

# PLAYING WITH EASE

A HEALTHY APPROACH  
TO GUITAR TECHNIQUE

DAVID LEISNER



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*A Healthy Approach to Guitar Technique*

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To my students, past, present and future, whose probing questions  
and open minds teach me more than they can ever know

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

Lao Tzu

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## PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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Illustrations by Jay Kauffman, [jaykauffman.com](http://jaykauffman.com)



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## ABOUT THE COMPANION WEBSITE

[www.oup.com/us/playingwithease](http://www.oup.com/us/playingwithease)

Oxford University Press has created a website to accompany *Playing with Ease*. When movements and concepts described in the book cannot be demonstrated by either photos or illustrations, videos are provided on the website. The reader is strongly encouraged to use these additional resources for Chapters 1–5. The videos were filmed by Alexey Gorokholinskiy. They are available online and indicated in the text with the symbol .



Playing with Ease



# Introduction

## EASE

Every musical instrument is hard to play. To juggle, balance, and remember all that is necessary to play any instrument is a staggering feat of acrobatics. It can only elicit admiration and awe from the knowing observer. While the guitar is one of the easiest instruments at the beginner's level, it is one of the most difficult instruments at the more advanced stages. Think about it: To begin with, the two hands do completely different things, and to complicate matters, they face in opposite directions. The neck of the instrument is usually placed at an odd angle to the side, tilted up and away from the body, which makes for a rather dizzying spatial orientation. Contrast this with the piano, for instance, whose keys are clearly laid out horizontally in front of you. The guitar can also make you, the player, feel very exposed and vulnerable, as the volume is rather quiet and there are only six strings at your disposal. Missed notes can be quite obvious to a listener. Also, there are times when you need to play two- or three-voice counterpoint on these six strings, with only four fingers on the right hand to pluck the notes. Playing the guitar is anything but easy.

Is it possible to make it easier? Of course. But it requires careful thought and consideration, supported by knowledge and awareness, with the reinforcement of focused practice. My intention with this book is to offer you some new ideas, as well as some familiar ones that are perhaps described in novel ways, of how to play your instrument with greater ease. At the very least, the book provides a systematic summary of the point of view of one person, who has an abiding interest in the sensible management of anatomy and of good physical health.