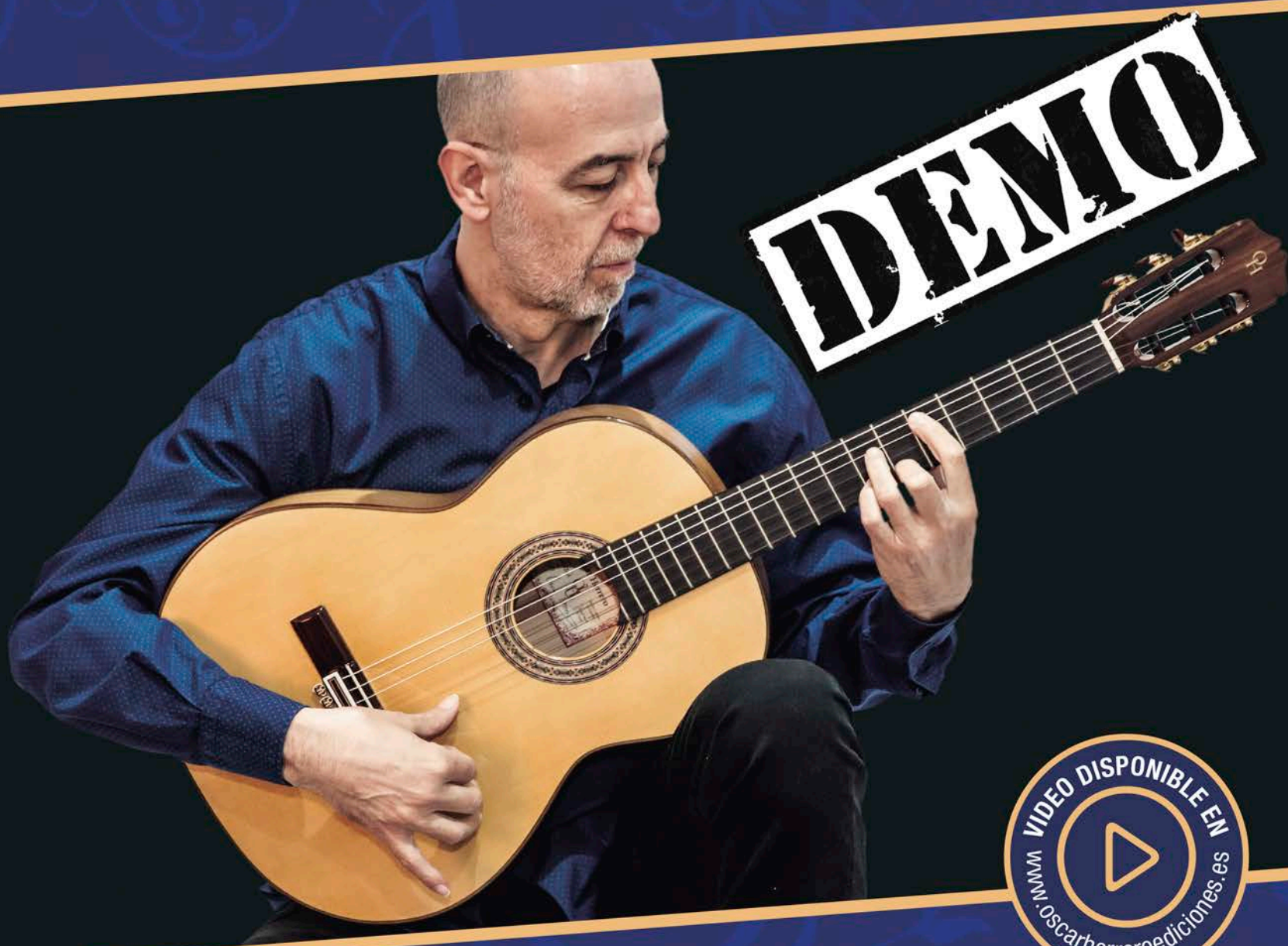


Aprende guitarra flamenca con
Learn flamenco guitar with

Oscar Herrero



DEMO



EL ALZAPÚA

Learn flamenco guitar

with

OSCAR HERRERO

THE ALZAPÚA

© **Oscar Luis Herrero Salinas (Oscar Herrero), 2019**

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PRESENTATION

In the 90s I began publishing my first didactic flamenco works.

At first I published with a French publisher; in collaboration with my friend and colleague Claude Worms, we published a series of books with accompanying CDs. After that, with a Spanish producer, I did a series of nine videos which included various techniques, falsetas, compás, and cante accompaniment instruction. Since then I've traveled the world, even more so since the age of the Internet. In 2003 I founded my own publishing house, Oscar Herrero Ediciones, where I continue to publish my didactic works and concert pieces. Today, more than twenty years after those first published works, I'm coming out with this new didactic work, now with all those extra years of experience under my belt. Years in which I've continued to teach hundreds of students. It's so interesting that, by teaching, one continues to learn from one's students. But how else would I have learned to teach if not from my students?

All I've tried to teach my students, the same material they have helped me continue to improve and perfect, I want to capture in a series of exercises for guitar, published in both written and video formats. This entire repertoire of exercises with accompanying videos will begin first with a series dedicated to my own flamenco guitar technique, which is quite unique. I've divided this series up into basic techniques, in six volumes:

The pulgar

The alzapúa

The rasgueado

The trémolo

The picado

The arpeggio

All of these techniques have their own way of being played in flamenco guitar music, and this assures that this instrument acquires its own personality and sound, which is very different from other styles of guitar. They're principally techniques that affect the right hand. With respect to the left hand, there isn't a noticeable difference between flamenco guitar and other styles of guitar. However, throughout these six videos I'll be making a series of comments and providing some exercises and advice to aid in developing a good left hand technique as well, because that aspect is often overlooked by flamenco guitarists, being that they're so often obsessed with the right hand.

But this sound that is so characteristic of the flamenco guitarist, apart from the techniques that we use and how we use them, is also due to the instrument itself, the flamenco guitar. Ever since the guitar has been used as a flamenco instrument to accompany the singing, there have also been other factors at play—hand clapping (*las palmas*) and dance (*el baile*).

This means that the flamenco guitarist needed a distinct sound in order to mesh with these other flamenco sounds; the raspy voice, the heels hitting the ground, the percussive *palmas*. This meant that it was going to be difficult for a guitar, which isn't that loud, to compete with everything else. It was necessary to have a sound that complemented the others, a sound that was bright, that had both a quick and short sound, and didn't ring out for too long, since all those *rasgueados* don't make it necessary for the harmonics to linger, so as to not form a wall of sound. All of these

characteristics were incorporated by the guitarist Antonio de Torres, from Almería, who is considered the inventor of the modern guitar, both flamenco and classical.

So it's fundamental, in order to play flamenco, to have an instrument prepared for the job, that is able to faithfully and clearly reproduce the right hand flamenco guitar techniques that we use, which separate both technically and sonically the flamenco guitarist from other genres. At the same time, it's necessary to have a guitar that feels comfortable for the left hand, which often plays much more intricately now than in the past, when a flamenco guitarist didn't used to play beyond the fourth fret.

For this didactic series, I want to present to you my new Oscar Herrero flamenco guitar, with which I've recorded the videos you will see. The Oscar Herrero guitar, available in six different models, is an instrument made by hand by renowned master luthiers who have implemented my suggestions in the design, which I have given from experience and personal preference. Each one of these guitars is named after one of my own musical compositions.

In this video I present to you the **ALGARABÍA** model. Algarabía is the name of the Bulería that is playing in the background of this video, and appears on my album **HECHIZO**. This professional level guitar is ideal for accompanying *cante* and *baile*, or for the soloist guitarist who wants a flamenco sound. It has a spruce top and cypress sides and back, and a 650mm scale. It's responsiveness and percussive sound faithfully reproduces the flamenco style. The fundamental flamenco guitar techniques, such as the pulgar, alzapúa, rasgueados and picado, all sound clear and crisp, with a professional sound quality that will surprise you.

For more information, you can visit my website: www.oscarherreroediciones.es

¿TO WHOM ARE THESE BOOKS AND VIDEOS DIRECTED?

This series of books, along with their complementary videos, is directed toward flamenco guitarists or guitarists of other disciplines who want to learn or perfect the basic techniques that characterize flamenco guitar. It's also directed toward those who, though they may already know the techniques, haven't learned them in a systematic way.

This work is made to train the guitarist in various techniques. We're not going to learn any song forms (*palos*) or *falsetas*, but rather we will learn and perfect the necessary techniques in order to play *palos* and *falsetas* correctly. Each of these books consists of several sections, and each section has two parts:

MECHANICAL EXERCISES

Consisting of a series of routine exercises designed to mechanize and automate movements so that our hands carry them out with ease.

STUDIES

These are short works in which we will apply what we learn in the exercises. More specifically, I've selected some studies from the three books I've published myself: 21, 24 and 12 Studies for Flamenco Guitar. Some are the original studies from these books and others have been adapted. I've also included a new study designed specifically for the technique we're working on.

And now, let's start paying.

THE ALZAPÚA

Before learning this technique, it's necessary to have good thumb technique. If that's not yet the case, you should work first on the volume dedicated to "The Thumb."

The *alzapúa* is a technique unique to flamenco guitar. It emulates the technique of instruments played with a pick, such as the mandolin, the lute, the bandurria, etc.

We could say that the *alzapúa* is an evolution of the *thumb-index* technique. When a guitarist is using this thumb-index technique and starts to use his index finger with chords and not only one string, it's a precursor to the *alzapúa* technique, which uses only the thumb.

The *alzapúa* consists of two movements, ascending and descending, over various strings, always accompanying a melody played with the thumb. The hand position is the same as that which we use for the thumb technique (*el pulgar*). Both the thumb's position and movement are the same in both techniques, the *alzapúa* and the *pulgar*. The thumb movement is controlled by the wrist.

Watch the video that accompanies this book, where I explain this technique in detail.

MECHANICAL EXERCISES

As the name of this section indicates, here I want to present a series of very “mechanical” exercises for each technique. In other words, basic exercises that permit the student to have a physical training routine, like circuit training, where little by little one’s fingers respond more and more to the difficult techniques, and gain dexterity.

We’ll always start with just the right hand, and later will sync it up with the left hand, always by making simple and repetitive movements.

Moreover, later on, these exercises will serve as a warming-up routine in our daily studies, even when we’ve reached an above average level.

At first it’s necessary to stay concentrated during the entire exercise so that it becomes completely automated. Attention must be paid to the rhythm, the sound and the movement of each finger, until the movements can be executed in a natural and unconscious way. When sensory and motor memory have habituated certain movements, the brain automates them; to go back and change a movement or a basic hand position is more difficult than learning it from zero. That’s why these first steps are fundamental and necessary to get right, because they’ll stay that way forever.

If you’re a guitarist who has spent a lot of time playing with other movements (which at one time you will have memorized and automated) but now you want to change them because you’ve realized that they don’t work and you trust in my experience (or at least you’re willing to give my advice a try, because it seems reasonable, or because what you’ve learned up to this point hasn’t worked well enough for you), it won’t be easy to change your technique, but if you’re patient and you work diligently, you’ll eventually get it. You have to erase what you’ve learned by repeating the new movements over and over, along with the new hand positions. If you are conscious of the movements and methodical in your learning, your fingers will respond. Don’t worry about going too fast. When you try to go faster than your brain permits, your fingers will begin to play in the way they did before you started trying to change your technique by learning these new movements. This happens a lot with guitarists who already play in a certain way, but want to change it. If they play without thinking, they go back to old habits, because the old way is still ingrained in their memory. To learn a new way of playing (including a new piece, a *false*, etc.) one must play consciously. One mustn’t play without paying attention. If that happens, the technique won’t become fully integrated, because the hand will automatically tend toward the positions one knew previously. One must be conscious of the way one’s hands and fingers move. I don’t know of any other way. It’s slow and cerebral work, and very repetitive, until at last the movements become automated and the old movements one had learned are erased. Then, everything will begin to be easier.

Technique should always serve expression. Technique is a vehicle to be able to express our emotions through an instrument. Technique isn’t the objective, it’s the path, the foundation. And because of that, there are sounds and musical expressions that are impossible to create without proper technique. So, first we have to prepare our fingers in a technical manner so that, once automated, we don’t have to worry about them, and they are completely at the service of our expression, our emotions, our art.

Having good technique is not synonymous with being a good guitarist. You can be an excellent guitarist with mediocre technique, or a terrible guitarist with marvelous technique. But, if we have good taste or musical talent (which can also be developed and improved, like everything),

technique will help us achieve certain melodies, sounds that we wouldn't be able to make without good technique. It will help us create beauty.

Good technique will help us give the most on a physical level.

- Technique isn't only velocity, strength or cleanness of sound. It's also sound quality, the ability to play loudly without making too much effort... Good technique also means that our *rasgueado*, *pulgar*, and *picado* sound very flamenco, clean, powerful...
- Good technique saves us hours and hours of study. For example, a passage on which we have spent days and still can't play quickly and cleanly, can be solved quickly by simply changing the fingering or some other incorrect movement.
- Good technique makes it possible to carry out our musical thoughts automatically, without slowing us down and becoming preoccupied by the movement or the physical aspect. In this way, whatever we want to play on the guitar, we will be able to play, without being limited by our physical abilities.
- In short, good technique will help us achieve things that would otherwise be impossible. We're all capable of creating, composing and demonstrating our individuality with our music, but for that we need the necessary tools that will help us channel through the instrument that which we hold inside.

Learning music is very similar to learning a language. One must have a good handle on the most simple aspects; the phonemes, the sounds, the grammar... they're like the technique, the harmony and the rhythms. No matter how clear we are on what we want to say, if we don't know how to construct a sentence, we won't be well understood. We won't be able to adequately express the beauty we hold inside of us until we learn the basic techniques. To speak a language well it's not sufficient just to learn words and memorize phrases. One must know how to use them, and understand grammar rules in order to create and understand new phrases. In the same way, to play guitar well it's not best to start right away learning melody lines and pieces. It's impossible to play a melody line well if you don't know the proper thumb technique, or *rasgueado* technique, or any other technique. It's impossible to play a *soleá* well if you don't understand its structure, its characteristics, its rhythm. The only thing you'll achieve is to automate movements you don't really understand and can't really control, and in that case your movements will mostly be incorrect. In short, you'll learn bad techniques that won't facilitate your development at all.

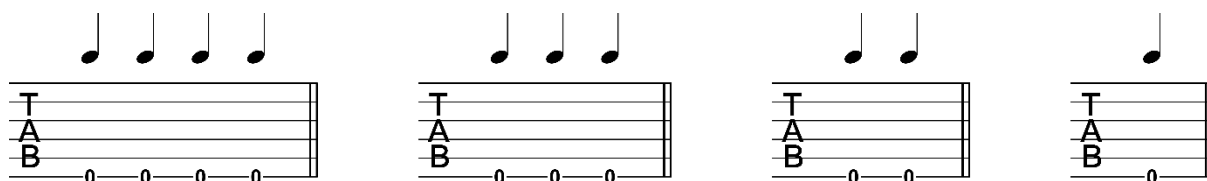
Like with anything in life, a solid foundation will ensure our ability to grow well. A building must have a strong foundation, or it will crumble before it has even been finished. Either that, or we'll knock it down ourselves out of frustration, because things aren't going well and we don't know why.

Music is a language through which we communicate with each other, express happiness, sadness, anger, passion... Traditionally flamenco music has been learned by ear and by repetition through imitation, like when a baby learns a language. However, once it's an adult and speaks a language fluently, using the same method to learn a new language doesn't work, because one already knows a number of automated sounds, words and structures in one's native language that don't work in another. So, one must learn new sounds, new rules. In short, one must be conscious of what one does. An adult doesn't learn with the same ease and intensity as a baby, but makes up for this in other ways; he understands what he learns, understands why things are used like they are. This speeds up and helps his learning.

Throughout the history of flamenco the same things have been repeated: *in order to sing or play or dance flamenco, you must be born with it, it can't be taught...* I agree that for anything in life one must possess certain basic qualities, but then those have to be developed, because how many potential guitarists, singers, dancers, painters, doctors, are there in the world? How many geniuses who aren't born in the necessary environment to develop their qualities? If Paco de Lucía's father hadn't been a flamenco aficionado and had emigrated to Australia or some other place where Paco didn't come into contact with flamenco, would Paco de Lucía have been a guitarist? It's possible that he was a genius, but maybe he would've developed his genius in a different genre of music, or in medicine, or painting...or some other art. Are there not thousands of hidden geniuses among those kids who grow up without studying, who don't have the resources or access to places that would help their development? I've always believed that one is born with certain qualities, then a vocation is awakened, and lastly one learns a craft from someone who can teach it. That's why life's path continues to twist and turn based on what one discovers and invests in along the way. Those who are born into and grow up in an environment immersed in flamenco acquire the gift of knowing all of the flamenco rhythms by heart, because they grow up listening to them and have many flamenco aficionados around them all the time. The environment we grow up in, our education, the interests that manifest themselves from a young age, that which we work and fight for and feel deeply about and want to pursue, is the most important. A good environment helps us once we decide to achieve something. And the rest, family, heritage, origin—they're just stereotypes that almost never helped flamenco grow in stature.

RIGHT HAND

The routine we'll go through when learning each right hand technique will be first to play only open strings, so that all attention can be focused on the right hand. Once the technique can be performed without thinking, we will then add in the left hand, first with very mechanical fingerings that don't distract much from what the right hand is doing, since now we must pay attention to both hands. In each exercise we'll use four rhythmical patterns—we'll play **four, three, two** and one beats per note:



And we'll do it in that order, because the more times we repeat a note, the more time we'll have in order to think about the next one. Hence, we will proceed in order of ascending difficulty.

LEFT HAND

Once we have control over our thumb, we'll begin incorporating the left hand, using all possible combinations of the four fingers. We'll use the following fingerings:

Block A (Finger 1)

A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
1 2 3 4	1 2 4 3	1 3 2 4	1 3 4 2	1 4 2 3	1 4 3 2

Block B (Finger 2)

B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
2 1 3 4	2 1 4 3	2 3 1 4	2 3 4 1	2 4 1 3	2 4 3 1

Block C (Finger 3)

C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
3 1 2 4	3 1 4 2	3 2 1 4	3 2 4 1	3 4 1 2	3 4 2 1

Block D (Finger 4)

D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
4 1 2 3	4 1 3 2	4 2 1 3	4 2 3 1	4 3 1 2	4 3 2 1

We'll also use the chromatic scale:

CHROMATIC SCALE

Ascending					Descending					Combined									
0	1	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	3	2	1	0	

SECTION 1

PRE-ALZAPÚA

Remember: it's important to watch the video that accompanies this book

EXERCISE 1

Before we dive into the *alzapúa* technique, first we'll work with a preparatory exercise that will help us learn this technique correctly.

We'll play **three** beats for each mechanism. The movements are:

ascending *descending* *ascending*
↑ ↓ ↑

First with open strings. We'll do this exercise on every string except the first, since below the first string there isn't anywhere for the thumb to come to rest. The exercise should be done several times on each string, until the wrist moves loosely. Then, as an example, you can do this exercise for two beats, then one, on each string:

E1

The musical notation for Exercise E1 consists of three systems of guitar staves. The first system is a six-string guitar with strings labeled T (Treble), A (Alto), and B (Bass) on the left. The strings are numbered 1 to 6 from top to bottom. The notation shows a sequence of open strings (0) across six measures. The first measure has a *p...* dynamic marking and three arrows indicating the thumb's movement: up, down, up. The second system shows the same exercise for the Treble (T), Alto (A), and Bass (B) strings, with the Bass string having a 0 in the final measure. The third system shows the exercise for the Treble (T), Alto (A), and Bass (B) strings, with the Bass string having a 0 in the final measure.

EXERCISE 2

For the next exercise, we'll work on jumping between strings. First, we'll jump from the sixth string to the second, and then from there return in the opposite direction. We'll play each string for two beats, and then the second time we'll only play one beat per string.

E2

EXERCISE 3

Now with the left hand, and as an example we'll use the fingering **A1: 1234**

E3a

I recommend using all of the other fingerings now as well, combining them, repeating them...for example, a very good mental exercise is to play the same string using all the different fingerings in **block A**:

E3b

Three guitar tablature systems for the 5th string. Each system has three lines (T, A, B) and a vertical bar line. The first system has fret numbers 1-1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4-4 on the left and 1-1-1-2-2-2-4-4-4-3-3-3 on the right. The second system has 1-1-1-3-3-3-2-2-2-4-4-4 on the left and 1-1-1-3-3-3-4-4-4-2-2-2 on the right. The third system has 1-1-1-4-4-4-2-2-2-3-3-3 on the left and 1-1-1-4-4-4-3-3-3-2-2-2 on the right. The first system also includes three arrows (up, down, up) and 'p...' below the first three frets.

Then we'll do the same thing on the next string (5th), **with block B:**

E3c

Three guitar tablature systems for the 4th string. Each system has three lines (T, A, B) and a vertical bar line. The first system has fret numbers 2-2-2-1-1-1-3-3-3-4-4-4 on the left and 2-2-2-1-1-1-4-4-4-3-3-3 on the right. The second system has 2-2-2-3-3-3-1-1-1-4-4-4 on the left and 2-2-2-3-3-3-4-4-4-1-1-1 on the right. The third system has 2-2-2-4-4-4-1-1-1-3-3-3 on the left and 2-2-2-4-4-4-3-3-3-1-1-1 on the right. The first system also includes three arrows (up, down, up) and 'p...' below the first three frets.

Like so, until we finish all four blocks, **block C** on the fourth string:

E3d

Three guitar tablature systems for the 3rd string. Each system has three lines (T, A, B) and a vertical bar line. The first system has fret numbers 3-3-3-1-1-1-2-2-2-4-4-4 on the left and 3-3-3-1-1-1-4-4-4-2-2-2 on the right. The second system has 3-3-3-2-2-2-1-1-1-4-4-4 on the left and 3-3-3-2-2-2-4-4-4-1-1-1 on the right. The third system has 3-3-3-4-4-4-1-1-1-2-2-2 on the left and 3-3-3-4-4-4-2-2-2-1-1-1 on the right. The first system also includes three arrows (up, down, up) and 'p...' below the first three frets.

and **block D** on the third string:

E3e

A musical staff with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The first line (T) contains the sequence of numbers: 4-4-4-1-1-1-2-2-2-3-3-3. The second line (A) contains the sequence: 4-4-4-1-1-1-3-3-3-2-2-2. The third line (B) is empty. A vertical dashed line separates the staff into two measures.

↑ ↓ ↑
p...

A musical staff with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The first line (T) contains the sequence of numbers: 4-4-4-2-2-2-1-1-1-3-3-3. The second line (A) contains the sequence: 4-4-4-2-2-2-3-3-3-1-1-1. The third line (B) is empty. A vertical dashed line separates the staff into two measures.

A musical staff with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The first line (T) contains the sequence of numbers: 4-4-4-3-3-3-1-1-1-2-2-2. The second line (A) contains the sequence: 4-4-4-3-3-3-2-2-2-1-1-1. The third line (B) is empty. A vertical dashed line separates the staff into two measures.

Here's an example of everything one can do, the many possibilities we have.

STUDY

Before continuing with more exercises, it's time to play a short study in which we apply everything learned so far. We'll do it with **Pre-Alzapúa Study n°1**.

It's composed in the style of **Tangos**, with a 4x4 *compás*, in the flamenco mode of A (La), known in flamenco slang as "*por medio*."

This technique is a tool, a vehicle used to express our emotions through an instrument. Now you can do it with this study, so go ahead.

ESTUDIO PRE-ALZAPÚA 1

(Pre-Alzapúa)

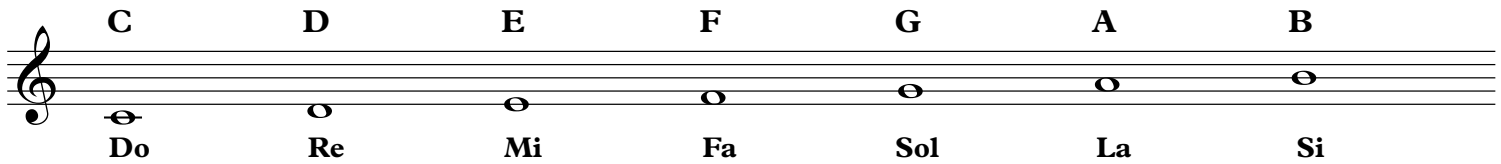
"Por Tangos"

Oscar Herrero

The musical notation consists of four systems of guitar tablature. Each system has three staves labeled T, A, and B. Above the staves, rhythmic patterns and triplets are indicated. The first system starts with a 4/4 time signature. The second system begins with a box containing the number 5. The third system begins with a box containing the number 9. The fourth system begins with a box containing the number 12. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final chord symbol.

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NOTATION SIGNS





(Right hand) p = thumb; i = index; m = middle; a = ring finger; e = little finger; T = all

(Left hand) 1 = first finger; 2 = second finger; 3 = third finger; 4 = fourth finger

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ The numbers indicate the string which must be struck

* "Golpe" is a tap on the sound board with the ring finger and middle finger

Pos 1, Pos 2, ... Position of the left hand on the fret board. Pos "B^b" =  Pos "F" = 

cI, cII, cIII, cIV, ... Barré on the fret indicated by the Roman numeral

cII₁₋₄ "Half barré on the fret 1 on the strings 1-2-3-4"

┌ End of barré, (cejilla) Pos, Ras, ... () Optional

Alzapúa...
Picado...
p...

When a word or letter appears followed by three dots (. . .) continue using until a change is indicated.

RASGUEADOS (RIGHT-HAND STRUM)

↑ "Rasgueado" from bass to treble using all fingers except the thumb

↑_p "Rasgueado" from bass to treble using the thumb

↓ "Rasgueado" from treble to bass using the thumb

{ "Rasgueado" from bass to treble using the thumb accompanied at the same time by "Golpe"

^ "Rasgueado" from bass to treble with the index finger

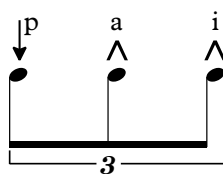
v "Rasgueado" from treble to bass with the index finger

(e, m, a)
^ "Rasgueado" from bass to treble with the finger indicated (e, m, a)

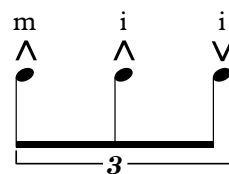
* ^ "Rasgueado" from bass to treble with the index finger accompanied at the same time by "Golpe"

* ^ "Golpe" on the 'upper' sound board (above the bass strings) followed by the index or middle finger

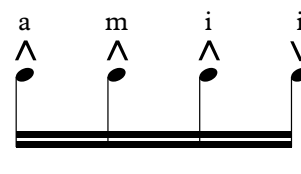
(p m p)



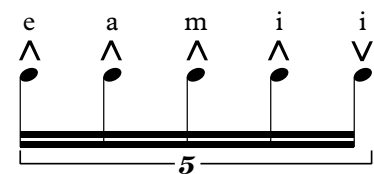
Ras A



Ras 3



Ras 4



Ras 5

¿A QUIÉN VAN DIRIGIDOS ESTOS LIBROS Y VÍDEOS?

Esta serie de libros, con sus vídeos complementarios, está dirigida a guitarristas flamencos o de otras disciplinas que quieran conocer o perfeccionar los elementos técnicos que caracterizan a la guitarra flamenca. También a los que, aun conociéndolos, no hayan adquirido una formación razonada de ellos.

Este trabajo está pensado para entrenar técnicamente al guitarrista, no vamos a aprender en él ningún palo ni ninguna falseta, sino a aprender o perfeccionar la técnica necesaria para poder interpretar esos palos o falsetas de una forma correcta. Cada uno de estos libros consta de varias secciones, y cada sección de dos partes:

EJERCICIOS MECÁNICOS

Consisten en una serie de ejercicios muy rutinarios con la idea de mecanizar y automatizar movimientos que queden fijados en la memoria de nuestras manos.

ESTUDIOS

Son pequeñas obras pensadas para aplicar en ellas todo lo trabajado con los ejercicios. Más concretamente, he elegido algunos estudios de mis tres libros publicados en mi editorial: 21, 24 y 12 Estudios para Guitarra Flamenca. Algunos son los estudios originales de estos libros y otros son estudios que he adaptado a partir de ellos. También he incorporado algún nuevo estudio ideado especialmente para la técnica que estamos trabajando.

TO WHOM ARE THESE BOOKS AND VIDEOS DIRECTED?

This series of books, along with their complementary videos, is directed toward flamenco guitarists or guitarists of other disciplines who want to learn or perfect the basic techniques that characterize flamenco guitar. It's also directed toward those who, though they may already know the techniques, haven't learned them in a systematic way.

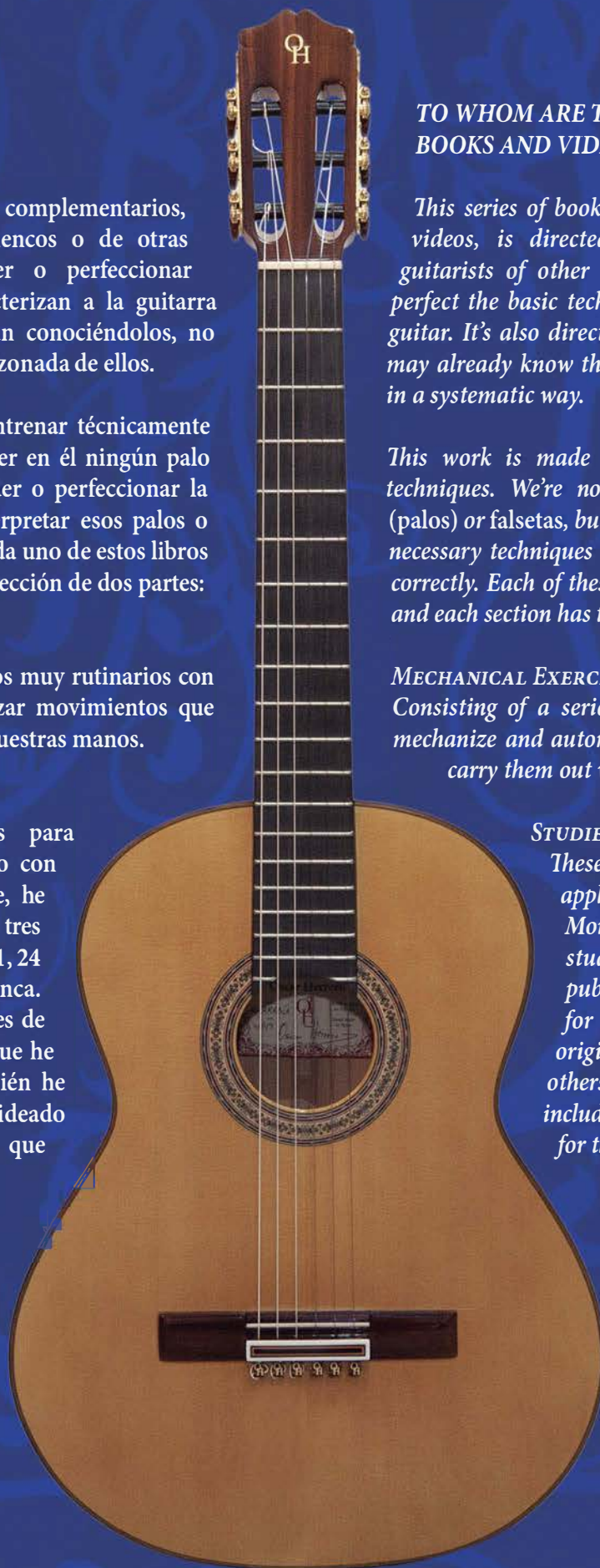
This work is made to train the guitarist in various techniques. We're not going to learn any song forms (palos) or falsetas, but rather we will learn and perfect the necessary techniques in order to play palos and falsetas correctly. Each of these books consists of several sections, and each section has two parts:

MECHANICAL EXERCISES

Consisting of a series of routine exercises designed to mechanize and automate movements so that our hands carry them out with ease.

STUDIES

These are short works in which we will apply what we learn in the exercises. More specifically, I've selected some studies from the three books I've published myself: 21, 24 and 12 Studies for Flamenco Guitar. Some are the original studies from these books and others have been adapted. I've also included a new study designed specifically for the technique we're working on.



GUITARRA OSCAR HERRERO MODELO "ALGARABÍA"