

Jan. 4, 2003

The Candidate With Pluck

■ Should Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) manage to win the White House, he'll join a very exclusive club of musically minded presidents. The club's recent members include Harry Truman and Richard Nixon, who enjoyed tickling the ivories, and Bill Clinton, who famously blew his saxophone to jazz up his image during the 1992 campaign.

Kerry's instrument is the guitar. And he's so serious about his musicianship—much more so, apparently, than those other guys—that he takes lessons whenever possible from Washington area classical guitarist Michael Bard.

"John is extremely diligent," said the 34-year-old Bard, who has been Kerry's unofficial director of guitar issues for the past three years. "Whenever I give him a new piece to study, he always has it memorized for the next lesson. His tone is impeccable, as smooth as silk. He's very analytical about his guitar playing."

Bard, who generally teaches at the elegant Georgetown manse Kerry shares with wife Teresa Heinz (for an hour nearly every week, before Kerry's presidential ambitions wreaked havoc on the schedule), told us his student keeps the fingernails on his right hand a quarter-inch longer than those on the left. "I've helped him shape and polish and sand the nails," Bard said. "He was having some trouble with tone and articulation before that."

Kerry's repertoire includes such standards as "Spanish Romance," "Malaguena" and "The Girl



COURTESY OF MICHAEL BARD

Attached to strings: Sen. John Kerry with his guitar instructor, Michael Bard.

From Ipanema." Sometimes during the lessons—for which Bard charges \$60 a pop—Kerry's wife can be heard humming along in another room. Kerry then calls out: "Teresa, honey, please. We're trying to concentrate!"

Kerry told us through a spokesman: "My buddies and I formed the Electras in high school and even put out a record. I still have one that I'll keep out of sight. Forty years later I decided it was time to . . . get serious about my guitar playing. Enter Michael Bard. Michael has been a patient teacher, but more importantly Teresa has been a very generous and encouraging listener. She can tell you it hasn't always been easy for her!"