

How to play **Girl from Ipanema**

Easy Fingerstyle Guitar arrangement by Damon Winter

[The following is a transcript of my original tutorial video]

Hi, I'm wedding guitarist Damon Winter. Today we look at my arrangement for solo guitar of Girl from Ipanema by Brazilian composer Antônio Carlos Jobim. Written in 1962, the lilting sunny melody of Girl from Ipanema has lost none of its luminosity over the years. It is a good choice for your set list, not just because so many people like it, but also because so very few people dislike it. It is a standard and very safe choice for solo guitar gigs. You can see my performance of Girl from Ipanema and download the TAB, notation and Sibelius file at www.EasyFingerstyleGuitar.com.

PART A

The key signature contains no sharps or flats; we are in the key of C major. The time signature is 4 - 4, or, four beats per bar where each beat equals a crotchet. The tempo indication is *moderato*, meaning to play at a moderate pace. Aim for a final performance tempo of about 120 beats per minute. Part A is a 'vamp' which is a simple introductory phrase or chord progression that can be repeated indefinitely until a soloist enters; hence the instruction on some scores to 'vamp till ready.' In this case we repeat the chords C minor seven and D minor seven three times, followed by one bar of G suspended fourth and one bar of G major. Notice from the outset that the right hand thumb plays syncopated bass notes. This is a defining characteristic of bossa nova. Chords played by the fingers either fill the spaces between the bass notes with a pattern of their own, or, play *with* the bass notes, creating a rich harmonic and rhythmic texture.

PART B

Part B contains the verse and chorus of Girl from Ipanema. The melody proper begins in bar five. Tied notes crossing bar lines and within bars contribute to the gentle sway of the piece. Both feature in the first two bars of part B and throughout. The rhythm of the bass line in the vamp continues unchanged in the verse. The repeated bass line motif is a dotted crotchet followed by a quaver. Tap and clap like this: **one** and two **and**. Although bossa nova is sometimes called 'Brazilian jazz,' avoid the temptation to swing the rhythm in a traditional jazz way. It doesn't work.

PART C

Part C contains a solo composed by me and placed above the bass line of the verse. After playing the first eight bars try changing tone color on the repeat. The standard classical guitar move would be to play *tasto* the first time and *ponticello* on the repeat. Tasto is the warm and rounded tone achieved by playing with the right hand close to the fingerboard. Ponticello is the bright metallic sound we get by playing close to the saddle. The *tasto / ponticello* strategy is used by guitarists all the time because it adds a sense of freshness to repeated passages.

PART D

Part D is a coda returning us to the main theme of the verse before a variation beginning in bar 51 leads us gently, but with a sense of absolute inevitability, to the final held chord of C major 7 in bar 57. Notice the shift to the fourth position in bar 51. During a shift the temporary loss of contact with the strings and the need to move quickly from one fret to another creates uncertainty. Observe that the entire mass of the left arm must move during a shift. The golden rule for efficiency is that *the elbow leads the hand*. Also, ideally, the fingers should keep their general alignment and curvature during movement. Avoid any outward rotation of the palm or straightening of the fingers.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A standard now, *Girl from Ipanema* was groundbreaking in 1962. It was the apotheosis of a new style of samba pioneered by Antônio Carlos Jobim. If you only play one Latin American tune it has to be *Girl from Ipanema*. It is reportedly one of the world's most recorded songs and brings sunshine to any set list. Have fun with my arrangement of *Girl from Ipanema*. You can download the TAB, notation and Sibelius file and watch my performance at www.EasyFingerstyleGuitar.com. Feel free to like, leave comments and subscribe for more videos like this. Until next time, I'm wedding guitarist Damon Winter. Thank you for watching.