Classical Guitar Solos

Volume 1

by

Andrew T. Otwell

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Forward

This collection of works was written and refined over a decade. The amount of work put into them was carefully crafted and exercised before finalized. Music is a fine art that cannot be rushed yet, cannot be dawdled throughout the process. The best advice I can give to developing skills is to practice slowly at first and allow your mind and hands time to absorb the material rather than rushing through and attempting to learn through thoughtless rote. Muscle memory is also involved with the process, which will be especially helpful when you're onstage before an audience and your heartbeat is elevated. In those times, you shall rely upon your muscle memory and hearing memory to carry you through the performance. The tempos listed in each piece is a good starting point and can be altered to fit the player's preference and ability. Just maintain awareness of your desired tempo and be sure that performance situations match the same tempo.

If you are relatively new to the music making or performing process, the people around you will need to become familiar with the habits required to adapt and build up your skills. People around you generally do not like to listen or observe a practicing musician. Try to establish a time and place to carry out your practice time without interference or interruptions. If you cannot play your instrument, consider simply reading the notes so your eyes and your mind can practice reading and understanding the notes and structure of each piece.

Allow me to elaborate on practicing and making mistakes. What I really mean is *practicing mistakes*. Your practice time needs to be focused and accomplished with the highest level of quality, no matter how slow you need to take it. In fact, you should practice slow even when you are adept at the material to give your mind and hands multiple opportunities to absorb the material. I have witnessed some professionals comment on the fact that they will practice material in various rhythms to feel out the music in a slightly different manner. You do not want to rush through your practice sessions and figuratively stumble through the material making mistakes throughout. This is what I mean by *practicing mistakes* and precisely what you do *not* want to do. If you find yourself making mistakes and constantly going back to repeat a measure or a section, then you need to stop for a moment and focus your attention on the root cause. You can choose patterns of chords, or a small section of melody and get them into your mind and hands before assembling the smaller sections into larger sections. Try to determine if one hand is more affected than the other or if the fingering seems abnormal. Since we are discussing classical guitar, also keep in mind the length of your fingernails. Nails too long can negatively impact your playing on either hand.

Regarding dynamics and right hand placement, the Classical Guitar is relatively quiet instrument unless you bang on the chords like a flamenco player or electrify and amplify. The difference in our minds about playing pianissimo (soft) or forte (loud), might be huge but the listener simply will not hear much of a difference. Players don't have much control over that so we do the best we can. Fortunately, the modern era allows everything to be electric and amplified. For Classical Guitar, we can approach this subject from a different perspective. We can play a lot of notes brisky and give the impression of loud. We can also move our right hand closer to the bridge to give a stronger, sharper tone. Inversely, we can

also do the opposite of each of these and give the impression of soft, gentle, and slow. These are the tricks of the trade in the Classical Guitar business. I did not go overboard in placing markings in every piece and every section. The music lines and melodies should lead you through the dynamics. During my collegiate studies, I played early style music which never contained any markings. The trick was, training the players on the norms of knowing when and where to accentuate and vary the dynamics and delivery. One of those fundamental lessons is to play passages a little softer the second time through and then crescendo the dynamics back up again. You can also do the opposite and play softly (calm) the first time then louder (excited) the second time. The key is, pick one method for a performance and stick to it. I have recorded audio and video performing these pieces so feel free to go online and find those resources to become familiar with each piece and how and where I varied the dynamics.

Finally, I would like to thank you for purchasing this collection of works and I hope you enjoy the development process and later enjoy the performance process on your own. Feel free to contact me online as I would love to hear from you. Also, these pieces are copyrighted so please keep your own copies to yourself and let other people purchase their own copies.

Andrew T. Otwell
Composer/Performer

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Destiny

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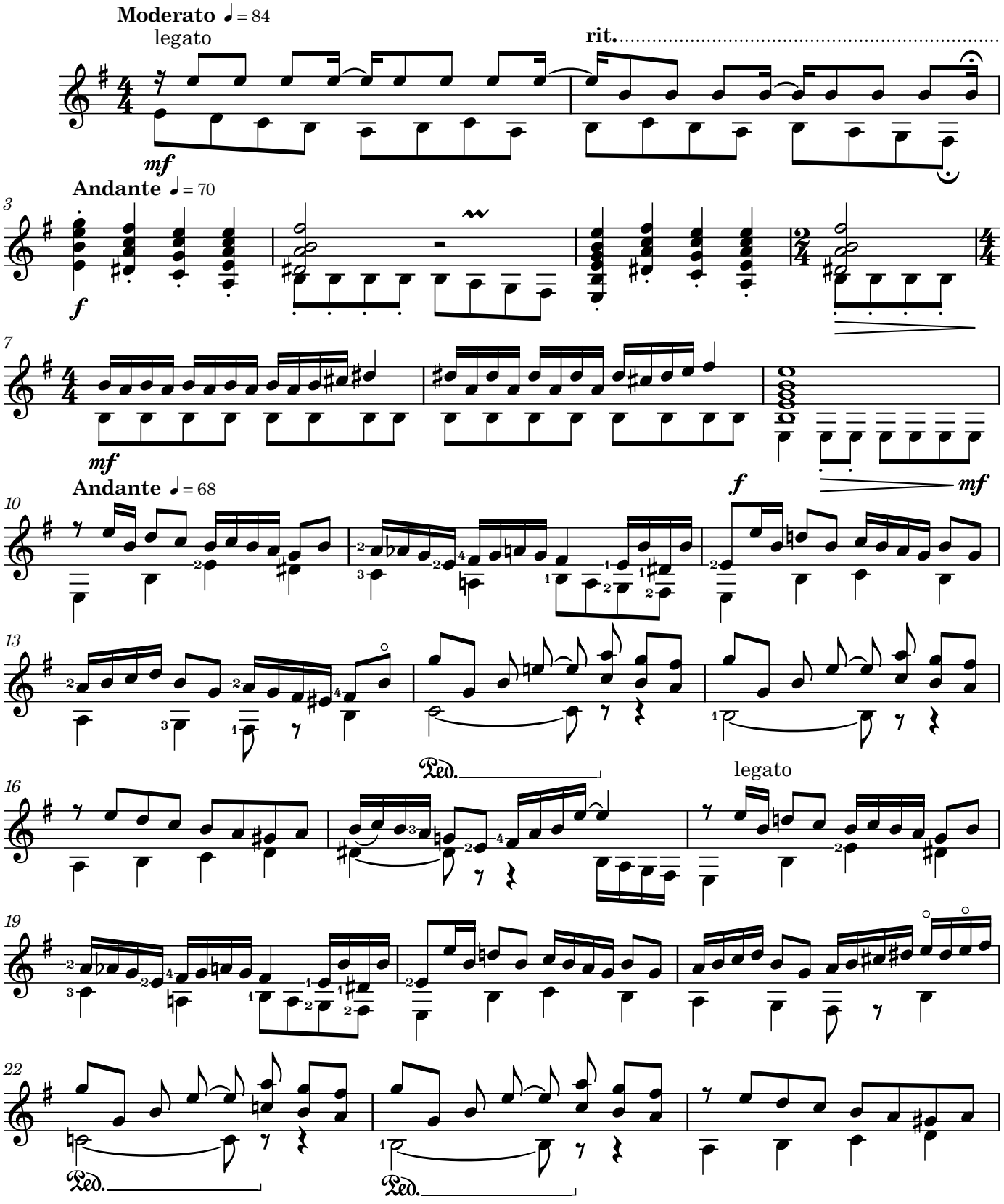

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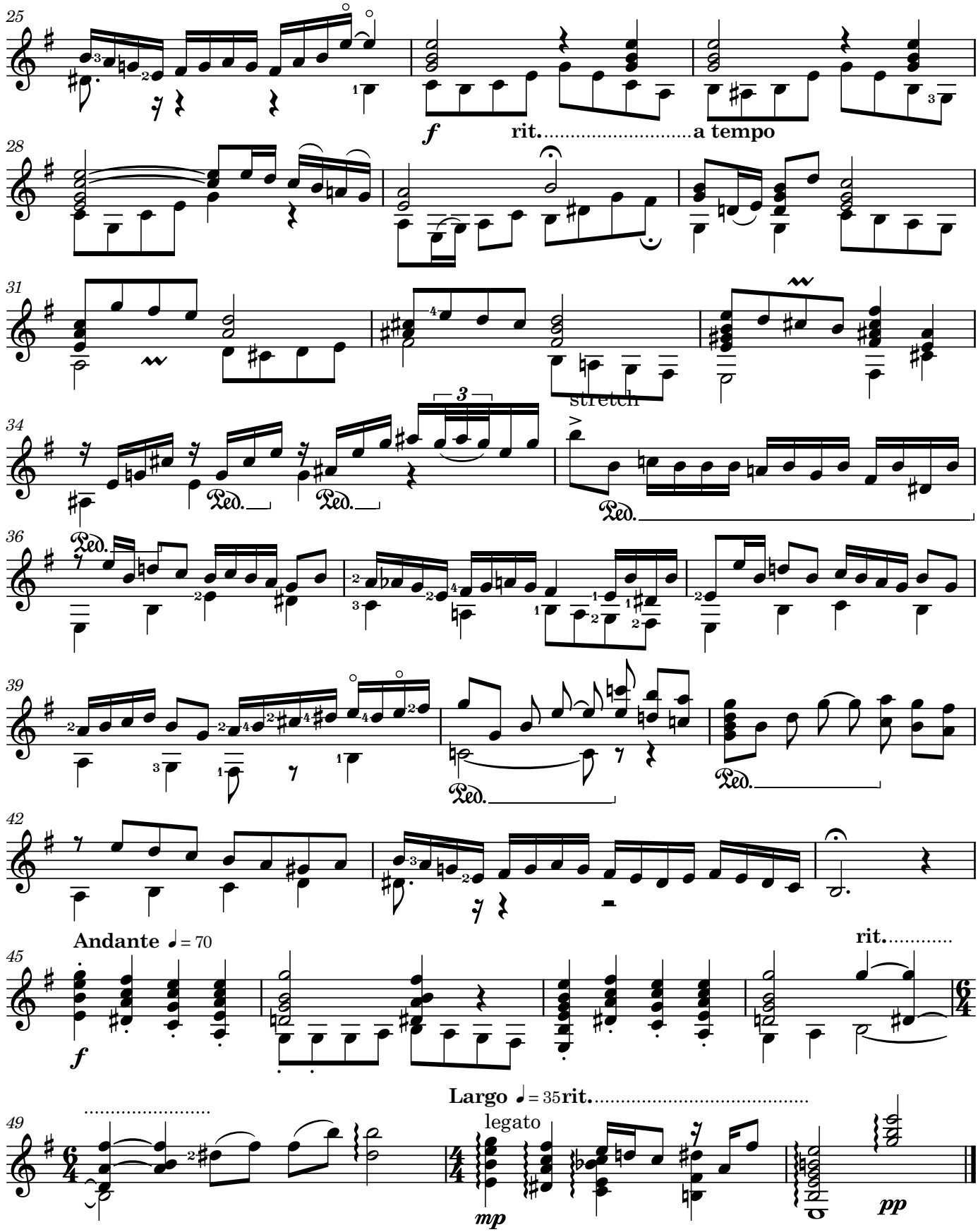

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