



PLAYING THE HARP GUITAR

BY JOHN DOAN

Basically, no method books exist to teach us how to play harp guitar. It appears that one is limited simply by one's own creativity. I came to the instrument after having played guitar, Baroque lute, and various zithers. I often play the bass strings with my right-hand thumb, while my melodies are played with my index, middle, and ring fingers on the high treble strings or the guitar section. At the same time my left hand plays chord accompaniments on the guitar section as well as single-line melodies. I often find it

useful to capo the guitar to create a new relationship among all the strings (*left photo*).

Sometimes I play melodies on the high strings with my right-hand thumb, while the fingers of the same hand play an accompaniment on higher strings. Then I'll reach over the top of the instrument with the left hand to play bass lines on the low strings (*center photo*). Often I'll use my left-hand middle finger to pluck the strings. To avoid the muddiness of too many basses ringing simultaneously, I can mute notes as necessary with my left-hand index finger (for notes below the middle-finger note) or ring finger (for notes above the middle-finger note). Sometimes when the right hand is busy with an idea, the left hand crosses over to play higher strings (*right photo*).

These are just some of the possibilities I have worked out. I am sure when you get your hands on a harp guitar you will think of a lot more. One last thought: Don't worry if you haven't learned how to tune a harp guitar. You'll be getting plenty of practice!