



Workshop AKUSTIK GITARRE

Pierre Bensusan: ‚Veilleuse‘

Willkommen zu einem exklusiven Workshop des französischen Ausnahmegitarristen Pierre Bensusan, der als einer der größten Meister des DADGAD-Fingerstyle gilt.

Für die Leser der AKUSTIK GITARRE hat Pierre exklusiv einen Song seiner neuen CD ‚Vividly‘ notiert. Die Noten findet ihr in Ausgabe 6-2010 der AKUSTIK GITARRE. Nachfolgend stellen wir euch die Originalkommentare von Pierre zu diesem Stück zur Verfügung. In diesem Text erfährt man nicht nur die Hintergründe zu ‚Veilleuse‘, sondern bekommt auch tiefe Einblicke in Denkweise, Spieltechnik und künstlerisch-musikalisches Selbstverständnis Bensusans.

Viel Spaß & viel Erfolg beim Nachspielen wünscht das Team der AKUSTIK GITARRE!

VEILLEUSE (Night Light)

Music by Pierre Bensusan

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For this workshop, I am pleased to introduce a piece of my brand new album ‚Vividly‘. I play in DADGAD tuning throughout the album, as I do since 1978. We also call this tuning “D suspended 4th”, because there is no third (in a tonic of D) and the open G string (the 4th) stays unresolved. You will feel more than once bumped by the proximity of that open G with the open A (second treble string), and wonder how you can *educate* these two loud neighbours and have them respect each other and *behave*. I propose below some solutions to get there.

This composition is named after something that I grew up with. Every weekend, from Friday evening until Monday morning, my mother (89) was burning a little night light into a cup of oil. It was to create a link with our ancestors. I don't know why this music is reminiscent of this, but it really has been so, since the first time I imagined that melody, about 25 years ago when I was living in Paris. The first title of this song, was ‘Millions of Souls’, I think ‘Veilleuse’ is somewhat lighter.

Before talking in details about the first 20 measures of this piece, here are some general comments:

Digits stand for left hand fingerings - "1" stands for index finger, "2": middle, "3": ring, "4": little finger and "5": thumb

Small letters stand for right hand fingering - "p" for thumb, "i": index finger, "m": middle, "a": ring, "pt": little finger.



When considering the right hand, the thumb would generally pick the first three bass strings, the index on the G, middle finger on the A (2nd treble string) and ring finger on the D (1st treble string). But we will see that sometimes, we need to get out of this rule and adapt ourselves in function of the context. For instance when playing the third bass string, you could try for yourself to use the thumb or your index finger, and see - feel - what is the best in term of sound, execution and comfort. Also, when playing three consecutive bass strings, you could roll your thumb down, but you could equally use your thumb only for the 1st bass and then use your i and m for the 2nd and 3rd bass. This will definitely create a different sound rendition and augment your palette of tones.

Make sure to read carefully the notated rhythmic values as indicated in the score, because first, this IS how the music should be heard, but it will also tell you which technique to use in order to get there.

The playing must be *legato*, it means that all the content is linked in sustain, and notes fall into each other, according to the notated values written in the score. We do not want to hear holes in the voices, unless they are notated, in which case it's no longer a hole but simply phrasing. Legato should not be misunderstood. When playing in any open tuning, we are at first attracted like a magnet to the kind of "whole resonant" world into which we want to dive in. Almost like gravity on earth. You need to control that in order to make your notes distinctive and your playing clear, precise and consequently use the best of both worlds: take advantage of the open tuning and let the open strings ring, thus creating a kind of empathic ambiance, AND become more intimate - closer - by reducing and sharpening the sound to its very core and nothing more. We could call this something like a *lot of information* opposed to *little information*.

When you see a little triangle in the tab it means that the resonance of the string on which the triangle lays must be stopped by using the indicated finger. You will also see a triangle with a little arrow indicating a rest stroke move, descendant or ascendant, depending on the direction of the arrow, also by using the indicated finger. The rest stroke will have the same effect, it will stop the resonance of the string on which the finger comes and rests.

When considering the job of the right hand, it is crucial to understand that we must dedicate the same kind of attention to initiate sounds and pick strings, as to stop sounds from over ringing, thus considering our fingerings carefully, and accepting that fingers, within the same context, can do different things, such as picking and stopping. This is how we organise the hierarchy - or architecture - of the sounds, thus leading to clear and identified musical intention, opposed to sound pollution, distraction and unclear intention resulting into wrong musical rendition.

So careful legato from measure 1 on. At the end of measure 2, you can either choose to let the A bass resonate when you play the D bass, or use a rest stroke with your thumb going down, and stop that second bass string when you'll play the D. In m. 4, see the triangle indicating that we should stop, with our ring finger, that second treble string to resonate, while we play the B & G with our thumb and r finger. Make sure to use your i, m & a for the four harmonics and to pick them right, by augmenting the hook position of your fingers, especially for the last harm. In m. 5, have the last A to very slightly slide (glissando) down to the triad opening m. 6. In that measure, make sure to keep pressing on the last chord while playing that indirect harmonic using i + a fingers on your right hand. This closes the first section.



The “real” melody of that song starts in this second section. Your task is to make sure we can *hear* this melody despite its environment: chords, intervals, transition notes, bass notes, etc. and become your own sound mixer. This is when the use of your right hand becomes crucial. Let this melody speak to you through your unveiling of the music. For instance, in m. 7, the three first Gs **are** the melody and every other note constitutes the environment and therefore should be mixed down. Otherwise, all will be flat and means nothing. In m. 9, we want to *kill* that open A (2nd treble string) right after we play the open G (see triangle) to avoid having that constant dissonance (interval of 2nd) of these 2 open strings, the *curse* of that tuning.

In m. 10, make sure to use a rest stroke to play that - slightly accentuated – C note with your m. finger, that will come and rest on that open G that has been played two notes before. This will prevent it from over ringing, and render the desired effect, make that note stand out by the very nature of that different sound. The rest stroke makes notes sound wider, warmer and at time louder (if needed), because you use more flesh and less nail. Watch out to not over do it and buzz. This is a way to accentuate and draw the melodic line to the ears. In fact, in all following measures, all the accentuated notes are the melody, this will help you to see it. They should be addressed with rest stroke whenever possible.

In m. 17, these two triangles indicate another stopping of resonance in order for these two chords to stand out clearly. In m. 19, the last harm is obtained by preparing the note with your right hand i. finger. That note is suspended above the location between the end of the fret board and the beginning of the sound hole. So use the <i> of your right hand on the note, and pick with your r. h. ring finger or even little finger. I would personally use the l. f. to pick when I play above the fret board to prevent any noise of nail against the wood, and the r. f. to pick when I play in open space, once the fret board is no longer in the way.

I hope you will enjoy these first 19 measures and that it will intent you to unveil and play the rest of that tune, which you will find on my website in the individual sheet music section. Simply remember, we, solo guitar players, are never alone, our best friend is the music (our guitar comes second), and we play for the ears and hearts of people who might not be musician or guitarists, but who resonate with the many strings of life, and it has to touch them just the same.

Pierre Bensusan - July 15th 2010