

## Classical Guitar Notation Explanation

For those unfamiliar with classical notation and those seeking a clearer explanation for some of the notation I use in my scores, please read the following:

**Left Hand:** fingers are numbered, from the index to the little finger, as 1 through 4

**Right Hand:** fingers are lettered, from the thumb to the ring finger, as *p, i, m, a*

**Circled Numbers:** larger numbers in circles indicate the string the note is played on. Horizontal lines extending from a circled number show that notes will continue to be played on that string until a new string is designated by a different circled number. Usually this notation is used in instances where playing the note in its most common position will not work as effectively as in the new location. Use common sense when interpreting the fingerings, but do try these alternate positions out and give them a chance. Often, these fingerings are the easiest possible or best preserve the melodic line.

**Bars:** bars are always done with the first finger and are notated with roman numerals; **I** being a bar across the 1<sup>st</sup> fret, **II** across the 2<sup>nd</sup>, **IV** across the 4<sup>th</sup> fret, and so on. If a roman numeral does not have a small subscript number after it, then assume it is a full bar, across all 6 strings. If there is a number after it, then that is indicating the number of strings, starting from the high E string, that are under the bar.

*Example:* **V3** indicates that your first finger bars across the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> string (high E, B, and G string.)

Horizontal lines that extend to the right of the bar are held until the line is ended.

Dotted lines indicate that the bar is briefly lifted, with either the highest or lowest note of the bar being held (see “hinge bar”)

*h* indicates a hinge bar, which means that the bar is not fully placed across the strings at that moment, with either the back side of your index finger on the 1<sup>st</sup> string (and the rest of the finger lifted off the strings) or the tip of the index finger on the lowest note of the bar while the rest of the finger is lifted off the other strings. Once the dotted line from the “h” indication becomes solid, fully depress the rest of the bar.

**Dashes:** dashes in front of a finger number indicate the use of a guide finger, where a specific left hand finger remains on the string while it slides up or down to the next note. Occasionally, this is also used to show that a barred position can be shifted up or down the fretboard.

**Harmonics:** diamond-shaped notes indicate harmonics. If a circled number is given with the harmonic, find that exact pitch on the indicated string. All harmonics are written at their actual pitches, so if there are no alternate strings shown (by circled numbers), assume the notes can be found in their usual positions. In this situation, notes that don't occur naturally on open strings must be played as artificial harmonics, which means that the note shown must be placed with the left hand while the right hand index finger taps the string, 12 frets up from the placed note, using either the *p* or the *a* finger to pluck the string.