

Study on Kotaro Oshio's Finger-style Guitar

Yonghao Zhu

Xi'an Conservatory of Music, Xi'an, China

Abstract. Finger-style guitar is a very emerging style of guitar playing. Based on the author's playing experience and understanding of music and guitar techniques, this paper analyzes the playing techniques of Kotaro Oshio's finger-style guitar song, Fight, and adapts it to Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence. This paper is aimed to promote the spread of finger-style guitar.

Keywords: Kotaro Oshio; Finger-Style Guitar; Fight; Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence.

1. Introduction

Finger-style guitar is a very emerging style of guitar playing. Zhu Jiaming called it "guitar performance with special finger techniques [1], also known as steel-stringed wood guitar performance (Finger-style guitar). Finger-style guitar combines with guitar playing methods in Flamenco, Hawaii, Spain, and fingerboard techniques to continue innovation. That is to say, a player can use one guitar to perform the effect of multiple parts [2]. Therefore, finger-style guitar attaches great importance to the use of special techniques such as string tuning, percussion, and fingerboard. For example, in Beekman blues, Drop-D string tuning is used, which specifically refers to the tuning mode of reducing sixth string by one whole note from E to D. Percussion refers to tapping the panel or other parts of the guitar with wrists or fingers to imitate percussion music, such as Snare Drum and Bass Drum, as shown in Figure 1. The four-finger percussion technique is often used in Flamenco style music, and a large number of percussion techniques are involved in Nakagawa Isato's The Sprinter to imitate the snare drum.



Figure 1. Percussive Techniques of Finger-Style Guitar

It can be seen that compared with other types of guitars playing methods, finger-style guitar is to enrich the musicality and aesthetics of the piece by using techniques. Through their own understanding of guitar performance and form innovation, the finger-style guitar has emerged in various styles represented by people or regions. For example, the traditional finger-style music in the United States is mainly represented by Ragtime, country blues, and jazz style, while that in Europe is dominated by Celtic and Mediterranean style music. Modern finger-style music is New Age, funk, Latin, and other songs [3]. Compared with traditional finger-style techniques, modern finger-style techniques pay more attention to sound effects and sometimes use effectors such as Japanese performers Nakagawa Isato and Kotaro Oshio. This paper will study Kotaro Oshio's playing techniques.

Kotaro Oshio (押尾コータロー), born in 1968 in Osaka, Japan, is a new generation of guitarists and finger-style guitar masters in Japan. He often uses only one guitar to imitate the sound effect of the whole band. His performance combines strength, gentleness and mellowness, with great musical stage expression. The music is very tense and skilled. Representative works include "Wings You Are the Hero", "Landscape" and "Fight". Compared with the finger-style genre in Europe and America, Oshio rarely uses clapper techniques. His playing techniques are mainly reflected in the use of strings,

such as Attack Mute (AM). In Blue Sky, Kotaro Oshio mentioned that AM plays strings with the middle finger and ring finger of his right hand at the same time [4]. However, it is found in his repertoire that he hits the speaker with the middle finger and ring finger while striking with the little thumb. Therefore, some people believe that the AM technique refers to tapping the panel with the little finger and rubbing and striking the strings with the ring and middle fingers of the right hand. In Wings~You Are the Hero, a large number of overtone harmonics are used only (holding the overtone points on the whole string with your hand when making an empty string, such as directly above the seventh fret and the twelfth fret), Tapping (not pressing the string with your left hand, but clicking the grade required by the score with the middle finger or index finger of your right hand), and Slapping (closing the fingers of your right hand and tapping all the strings with your entire right hand, and make the strings collide with Fret, which is similar to the sound of Hi-Hat) (as shown in Figure 2).

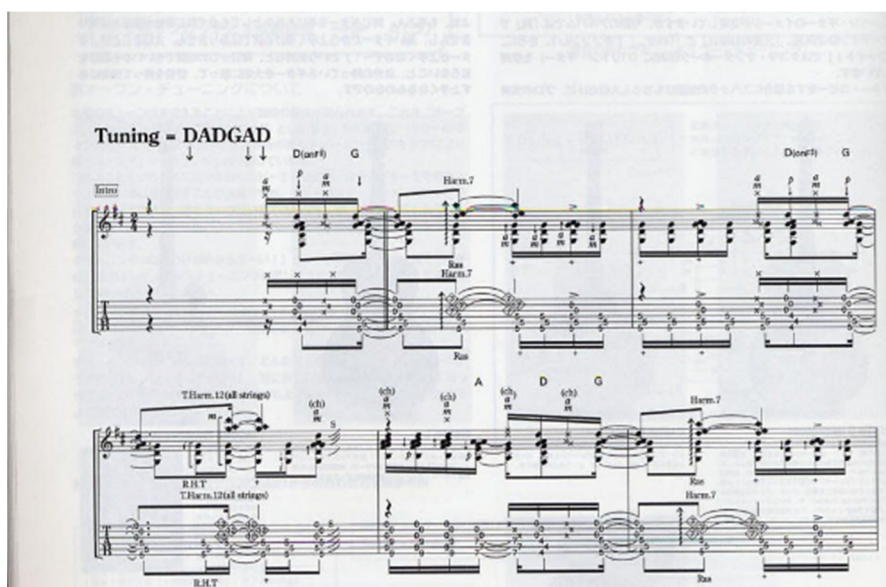


Figure 2. Wings ~ You Are the Hero

2. A Study on Kotaro Oshio's Finger-Style Guitar Technique

Kotaro Oshio's original repertoire makes full use of all the sound-making parts on the guitar, resulting in a variety of performance techniques. But for ordinary performers, the abundance of techniques that emerge in the music adds to its difficulty. This section will analyze the playing techniques of Fight and simplify the technique difficulty of Marry Christmas Mr. Lawrence based on personal performance experience.

2.1 An Analysis of the Performance Techniques of "Fight"

"Fight" is one of the richest rhythmic original finger-style guitar songs composed by Oshio, which is included in the album "Be Happy". When playing this song, Oshio used a Tacoma Thunderhawk BM6C midrange guitar, combined with a large number of PM and its variant Palm with nail attack techniques. PM technique refer to using the thenar of the palm to hit the bass drum above the sound hole Sound-hole, and at the same time, using the nail of the right hand to hit the sweeping string and H Hammer-on conveniently. H Hammer means playing a certain note first, and then hammering the higher notes of the same string with the corresponding fingers of the left hand, striving for stability, accuracy, and ruthlessness. In the spectrum example (as shown in Figure 3) (X) does not mean to play this string, but to play the mute sound of this string. In "Fight", Kotaro Oshio uses his left hand to virtual press the string to complete the sound making.

The "Fight" is divided into 7 periods, of which Period D is a complete reproduction of Intro and Period F at the end is an incomplete reproduction. Intro is also the most classic and memorable movement of the whole song.

Tuning = Standard



Figure 3. An Example of the Score for Fight

2.1.1·Intro

The Intro of "Fight" consists of two phrases, which are weak bars with a tailless glide starting with the twelfth fret, followed by the standard 4-bar basic mode of 4/4 beats. Specially, the Mute part uses the middle finger and ring finger to sweep down or the index finger to sweep up, and the melody part uses the thumb to play like bass chopping. The first note of each bar of intro is played with Palm with nail attack technique, which requires using the heel of right hand to hit the upper panel of guitar and using the force of the heel to hit the sixth string quickly with the nail with the relaxed middle finger. The sound effect is low and powerful, which gives intro a strong sense of rhythm as the first note of each bar. In addition, the right hand of the last A chord and G chord of each phrase uses Palm with nail attack technique. However, to quickly convert chords and achieve the purpose of sound making, when pressing A chord with the left hand, you can use the first knuckle of the index finger to press the second fret on strings 234. Meanwhile, you can touch the third fret on a sixth string sound making Mute with the fingertip of the ring finger. In the original performance suggestion, it is explained that the sixth string sound making Mute should be lightly pressed with the grip technique [5]. However, in actual performance, the author found that this technique is difficult to master. Therefore, when switching to the G chord, the author presses the third fret on a sixth string with his fingertips, and lightly touches the fifth string with his fingertips, which can achieve rapid chord switching and complete sound making.

2.1.2·Period A

Period A is divided into four phrases, of which the rhythm and melody of the third phrase are slightly different from those of the first, second and fourth phrases. There are a lot of syncopation and dotted notes in this period, so it is difficult to grasp the rhythm, which also lays the Funk style of the whole song. The first beat of the first phrase presents a Funk-style syncopation. In the first tone, press the third fret on a first string and a second string with the first knuckle of the index finger, and in the second tone, you don't need to play it with your right hand, and use the Pull-off technique of your left hand to make the strings sound. The following third beat is to press the fifth fret on a sixth string with

the fingertip of the index finger, while the stuffy Palm Mute can gently press the other strings with the other three fingers to make sounds, and the following fourth beat is the same as the third beat. The first beat of the second bar is the Barre Chord of the index finger, the second beat is to relax the index finger to make sound immediately, and the right hand plays the stuffy sound effect of two sixteenth notes. The second beat of the second fret on a sixth string is followed by the index finger fingertip pressing hard, sliding to the seventh fret conveniently, followed by a Barre Chord of the seventh fret, completing B7(+5) chord with the middle finger and ring finger, and then relaxing the index finger to make sound. The last F7(9) chord in the thirteen bar is a difficult chord in this song. The specific fingering method is using Barre Chord for the eighth fret on the fifth string of the middle finger, the seventh fret on the fourth string of the index finger, and the eighth fret on the first string, second string, and third-string by the ring finger. However, because the flexibility of the author's ring finger cannot meet the corresponding requirements, the author tilts his finger outward, so that the ring finger, which should be parallel to the fret, is no longer parallel to the fret, forming an included angle. And with the help of the little thumb, press the eighth fret on a first string to prevent the first string from being unable to make a sound due to insufficient pressure on the string. Then relax your fingers and play four sixteenth notes to end the period.

2.1.3·Period B

Period B is the Build Up period for Drop. The first phase of this period is mainly played around the G chord, in which the third fret on a sixth string can be pressed with the left thumb grip gesture, mainly because the third fret on a sixth string remains unchanged in the phrase and also makes it easier to change the chords of the three bars of the phrase. The last bar of the seventh fret overtone is slowly downstroke with Arpeggio to relax listeners and players.

2.1.4·Period C

The first two phrases of period C are the left-hand Pull-off part. Because of the fast speed and the requirement to highlight the melody, there is a high requirement for the strength control of the left-hand Pull-off, so that the sound of the melody cannot be drowned out due to too strong Pull-off force. The score requires a combined rhythmic pattern of four sixteenth notes, so the duration of each note needs to be stable, and the player needs to press the string for a long time. The last phrase is a Strumming with Funk-style feature. A combined rhythmic Strumming of two consecutive sixteenth notes and one eighth note is accompanied by the sixteenth note as the main melody, and the eighth note highlights the melody. To achieve the purpose of quickly switching chords, it is recommended to use the first knuckle of the left forefinger to make a Little Barre on chord A of this phrase (the same applies to B-flat chords later). For chord G, because there is only the sound of the third fret on a sixth string, you can press the third fret on a sixth string with the fingertips of your ring finger and touch the fifth string lightly to achieve the damping effect like chord G in the second bar of the Intro.

2.1.5·Period D

This period is an incomplete reproduction of the Intro, except that the last two beats of the last bar are changed from the A chord and G chord of the Intro to the sixth string empty note and empty beat.

2.1.6·Period E

This period is a transitional period for reproducing the ending period. When playing, it is necessary to maintain the rhythm stability of the sixth string and pay attention to the fingering methods of overtone and solid note. In the overtone part of the first phrase, you can use your left middle finger to virtually press the twelfth fret of the strings, then play the melody with your little finger at the fourteen fret and use your index finger to press the remaining tenth fret. The remaining two phrases can be referred to as the first phrase.

2.1.7·Period F

The period is an incomplete reproduction of the Intro, with complex adaptations to the second half of each phrase. At the end of the second phrase, there are two quarter-note overtones. Although only

two ordinary downstroke overtone are marked on the score, when Oshio himself is playing, he handles the fifth overtone by downpicking with four fingers other than his right thumb, which is somewhat similar to Flamenco's downstroke, but the fingers are not as clear and strong as each finger strums the strings, which makes the overtone layered and not complicated; The fourth overtone in the next beat is played in a completely different way: Since it is difficult to pronounce the overtone itself, only by pressing your thumb against your index finger and downpicking with your index fingernail, the Overtone Harmonic be more clearly highlighted.

2.1.8·Ending

T. Harm Overtone Touch Harmonic and L.H. Hammer-on are used extensively in bar 51, 54 and 55. T. Harm beat overtone refers to the sound made by touching the strings with your fingers after playing them with your right hand. L.H. Hammer-on is different from H mentioned above in that H needs to hammer-on to a higher fret based on the string already pressed by his left hand, while L.H. does not need to press the string with his left hand but directly hammers the string with his fingers to make a sound. Since these two techniques are done with one hand alone and do not require the cooperation of the other hand, it is necessary for the player to control the rhythm of the left and right hands and play the strings alternately to maintain the stability of the rhythm.

2.2 Re-creation of Marry Mr. Christmas Lawrence

The original song "Marry Christmas Mr. Lawrence" is a piano concerto, which was composed by Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto in 1983 for the film "Merry Christmas on the Battlefield". The original song is quiet and simple. Compared with the instruments in piano concertos, the tone of the guitar is crisper and more gorgeous. The prelude is accompanied by a solemn bass to set off the musical atmosphere, and the playing method in the piece has also been changed many times. The style of the piece is bolder and more changeable, which makes the whole piece more emotionally full, but at the same time it does not lose the overall style of the original piece and maintains the quiet listening sense of the original piece. Based on my playing experience, the author has adapted the technique of Marry Christmas Mr. Lawrence.

2.2.1 Technical Adaptation of Marry Christmas Mr. Lawrence

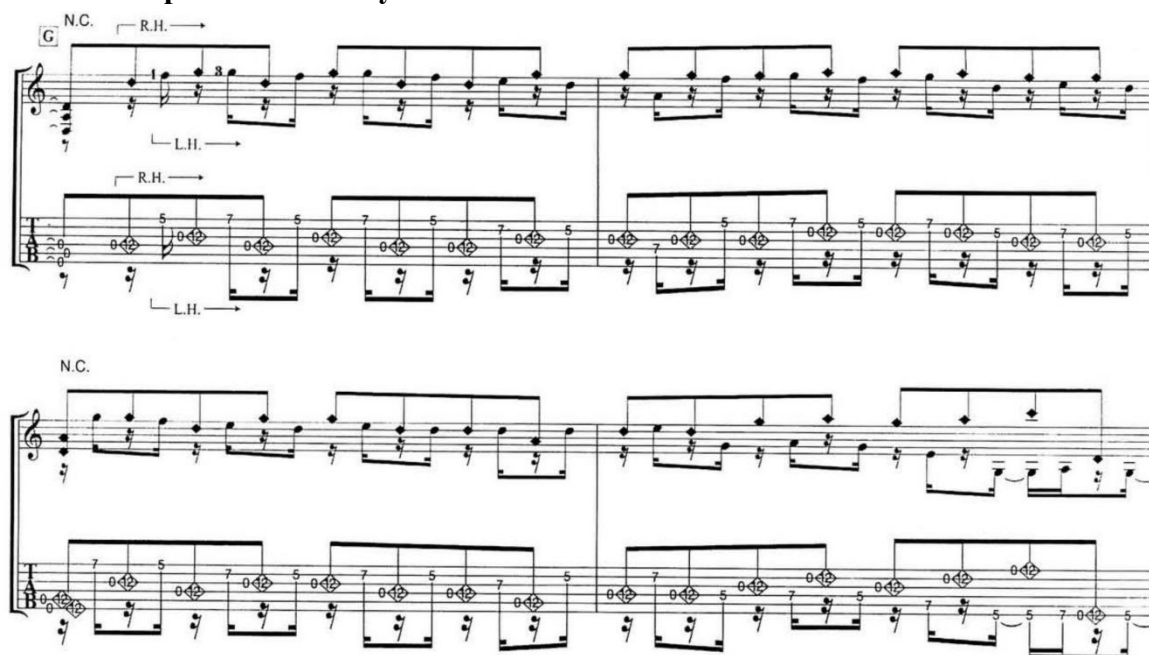
The image displays a musical score for guitar, consisting of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The top system begins with a 'G' chord symbol and a 'N.C.' (Natural Chord) instruction. The right hand (R.H.) part is written in a rhythmic pattern with eighth notes, and the left hand (L.H.) part is written in a similar rhythmic pattern with eighth notes. The second system also starts with a 'N.C.' instruction. The notation includes various fret numbers (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7) and rhythmic markings (e.g., eighth notes, quarter notes) for both hands. Arrows indicate the direction of the right and left hand parts.

Figure 4. An Example of the Score for Marry Christmas Mr. Lawrence

The Barre Chord in $Fmaj7^{(13)}$, $Fmaj7^{(9,13)}$, $Cadd9^{(on E)}$, $Am7^{(11)}$, $Cmaj7^{(9)(on E)}$, $Am7^{(9, 11)}$ and $Am7^{(9, 11)(on G)}$ chords of the Intro are recommended to use Little Barre in the performance suggestions at the

end, but I used Barre Chord in my actual performance. The author believes that using the technique of Barre Chord can effectively solve the problem of low finger flexibility and improve the speed of chord conversion. However, compared with the Little Barre, the Barre Chord has certain requirements on the strength of the Barre Chord. The player needs to pay attention to the strength of the left hand. Therefore, the Little Barre is an appropriate choice for players who lack strength but have good flexibility of finger knuckles.

The whole period of G is played by N.C. (No Chord), with fast rhythm. In the first half, the right-hand points overtones and the L.H. Hammer-on (as shown in Figure 4). In actual performance, the author found that it is easy to release the Open String after the L.H. Hammer-on. The author's method to solve this problem is to use the left index finger to hold down the lowest fret of the current bar, then use the ring finger to hammer-on with high fret and use the technique of Pull-off when returning to the low fret. Although this playing method does not meet the left-hand rest required by the spectrum, it reduces the probability of multi-playing, so that the playing of this period will not become messy because of multi-playing.

3. Conclusion

A comprehensive understanding of various musical instruments is a very important link in music performance. Therefore, in the future, the author will try to adapt and re-create classic tracks of different musical instruments and summarize the similarities and differences between different musical instruments in expressing the same music. When the author played the classical guitar classic "Romance" on the piano, he found that the piano could not show the fluidity of the wheel fingers in the original song well, and the bass accompaniment of the original song had only one root sound on the piano, which was slightly thin. Therefore, the music can be re-created by combining the timbre, sound quality and playing techniques of piano.

Finger-style guitar has more advantages in displaying multiple timbres due to its variety of techniques. However, finger-style music is an unpopular type of music in China, accounting for only about 8% of the music market. Therefore, there is a strong development space for finger-style music in China. For this reason, the author will also conduct research from the perspectives of finger-style guitar dissemination, special fingering technique, etc.

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