Two Significant Problems
- a general lack of stylistic-expressive awareness amongst guitarists today (despite the size of the historical repertoire)
- a preponderance of musically ineffective performances and a resistance to exploring rarely-performed works

Specific Issues
- interpretation of expression markings
- practical realization of expression markings (especially dynamics and marks of accentuation)
- interpreting tempo words
- detailed articulation of phrase ending and sub-phrases
- articulation of other melodic features
- articulation of the lower voice
- articulation of harmonic events
- preponderance of guitar scores printed with minimal (or even no) expression indications

Solutions
- develop clear definitions and practical realizations of specific markings
- consult well-written historical writings (there are many for the guitar)
- study well-notated scores (Carcassi Op. 60, Viennese scores (Giuliani, Diabelli, Matiegka → Mertz)
- develop an objective set of guidelines for applying expression to unmarked scores

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1   Interpreting Expression Markings

1 Block dynamics relate to musical character, feeling and quality of sound more than they do to volume levels:

> *mf* — normal, full-sounding comfortable 'speaking' voice
> *p* — gentle, understated, 'seductive' quiet voice
> *pp* — whispering, secretive, mysterious
> *f* — forceful, accented, 'strong' speaking voice
> *ff* — hard, inflexible, 'shouting' voice

Combine three basic dynamic levels with tone quality and color (as described in many guitar methods of the time):

> *mf* — normal full sound which is susceptible to subtle inflection (edge of soundhole)
> *f* — brighter, harder more uncompromising sound; essentially a series of accents
>   (closer toward the bridge)
> *p* — dark, warm sound (over the soundhole)

Develop an indelible sense of how it feels (psychologically and technically) to create these levels.

2 *Crescendo / Diminuendo* — if applied to more than a few notes must occur in a series of graduated 'steps' (for example, a two-measure crescendo in 4/4 time might be accomplished over a series of two-beat steps: *pp*—*mp*—*mf* —*f*); long crescendos and diminuendos require changes in tone color / plucking point along the string (as indicated by, for example, Giuliani in Op. 6 Var. 4) **[Ex. 1]** - also instrumental imitation]

3 A less standard block dynamic sign:

> *pf* = *'poco forte'* = *mp* (e.g., Carcassi Op. 60) of *mf* (Giuliani c. Opp. 1-20) **[see Ex. 1]**

4 Interpreting accentuation signs:

> *sf* = stressed, not necessarily forceful (just a notch up from the prevailing dynamic); can connotes a feeling of 'pushing' with a resulting lengthening of the note; used most often in the lower voice to support a harmonic dissonance or a syncopation; often effective to add a preparatory short crescendo to the accented note (also see *rf* below)

> *rf* / *rinf* = reinforced; often connotes to a feeling of lifting something heavy; found in both lower and upper voice parts; often intended as a short crescendo over a series of notes, especially in a prevailing *p* or *mp* / *pf* block dynamic

> *fp* = a sudden *forte* followed immediately by *piano*; often less susceptible to lengthening

> **>** = can indicate a dynamic accent, but also often serves to point the player to an important line (especially in less sophisticatedly notated scores (e.g., Carulli)

5 Typographical Problems

> Markings are often ambiguously placed and are often confused for one another (resulting from the publisher's music engraver working very quickly and/or the composer writing the 'fair copy' very quickly).

> For example, short *crescendo* / *diminuendo* 'hairpin' signs are frequently confused with single-note accent signs; marks of accentuation are often positioned under the wrong note (context tells us this); compound markings such as *pf* and *fp* are often mistakenly separated into separate markings, and vice versa.

6 A notational convention regarding pickup measures

> Opening sectional block dynamic markings are hardly ever positioned beneath an anacrusis (pickup) and appear instead beneath the downbeat (clearly a notational convention rather than a delayed dynamic effect)

2 Interpreting Tempo Words

- There is no set range of metronome markings that relate to any particular tempo word (despite Maezel's metronome indications).
- In addition to a general feeling of pulse (slow, moderate, fast), the tempo of a piece depends on time signature, rate of harmonic movement, and rhythmic level of beat subdivision (8th, 16th, etc.); in general, the shorter the note values, the slower the pulse.
- Tempo words are indications of musical character just as much as they are of actual speed.
- Tempo is one of the main conveyors of musical character; inappropriate tempos will conflict with other expressive features of a piece; see for example, Sor Op. 9 theme (invariably performed too quickly), Mertz Elegy introduction (invariably played too slowly) (also see Carcassi Op. 60. No. 2 below)

- *Andante* is a moderate tempo very often qualified by another word: *Andante mosso*, *Andante con espressivo*, *Andantino*, for example, which convey a subtle range of musical character.

    - Sor: *Andante largo* (his slowest tempo), *Andante moderato* (a true moderate andante), *Andante allegro* (= andantino, on the faster side of moderately slow)

- the modifier *espressivo* (*Andante con espressivo*, *Moderato con espressivo*, etc.) suggests rhythmic flexibility, rubato, and dynamic ebb and flow (see Carcassi Op. 60 No. 2 for example)

- short passages marked *espressivo* (usually short lead-in passages or cadenzas) are played without meter or pulse (usually slow—accel/cresc—rit/dim) even when notated with strict metric notation.

3 Articulation of Phrases and Sub-Phrases

- Since guitar music is hardly ever notated with phrasing slurs or grouping slurs, guitarists often fail to articulate *all* required phrase endings, sub-phrases and note groupings.

    From Doisy, *Principes Géneraux de la Guitar* (Paris, 1801, p.56): **[Ex. 2 & 3]**

    "The Repose or Termination of Musical Phrases." Doisy discusses here the necessity of articulating phrase endings, that this finds its analogy in singing, and that it is something that distinguishes the professional musician from the student musician. He distinguishes between the inflection required for sectional phrase endings and that required for shorter phrases.

- Basic inflection normally follows the form: rit (diminuendo)—pause—breath (with the degree of each element dependent on the relative phrase hierarchy (sub phrase, phrase, section, movement)

- There are of course further (more sophisticated) ways to make infect and shape/separate phrases

- in pieces based on orchestral models phrase endings are often accented and function as forward-moving "arrivals" rather than points of repose (e.g. Giuliani Grande Overture, Op. 61) **[see Ex. 1 line 2]**

4 Articulation of Other Melodic Features

1 Appoggiatura

    —a stressed dissonance-resolution figure, a two-note 'sighing' gesture.

- standard interpretation: lengthen the dissonant note ("lean" on it) and play the resolution softly; no need to add a sudden dynamic accent to the dissonance (much better the precede it with a short crescendo)

- see Carcassi Op. 60 No. 3 **[Ex. 4]**

- this is such a common expressive gesture in most tonal music that the required expression markings are rarely notated

2 Melodic Accent and Descent

—in general: ascending = crescendo / descending = diminuendo

3 Melodic Discontinuities (leaps / direction changes)

- in general: consider stepwise movement to the next pitch in the same direction as 'expected;' anything else is to some extent 'unexpected' and therefore expressive (barring melodic arpeggiation)

- the unexpected note receives a subtle accent (and can be subtly delayed and even held, depending on context and rhythmic level)

4 Half-Steps versus Whole Steps

- half-steps are more expressive than whole steps: lengthen the first note of a half-step (possibly followed by a subtle diminuendo)

5 Chromatic Notes

- chromatic notes are unexpected and tense—treat them like appoggiaturas: lengthen them (possibly preceded by a subtle crescendo) and follow them with a decrescendo

6 Syncopated Notes

—receive an accent or a ***sforzando***

7 The Lower Voice

- explore the lower voice independently for these features; take note of the articulative notated rests that are often present

- don't neglect to play lower-voice repeated pedal tones (*trommelbas*) super consistently

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5 Articulating Harmonic Events

- harmonic events influence the "meaning" of the melody

- harmonic events usually trump melodic ones (regarding phrasing, movement and dynamics)

- harmonic movement based on a half-step bass movement is more expressive than that based on whole-step movement or movement based on fourths or fifths

- dissonant chords are unexpected and therefore expressive:

    V chords create movement toward their tonics (especially V7 chords)
    ii7 chords create movement toward the following dominant
    dim 7 and **Aug 6** chords (which are usually pre-dominant chords) are even more expressive and often require a **sforzando**

- larger II-V-I harmonic areas outline the overall harmonic structure of a piece

6 Reconstructing the Expressive Layer in a Blandly Notated Score

Sor Op. 6 No. 2

1 Performance tempo—*Andante allegro* (a relaxed *andantino*, probably slower than we usually hear today)

2 Melody: phrase structure, appoggiaturas, leaps, note-grouping **[Ex. 5]**

3 Lower Voice: note-grouping, half-steps, dissonances **[Ex. 6]**

4 Harmonic Movement and Voice-Leading **[Ex. 7]**

Sor Op. 35 No. 22

1 Performance tempo—*Allegretto* (moderately lively and faster than we usually hear today)

2 Melody: phrase structure, appoggiaturas, leaps, note-grouping **[Ex. 8]**

3 Harmonic Movement and the Lower Voice **[Ex. 9]**