INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GUITAR

~The manner of holding the Guitar~

Place it across the Body, with the Neck inclined upwards; then apply the Little-finger of the Right-hand to the End of the Bridge next the first or smallest String, by which the instrument will rest upon it; the Left-hand holding the Neck between the Ball of the Thumb and Root of the Fore-finger. The best Way to hold it with Ease in this Position, is to sling it over the left Shoulder, with a Ribband fixed to both Ends of the Instrument, so that the Hands, particularly the Left-hand, may be free to move up and down without Interruption; the Necessity of which will be found in the Course of Practice.

~Of the Right-hand Fingers~

When the Instrument is thus placed, hold up the Wrist so as it may, together with the Fingers, form a Roundness: Then streight the Fore-finger, and draw it across all the Strings, beginning at the smallest. In like manner, return the Thumb, from the thickest, by which the Position of the Fingers will be discovered.

The true Fort of the Instrument is best produced by touching the Strings between the Sound-hole and the Bridge, tho’ it will occasion a pleasing Variety to play some Times near the Bridge, and afterwards as far up as the Little-finger will allow the others to reach; the Tone of the one representing the Lute, and the other the Pipe or Organ. But this is only to be attempted when the Learner is well advanced, and can with Judgement apply it so as to expect a good Effect from it.
The running the Thumb and Fore-finger across the Strings, as above, is recommended as a Lesson sufficient for the first Day; only the Thumb to leave one String for the Fore-finger to begin with, and that they move up and down upon one another, so as the one may not interrupt the Performance of the other. After this Manner are all Arpeggio’s performed; an example of which may be seen in the Second Prelude. Hitherto two Fingers, viz. the Thumb and Fore-finger, have only been recommended for Use, tho’, in the Course of Performance, it will be shewn, that four are requisite. There are some that only recommend these two for all. But this renders even easy Passages difficult, and must often marr the Performance; as it is impossible to move the Fore-finger (which by this method must execute the whole, except some occasional low Notes) so quick, as most Music will require, without sometimes touching the wrong Strings: Nor is there any Reason why a Finger that naturally hangs over a String should be idle, and another come from a Distance to perform its Office: On the contrary, had we a Finger for each String, it would facilitate our Performance; but this not being the case, we must lose the Use of none of those we have.

Example 1. in Plate first, [see page 13 - Rob MacKillop] shews the Notes representing the open Strings, and are called by the Letters under them. Example 2. shews a different method of fingering the Open Notes from that formerly given. N.B. 0 means the Thumb 1 Fore-finger 2 Second-finger 3 Third-finger In this Example, the first three Notes are played by the Thumb, which must not be lifted at each, but made to slide over them. The next three have a Finger to each: and as they Strings are double (Such Strings as are close to each other are Unisons, or the same Sound, and therefore considered only as one Note. – footnote in original), Care must be taken that they are struck so as to make them vibrate equally. In returning these Notes, the Fingers are the same; only the last three, which, instead of the Thumb, are played by drawing the Fore-finger over them. To perform this quickly, is Work sufficient for the second Day. Example 3. is another Lesson on the open Strings, which merits another Day’s Practice. Nor is Example 4. less deserving, as it is designed to exercise the Fingers for double, triple, and quadruple Notes. In playing this Lesson, the Fingers must be pressed equally on the Strings, and then drawn in towards the body, (the Thumb the reverse) at the same time viewing the Strings on the Finger-board, to discover if their vibrations are
equal, which, if otherwise, is a Sign they have not been equally pressed.

Tho’ these Examples are but short, yet, by repeating them (which is here designed) they may be lengthened at pleasure, taking care that no more Time be lost between the first and last Notes, than between any two lying next other. Each Parcel of Notes between the Cross-bars in Example 4. may be considered as a distinct Lesson, and repeated as above. Such Notes as have not the Fingers marked are to be played with those applied to the former Notes.

The anxious Learner will no doubt think it unreasonable to be so long detained without a Tune; but let such be assured, that beginning to learn any Instrument with Tunes, particularly known ones, is generally the greatest hinderance they can meet with; for their Eagerness to learn these Tunes makes them break thro’. every Rule and Method the industrious Teacher has been labouring to communicate; wheras, if the Learner would have a little Patience, and first endeavour to have a good Notion of the first Principles, together with a tolerable command of the Fingers, his Progress would be sure and speedy. Which, if otherwise, seldom fails of being slow and uncertain, attended with Aukwardness.

~Of the Left-hand Fingers~

Their Business is to apply the Strings to the Frets or Brass-bars across the Finger-board, so as to produce a good Tone, and this is best done by pressing the Finger on the String a little above the Fret from which the tone is received; each of these Frets is in reallity a Bridge, which, if the String is made to rest firmly upon, must undoubtedly give a Sound little inferior to the open Note. Of the Scale. The Learner being, it is hoped, by this Time, well aquainted with the Lines and Spaces on which the open Notes are placed, will have little Difficulty in remebring the others. Each Note of the scale (Example 5) has the proper Finger of the Lef-hand marked above it. The Right-hand Fingers may be applied as at (Example 2.). In playing up the Scale, the Fingers often slips a Space between the Frets; the Reason of which shall be hereafter given. All that the Learner has at present to observe is, to play the Notes as directed in the Scale and Plan of the Finger-board (Example 6.); the one pointing out the proper Finger, the other
shewing where to place it. Example, The first Note C, is the sixth String open. The second, being D, is the Second-finger on the same String, placed on the Instrument, as represented by the Letter D in the Plan; and so of all the other stopped Notes.

~Of Notes, their Names and Proportions~

The Notes made Use of in either Vocal or Instrumental Music are of six Sorts, namely, Semibreve, Minim, Crotchet, Quaver, Semiquaver, and Demisemiquaver. As to their Lengths and Proportions, a Semibreve is equal to two Minims, four Crotchets, &c. See (Example 7.)

~Of Rests~

These are Characters which denote Silence, or an Intermission of Sound, and are the same, as to Measure of Time, with the Notes after which they are placed. They are likewise called by the same Names, as Semibreve-rest, Minim-rest, Crotchet-rest, &c.

~Of a Dot or Point~

A Dot or Point placed after any Note, makes that Note longer by a Half than it formerly was. For Instance, a Semibreve alone, is equal to two Minims, but by a Dot after it, is made equal to three; a Minim again is equal to two Crotchets, but with a Dot is equal to three. And so of the others, (Example 8)

~Of Cliffs~

There is one or other of them set at the Beginning of every Tune. The G or treble Cliff, is the only one used for this Instrument.

~Of Bars~

There are Lines which cross the five Lines, which, together with the Spaces betwixt them, are called Bars. Of these there are two Kinds, namely single and double: The single Bars serve to divide the Tune,
according to its Measures. The double Bars serve to divide every Strain of a Tune. There is an Arch or Semicircle, with a Dot within it, placed over the first double Bar, in the Example of Bars; this Character is called a Close; and some Times serves to shew, that whatever Note it is placed over is the last Note of the Piece: At other Times it denotes, that the Note, over which it is placed, may be lengthened at pleasure. There is another Character, placed over the second double Bar, called a Repeat, which shews that the Music is to be performed over again, from the Note over which it is placed; and Dots, being placed by the double Bar, serves the same purpose. The other Character, at the end of the five Lines, resembling a W, is called a Direct, and is placed at the End, in order to shew on what Line or Space the first Note, in the next Line of Music, is placed.

~Of Time~

The Characters which denote Time are always at the Beginning of a Piece of Music; and tho’ they are many in Number, yet there are but two Sorts of Time, namely, Common Time and Triple Time. The First of these, Common Time Characters, denotes the Music to be Slow, and shews there is a Semibreve, or as many other Notes or Rests as are equal to its Length in a Bar. The second denotes the Music being quick, and answers for either one or two Semibreves in a Bar. Triple Time is known by having either 3/2, 3/4, 3/8, &c. at the Beginning of the Tune, the first of these shews that there are three Minims in a Bar, and is the slowest of all Triple Times. The second 3/4, shews, that there are three Crotchets in a Bar, and is generally quicker than the former; but that these and all other Kinds of Time may be rightly understood, let it be observed, that the Semibreve is the Source of all Times; for the undermost Figure being either 2, 4 or 8, signifies Minims, Crotchets or Quavers, contained in a Semibreve; and the Figure above shews how many of either of these is in a Bar. As for Instance, If 3/2 is placed before a Piece of Music, the Figure below tells the Number of Parts into which the Semibreve is divided, namely two, which signifies Minims; for there are no other Notes, whereof two are equal to a Semibreve: Then the Figure 3. above, shews that there are three of these Minims in a Bar; and so of the rest.

~Of Sharps, Flats, and Naturals~
It must be observed, that the Space betwixt each Fret on the Finger-board, is only a half Tone or Note; if a Sharp therefore is placed before a Note, it makes that Note a Half Tone sharper, or more acuté than it formerly was. A Flat has the contrary Effect, as it takes away a Half Note from any Note before which it is placed, to make it more flat or grave. Either are performed by placing a different Finger on the Space above or below that formerly used. As, for Instance, Suppose a Sharp placed before D, the second Note in the Scale; then it is played, by putting down the third Finger in the Space above, as represented by the Sharp in the Plan. On the contrary, were it a Flat, the first Finger must be put down where the Flat is marked. If either of them is set at the Beginning of a Piece of Music, they affect the Notes on such Lines or Spaces throughout the whole Tune, according to their different Natures. A Natural serves to contradict the Sharps or Flats, by restoring any Note before which it is placed to its former natural Sound.

~Of a Shake~

This seems to be the onely Deficiency of the Instrument; for, in every other Respect, it doubtless has the Advantage of most others of its Compass, as it is capable of adding the full Harmony to any Note the Performer chuses; which, together with its Melodiousness, renders it a most elegant Accompanier of the human Voice: Nor need it be doubted, but Time will remove this Defect, and likewise discover more Beauties in the Instrument than there are yet known; as it has but lately been introduced in Britain. One Method of a Shake, is, by sounding the Note above, and then moving the Finger of that Note as on the Violin; but as the vibration occasioned by sounding the Note soon ceases, the Effect is next to nothing. The next is the same with the former; only with this Difference, that, instead of moving the Finger up and down perpendicularly, it must, in falling and rising, form an Oval, by which it will draw the String a little to a Side, so as to renew the Vibration. This has a very good Effect, if done with Judgment. The last is that used by the Harper, namely, by the Thumb and Fore-finger on two different Strings. As, for Instance, Suppose a Shake is wanted on D, on the fourth Line; then it is performed by the Thumb and Fore-finger of the Right-hand, sounding that Note alternately with the open String above. If this Method is once acquired, it must be equal to a Shake on any other Instrument.
~Of a Beat~

This is best done by the second Method laid down for a Shake, only with this Difference, that, instead of the Note above, the Finger that stops the Note moves; which, when done, must be kept down, that the Note itself may be the last heard. See the Examples.

~Of a Slur~

A Slur on this Instrument, signifies no more than to point out such Notes as are played by drawing the same Finger over them, except in the Songs where they likewise shew such Notes as are sung to one Syllable. The Learner may now proceed to play some Tunes after which it will be necessary to observe the following Rules: 1. The Right-hand may play the open Notes in such Music as descend, which is done by drawing the String to a Side, in Raising the Finger from the Note above. See (Example 9) where such Notes as may be played in this Manner have Dots above them, as have also those in the Lesson in page 26. But Care must be taken, that these Notes this played be not stronger than the others, otherwise they will have a bad Effect. 2. In the scale, the 2d, 3d, 5th and 6th Strings, have only two Notes each, the 4th has three; and the first eight. But it is evident, by viewing the Frets, that each String must have the same number of Notes as the first and tho’ the odds over these in the Scale, are no more than a Repetition of those on the Strings above; yet the Knowledge of them is most necessary, there being many Passages that cannot otherwise be performed. See the third Chord at (Example 10) where the G must be taken on the second String. N.B. The proper Fingers are marked to this Chord. At (Example 11) is another Instance where G must be taken on the 5th String. The easiest Method of playing those at (Example 12) (which is the same with the tenth Bar of the second Prelude,) is by placing the first or second Finger across all the Strings, so as to make them bear upon the fifth Fret. After this manner may any common Chord be played, as every Fret is one or other of them.

~Of Tuning the Guitar~

This is to be done only by an adjusted Ear, and therefore is not to be attempted by those who are unaquainted with Music. But as
there is scarce a Place destitute of one that can tune a Violin, any such may easily tune a Guitar. The Method is this: Let the third String or Strings be tuned the same Sound with the 3d Finger on the fourth String of the Violin, which is C. This done, the second String is made to sound the same with the 1st Finger on the third String of the Violin, which is E, and is a third to the former. Then tune the first String to the 3d Finger on the same Violin String, being G; by which it becomes a 5th to the String first tuned. When these three are thus tuned, they will sound these three Notes at (Example 13). As a Proof of what has been done, compare such Notes as are crossed (See the Plan) with the open Strings above; and if they have the same Sound, the Instrument is so far tuned. As, for Instance, let the Note that is crossed on the 2d String have the same Sound with the first String open, and so of the 3d and 2d String. The other three Strings are no more than Returns than the same Sound, they being eight Notes lower than the former, viz. the 4th is tuned an Octave to the first; the 5th to the 2d; and the 6th to the 3d. If the first and last three strings sound the first three Notes in the State-Holders Minuit properly, it is a Sign the Instrument is in Tune. And such as cannot tune it, ought to play this Minuit often, as the Knowledge of it will greatly forward their Tuning.

~Remarks on the Pitch of the Guitar~

The Notes appearing so high, makes it seem impossible for the Human voice to accompany this Instrument; but when it is considered, that the Music is set an Octave above it, to prevent too many Ledger-lines or unaccustomed Cliffs, the Difficulty will be removed. The true State of the open Notes are these at (Example 14) of which three are Bass, and therefore improper for a Trible Voice. Those who transpose for this Instrument, must observe, that the proper Compass on it for the Generality of Voices, if pitched at C, (which seems to be the most proper Pitch for the most of the Guitars that have yet appeared) are those Notes at (Example 15) which are Unison, or the same Sound on this Instrument, with these below them, on either Violin or Harpsichord. Those at (Example 16) is another Range of Notes which may likewise terminate the Bounds of a Song; they being the same with the former, only an Octave lower, as may be seen by the Notes below them with which they are Unison. If a Song is set in this Compass, (See the Bush aboon Traquair.) A Trible Voice will naturally sing an
Octave above the Instrument, which, tho’ not quite so proper, yet has no worse Effect than if a Man and a Woman sung an Air together. But the former at (Example 15) is doubtless preferable, were it not the frequent Shifting of the Hand it occasions, as it is Unison with the Trible Voice, (of which the Fair Sex are only possessed,) and likewise permits the Instrument to join a Bass or Thorough-Bass. Those Guitars that have moving Bridges on the Neck have the Advantage of the others; as by such, the Instrument is enabled to suit the voice with any Pitch of Song.

~FINIS~