



# North American Guqin Association

## Keys to success in *guqin* learning

By Wang Fei

Whether or not you understand Chinese, you can be a good *guqin* player if you:

1. Respect Chinese culture and the *guqin* tradition.
2. Learning comes from interest. If you like the *guqin*, you can learn to play it; if you love the *guqin*, you can learn to play it well; if you are passionate about the *guqin*, you can master it.
3. Get hands on experience as early as possible; practice playing rather than talking about it.
4. Buy the best quality *guqin* you can afford; it will enhance your interest, whereas a poor one can discourage you.
5. The *guqin* tradition has been passed from generation to generation by master musicians through word of mouth and the use of *guqin* tablature. If there are keys to success, learning from masters is one shortcut. If possible, study the *guqin* in the traditional way and learn correct technique from an acknowledged *guqin* master in person, even if only for a short period, rather than finding an unqualified player who will often give poor instruction, resulting in bad playing habits that will be hard to correct later on.
6. If you cannot learn from a master in person, teach yourself by following a master's direction from a video or book, either in Chinese or translated into your language, rather than by finding material written in your language by someone who is not properly trained. A picture or a video is worth a thousand words.
7. Improvement comes through challenge, mastery comes with persistence. Pay attention to the quality of your playing, not to the number of pieces you learn. Build a good foundation first, then learn traditional pieces grade by grade, piece by piece. Finish learning each piece, then perfect it.
8. Set high standards for yourself. Listen frequently to masters' recordings and *guqin* masterpieces. Attend at least one live performance by a master; you will gain more insight than from anything you can find online.
9. Learn to play in the same way as a master before innovating or forming your own style.
10. Learn a wide range of pieces and play for many years before attempting *dapu* or composition.