



**John Petrucci** *Wild Stringdom*

**Chopin Sez Me**

**Studying non-guitar music to spice up your playing.**

One of the best ways to broaden your scope as a guitarist (or musician, for that matter) is to listen how other (non-guitarist) musicians write or improvise. Drawing influences from other instruments is an important yet oft-neglected process that will help you gain a whole new perspective on the guitar. You might say it's (no pun intended) instrumental in developing your individuality.

All instruments have fingerings and phrasings that are inherent to them. For example, lines that are easy to play on the saxophone or piano might be a lot harder to play on the guitar. Because of this, many guitarists won't try to play these types of lines and as a result end up regurgitating the same guitar-bred licks that everyone else plays.

By adapting music to the guitar that was originally improvised on or written for another instrument, you'll be able to infuse a breath of fresh air into your lines and separate yourself from the majority of guitarists who rely on purely guitaristic devices and fingerings. You'll actually be forced to approach the guitar from a whole new direction. And as a result, you'll broaden not only your knowledge of music, but your knowledge of the guitar as well.

I feel that one of the best ways to get into the "vibe" of another instrument is to transcribe solos and learn pieces specifically written for it. In fact, this is one of the things I specifically focus on in my clinics. So with that in mind, I thought we'd work towards learning a great classical piano piece, Chopin's Etude No.2, Opus 10. It's a chromatic, 16th-note virtuoso workout (very similar in attitude to "Flight of the Bumblebee") that translates incredibly well to the guitar. It will not only hone your chops to razor-sharp perfection, but it will also give you plenty of ideas for cool, unconventional lines and licks.

Before you attempt to play this etude, you'll need to master certain techniques (such as right- and left-hand coordination and playing the chromatic scale across the whole fingerboard) that will help facilitate you learning it. So for the next few lessons, we'll cover all the tools you'll need to tackle this challenging,

yet ultimately rewarding piece.

One point of note: All the exercises we'll be working on leading up to the etude were also written for instruments other than the guitar. They're also all chromatic sequences, which are crucial to learn, because you won't be able to play Chopin's Etude No.2 unless you know the chromatic scale (Figure 1) inside-out. So let's get to it!

FIGURE 1

The figure shows three systems of musical notation for a chromatic scale exercise in 4/4 time. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram with fingerings. The first system shows an ascending scale from C4 to G4. The second system shows a descending scale from G4 to C4. The third system shows a descending scale from G4 to C3.

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1 (75 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

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FIGURE 2 is a chromatic exercise derived from a violin study. Play each sextuplet four times using alternate picking, ascending chromatically to the 12th position. I recommend accenting the first and fourth notes of each sextuplet-this will help to get your alternate picking sounding crisp and in time.

FIGURE 2

The image displays a guitar exercise in 4/4 time, labeled 'FIGURE 2'. It consists of two systems of notation. The first system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in eighth notes with accents, featuring three triplet markings. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with six strings. The first three measures of the tablature are: 1-2-3-4-3-2, 2-3-4-5-4-3, and 3-4-5-6-5-4. The second system continues the exercise. The treble staff shows the melody moving up to the 6th fret, then to the 12th fret, with two triplet markings. The tablature below shows the corresponding fret numbers: 4-5-6-7-6-5, 5-6-7-8-7-6, and 12-13 14-15-14-13. Arrows point from the text 'continue sequence up to' to the 6th and 12th fret positions in the tablature.

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 2 (60 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

A cool way to practice this study is to use a low amp volume so that you can hear both the electric and the acoustic sounds of the guitar. That way, you can hear the accent of the pick and gauge how cleanly you're playing at the same time.

Once you're at the 12th position, descend chromatically to the 1st position, starting the sequence with your pinkie, as in FIGURE 3. Play these exercises on all the other strings, as well.

FIGURE 3

15-14-13-12 13-14      14-13-12-11-12 13      13-12-11-10-11-12

12-11-10-9-10-11      4-3-2-1-2-3

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 3 (60 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

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By now you know to start slowly and increase the metronome tempo only when you feel comfortable. Once you've mastered these, you'll be ready for the other cool violin exercises we'll cover next month. Later!

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