

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The term “Riyaz” comes from India where it means the all-embracing art of practice, with all its associated ritual, discipline, teacher-mentorship and sheer hard work. There are countless stories about the superhuman dedication and energy put into Indian musicians’ practice regiments in order to achieve virtuosic levels of artistry.

Bass Riyaz takes a wholistic approach to the development of craft on the electric bass guitar. Mastery of any instrument is not only about development of physical “technique”, but is also about the mastery of Self. It is necessary to consider emotional, philosophical, psychological, and physical aspects necessary to master oneself and one’s instrument. It is with this attitude that I teach myself, teach my students, and wrote this book. I certainly don’t believe any one book can be the “complete” method, but I hope that Bass Riyaz serves not only as a reference book kept on your bookshelf, but as a workbook that is a companion to your practice every day.

It is important to realize that you can always benefit from the observations and guidance of another more experienced person - even if you’re endowed with such a book as this! So it is encouraged that the developing bassist seek professional tutelage on many of this book’s topics, in parallel with independent study and practice. This book developed in a similar way: over the course of years of experience in teaching, learning and performing with numerous people in a variety of situations.

The exercises contained herein are often notated from C, but this serves as only a starting-point. It is assumed that the bassist will transpose the appropriate exercises to other keys and across the range of the instrument, for added benefit. It is also assumed that the exercises are repeated several times consecutively, even if repeat signs do not appear. In India material that can be read and rendered once correctly is not considered mastered. Repetitions ad infinitum must be rendered at a multitude of speeds before material is truly “owned” by the player. Only then can the student humbly take their skills and attempt to apply them in performance situations.

The broad range of topics contained herein are relevant to musicians of any instrument, and so I encourage non-bassists to dig into these concepts and see if the meaning of “Riyaz” comes through to them also. Composers may also find certain concepts relevant to them. Broad as the range of topics are, however, as I said it is not possible for any one book to cover every conceivable topic. My bibliography should serve as a starting point for further reading, and for enriching your library.

The chapters are not laid out in any strict order. Apart from the Warm Up chapter, which is intrinsically rudimentary and follows this Introduction, you may skip around to whatever chapters you fancy. I do recommend that beginning and intermediate level musicians consult Chapter 12 for some ideas on how to develop an effective practice routine.

A word on the notation in this book: conventional musical notation is used, not tablature (tab). This was a conscious decision, because I believe that developing general musicianship involves being literate - being able to read and write. Music is not written using tab, only shapes and patterns for guitar and bass use this shorthand. If you have until now avoided learning to read music, please take this opportunity to start learning now! Your bass playing will benefit from the improvement of your literacy and musicianship.

I also have used English (rather than American) spellings for some words. I realize that some readers will be in the USA and wonder what I mean by “colour”, but alas I am a creature of habit and was originally taught that English has such silent letters. Just because. Such is life.

I encourage feedback on any aspect or issue related to this book. To facilitate this, I have dedicated a section of my web-site to Bass Riyaz. This online facility is designed to maximize the utility and currency of this book via an online forum for question-and-answer sessions between readers like you, and myself. Bass Riyaz online will develop and change over time, so please keep in touch. Log on to: www.jonathandimond.com

It is my intention to record and release a Compact Disc to accompany future editions of Bass Riyaz. Please e-mail if you are interested in receiving this CD in the future.