

## ANDRÉS SEGOVIA'S UNFINISHED GUITAR METHOD: Placing His “Scales” in Historical Context

By Andreas Stevens

### Introduction

For over sixty years, guitarists of my generation have been familiar with the so-called *Segovia Scales*—the systematic scale fingerings advocated by the Andalusian maestro.<sup>1</sup> They have been an influential—some might say a definitive—bestseller since their first USA publication in 1953. Countless guitar students have incorporated them into their daily practice routines. For the publisher, Columbia Music Co., they seem to be the goose that laid the golden egg. Are they everything that Segovia wanted them to be?

Two books of recent date on guitar technique attest to their enduring value and relevance. Thomas Offermann wrote in 2015: “The fingerings of the scales used here mostly correspond to those of Andrés Segovia.”<sup>2</sup> And Hubert Käppel explained their use and their origins (as he understood them in 2011) in even more detail: “The Segovia Model that originates from the tradition of Tárrega and Llobet (slightly varied) has proved to be very useful because of the order of the fingers within the frame of the hand on one string.”<sup>3</sup>

A revised edition of the 1953 publication came out in 1967.<sup>4</sup> It was republished in 2011 and has remained in print. The original preface by Segovia was partly removed and replaced by a “Historical Note” by Thea E. Smith, the granddaughter of the publisher, Sophocles Papas. She attested that they were “one of the best-selling guitar publications of all time.”<sup>5</sup>

To reinforce this point, here is a quote from her 1998 biography of Sophocles Papas: “In 1975 Columbia Music Company was selling about 10,000 copies of the scales a year.” So far so good. But what aspects of this scenario invite further research? What demands a closer look?

### Origins

Segovia himself described on several occasions how his fingerings came about. It seems that it was important for

him to communicate the circumstances to the interested community of guitarists. When one takes a closer look, it becomes clear that all the versions of this story are based on the bilingual first autobiography of Segovia published in 1947 in *Guitar Review*. His motivation for working on scales was inspired, he says, by an attractive piano student a few years his senior—Laura Monserrat. In 1909 Segovia had moved to Córdoba, where he came to appreciate how carefully she practiced her piano scales. He conjectured that such systematic exercises would translate well to the guitar. So he started to work out the fingerings.

Was the development of Segovia’s scales, then, his own invention? In large part it would seem so. In the apparent (to him) absence of any comparable technical scale studies for guitar at the time, at least in remote Andalusia, it could even be called a pioneering effort. Segovia would have been sixteen years old. This says much for his vision and his determination to become a leader in the revival of the classical guitar.

We also have to consider his motivation: Segovia wanted to raise his instrument to the same artistic level that the piano had enjoyed for a long time. A logical step was to study and advocate for the same kind of technical exercises that a serious pianist would practice. Segovia’s nearly word-for-word description of how he developed his scales was published in this chronological order:

- a) First publication in *Guitar Review* 1, no. 4 (1947), in English and Spanish.
- b) The text, read by Segovia, was recorded in August 1970 in *Decca: A Centenary Celebration*.
- c) In written form it appears again in *Segovia an autobiography of the years 1893-1920* (London: Macmillan, 1976).
- d) Transcription of Segovia’s recording in “La guitarra y yo” (2004).<sup>7</sup>

Another more freely worded description was written by Larry Snitzler in 1993.<sup>8</sup> Here Snitzler recalls what Segovia

<sup>1</sup> Andrés Segovia, *Diatonic Major and Minor Scales* (Washington DC: Columbia Music Co., 1953).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Offermann, *Moderne Gitarrentechnik: integrative Bewegungslehre für Gitarristen* (Mainz: Schott, 2015): 211. “Die Fingersätze der hier aufgeführten Skalen entsprechen meist denen von Andrés Segovia.”

<sup>3</sup> Hubert Käppel, *Die Technik der modernen Konzertgitarre: Detailliertes Kompendium zu den Grundlagen und Spieltechniken der Gitarre im 21. Jahrhundert mit umfassenden progressiv aufgebautem Übungsteil* (Brühl: AMA Verlag, 2011): 115. “Das aus der Tradition Tárregas und Llobets hervorgegangene Segovia-Modell (hier leicht abgewandelt) hat sich aufgrund der Anordnung der Finger der LH in den Handrahmen auf einer Saite bewährt.”

<sup>4</sup> Andrés Segovia, *Diatonic Major and Minor Scales, Revised Edition, With an English Translation of the Original Spanish Preface* (Washington, DC: Columbia Music Co., 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Andrés Segovia, *Diatonic Major and Minor Scales* (Washington DC: Columbia Music Co., 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Papas Smith, *Sophocles Papas: The Guitar, His Life* (Columbia Music Co., dist. by Theodore Presser Co., 1998): 30.

<sup>7</sup> Andrés Segovia, as quoted in *Colección Nombres Proprios de la Guitarra, no. 2, Andrés Segovia* (Córdoba: Ediciones de la Possada, 2004), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Snitzler, “Segovia: His Century,” *Guitar Review* 93 (1993): 30.

## ANDRÉS SEGOVIA: (cont.)

had told him in the early eighties about the origins of his scales. In this version the chronology becomes blurred: Córdoba turns out to be Granada and the sixteen-year-old boy is now only ten years old.

But let us now consider Segovia's own words, as found in the first version of his story:

I understood then that the methods for studying the guitar were of a Franciscan poverty compared to the number, variety and progressive order of the exercises contained in any book of piano technique, whether elementary or advanced. Far from discouraging me, however, this realization kindled in me a new interest in the problems of my own instrument. I carefully observed the efficacy of each study, how it made the fingers work, and what degree of independence, strength and agility it developed in them. When I got back to my room, I would try to apply my observations to the technique of the guitar, and it brought me an incredible joy to discover that the exercises I had worked out were also increasing the vigor, elasticity and rapidity of my fingers.<sup>9</sup>

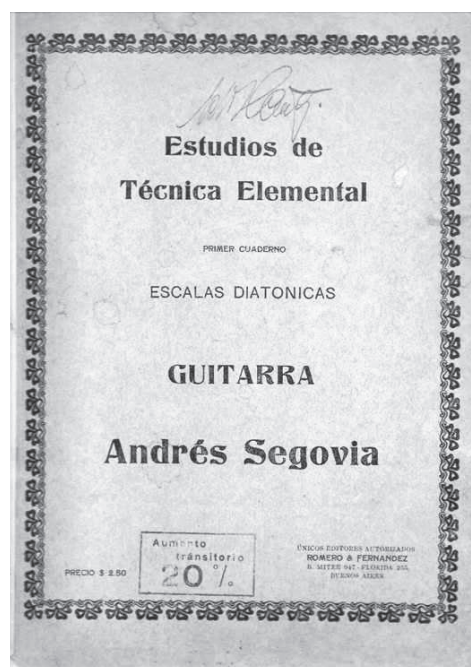
Quoting Segovia's own words, he "carefully observed the efficacy of each [piano] study," and analyzed the exercise's effect on the "independence, strength, and agility" of the fingers. In other words, he claims to have been nothing if not systematic in his approach to mastering guitar technique. And there is evidence to support his claim. The problem is that most guitarists have been unaware of the full extent of the published evidence. The story doesn't actually begin with the *Guitar Review* statement in 1947, but much earlier.

### Publication, Circulation, and Reception

With a better understanding of Segovia's motivation from an early age, it should be easier to appreciate the true publication history of the *Segovia Scales*. It may come as a surprise to discover that their earliest version was in Spanish:

*Estudios de Técnica Elemental – Primer Cuaderno, Escalas diatónicas* (Buenos Aires: Romero y Fernandez, no plate number or date, [pre-1928])

This first edition of the scales is an extremely rare bird. None of the Segovia experts whom this author queried had a copy or even knew of it. As chance would have it, the art collector and guitar aficionado Matthias Hans in Hamburg gifted me with a copy of it that had belonged to Adi Haug, a German guitarist, who had studied this book under the guidance of Segovia in the 1920s. The signatures of Haug and Segovia can be seen on different pages of this copy. (See **Figure 1**, and the uncropped reproduction on copublication website, [www.guitarfoundation.org/page/SbS03](http://www.guitarfoundation.org/page/SbS03).)



**Figure 1:** Title page of first edition of the "Segovia Scales" (Buenos Aires, ca. 1928) (continued on pages 15–18).



**Figure 2:** Advertisement of the availability of the "Segovia Scales" in a 1928 issue of *Gitarrefreund*.

The next-earliest edition evidently appeared in German-speaking lands: *Estudios de Técnica Elemental* (Schlesinger, 1928) [German imported version]. See **Figure 2** for a Viennese vendor's ad in *Der Gitarrefreund* (1928). Although preserving the Spanish text, it included an anonymous German translation of Segovia's preface on a separate insert.

<sup>9</sup> Andrés Segovia, "The Guitar and Myself," *Guitar Review* 1, No. 4 (1947): 80.a.



# Estudios de Técnica Elemental

## ESCALAS DIATONICAS

### Primer Cuaderno

ANDRES SEGOVIA

*M. J. Camp*  
*Rochester, N. Y.*  
*Hamberg*

QUITARRA

Musical notation for the first scale exercise, labeled (1) through (5). It shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are: (1) G4, A4, B4, C5; (2) A4, B4, C5, D5; (3) B4, C5, D5, E5; (4) G4, A4, B4, C5; (5) A4, B4, C5, D5.

Musical notation for the second scale exercise, labeled (1) through (5). It shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are: (1) G4, A4, B4, C5; (2) A4, B4, C5, D5; (3) B4, C5, D5, E5; (4) G4, A4, B4, C5; (5) A4, B4, C5, D5.

Musical notation for the third scale exercise, labeled (1) through (5). It shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are: (1) G4, A4, B4, C5; (2) A4, B4, C5, D5; (3) B4, C5, D5, E5; (4) G4, A4, B4, C5; (5) A4, B4, C5, D5.

Musical notation for the fourth scale exercise, labeled (1) through (5). It shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are: (1) G4, A4, B4, C5; (2) A4, B4, C5, D5; (3) B4, C5, D5, E5; (4) G4, A4, B4, C5; (5) A4, B4, C5, D5.

Musical notation for the fifth scale exercise, labeled (1) through (5). It shows a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are: (1) G4, A4, B4, C5; (2) A4, B4, C5, D5; (3) B4, C5, D5, E5; (4) G4, A4, B4, C5; (5) A4, B4, C5, D5.

la categoría de doctor.

De los tres nombres citados, únicamente Tarrega — el admirable sensibilizador de la guitarra — pudo haber dejado escritas mejor que nadie, algunas páginas en que se hubieran sintetizado eficazmente la amplitud de su talento y la sabiduría de su experiencia. Desde el libro hubiera aconsejado con tanto provecho y discreción como aconsejó durante su vida, y explicita su voluntad de maestro en un testimonio inmutabile habría prestado un servicio fecundo al remedio porvenir de la guitarra y otro de igual importancia en nuestros días: la excomunicación de cuantos falsos continuadores, enseñan torpemente en su nombre.

Vemos pues que la técnica de nuestro bello instrumento no ha tenido aún su arquitectura definitiva y creemos que á nosotros corresponde fundarla. Nadie ha querido dejar huella de sus primeros pasos en la guitarra, como si temieran entregar al alumno el misterio de su aprendizaje ó como si jamás hubieran estudiado. A nosotros, en cambio nos complace extraordinariamente fiarlas para ayudar, con ejemplos de propios esfuerzos vencidos, al completo desenvolvimiento de las posibilidades artísticas del alumno.

Para conseguir una técnica firme en la guitarra no debe abandonarse el paciente ejercicio de las escalas. Trabajándolas dos horas al día, se irá corrigiendo la mala posición de las manos, graduando la fuerza de los dedos y preparando las articulaciones para posteriores estudios de velocidad. Gracias á la independencia y elasticidad que proporcionan á los dedos, puede adquirirse tempranamente una cualidad muy difícil de poseer mas tarde: la belleza física del sonido; y digo física porque la sonoridad y sus matices infinitos no son el resultado de tercios propositos de voluntad, sino de innatas excelencias del espíritu.

Para que los ejercicios que siguen sean provechosos, pulsense lenta y vigorosamente primero y mas suave y ligeramente despues. En una hora de escalas se condensan otras muchas de penosos ejercicios con frecuencia esteriles, y se logra resolver en menos tiempo mayor número de problemas técnicos.

ANDRES SEGOVIA

NOTA: Aparecerán sucesivamente otros cuadernos con estudios progresivos para ambas manos. El próximo constará de 20 fórmulas distintas de arpeggios sencillos y dobles.

Figure 1 (continued)

ANDRÉS SEGOVIA: (cont.)

The image displays two systems of guitar sheet music for Andrés Segovia. Each system consists of six staves of music. The first system is labeled with the number '4' at the beginning, and the second system is labeled with the number '5'. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and fingering numbers (1-5) written above the notes. The music is a single melodic line.



The image displays two systems of guitar music notation, labeled '5' and '6'. Each system consists of six staves of music. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns and extensive use of fingerings, indicated by numbers 1 through 5. Some fingerings are circled, and some notes are marked with circled numbers, possibly indicating specific techniques or accents. The notation is dense, with many beamed notes and slurs. The overall style is that of a technical guitar exercise or study.

Figure 1 (continued)

ANDRÉS SEGOVIA: (cont.)

The image displays a page of musical notation for guitar, consisting of six systems of staves. Each system contains a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The notation is highly technical, featuring complex melodic lines with many slurs and numerous fingering annotations (numbers 1-5) placed above or below the notes. The systems are arranged in two columns of three. On the right side of the page, there is a handwritten signature that reads "Segovia".

Figure 1 (continued)

To my great surprise this edition also was not available even in the largest guitar music collections. Only in the estate of Karl Scheit has one copy survived. Here we find a remark that in the Argentine publication was printed as a footnote:

The Spanish Maestro Andrés Segovia has just finished the first volume of technical studies for the guitar. The next volume will contain twenty different formulas of simple and double arpeggios. Further volumes of progressive exercises are planned.<sup>10</sup>

It is probable that this edition was quickly made available to German guitarists. In the September/October issue of *Gitarrefreund*, Fritz Buek, the editor and chairman of the *Gitaristische Vereinigung*, wrote an article, “Scale Studies of Andrés Segovia.”<sup>11</sup> Here Buek underscored the importance of scale studies for the ambitious guitarist. But in fact, systematic scale studies were not unknown to European guitar teachers at that time. Consider for instance Luigi Mozzani’s three-volume *Studies for the Guitar* (New York: F. A. Mills, 1896). Ever since 1905, Mozzani had become a leading figure in the guitar’s revival among German guitar players. Even earlier, in 1901, these *Studies* had been extensively reviewed by Heinrich Scherrer, and they were available in the association’s library.<sup>12</sup>

Scales as a pedagogical focus had also been previously dealt with by Heinrich Albert, who as a trained orchestral musician was well aware of their importance. As early as 1915, he had written an essay entitled “A Detailed Study of Scale Playing.”<sup>13</sup>

In the preface to the third volume of his *Moderner Lehrgang* . . . [*Modern Method of Artistic Guitar Playing*], Albert wrote in his introductory article (September 1916): “Many players take the view that scale playing on the guitar is not necessary, whereas it is in fact one of the ten commandments.”<sup>14</sup> And a little later he adds: “. . . scale exercises and mastering any instrument at all are inseparable, and this especially applies. Nothing forms the fingers of both hands better than scales.”<sup>15</sup> The fourth volume of his method contains not only single-line scales

but, in contrast to Segovia, also scales in thirds, chords, and two-voiced scales in countermovement.

Constant practice of scales in those days in Germany may well have been what separated ambitious guitarists from the many guitar amateurs. Fritz Buek wrote in his review of Albert’s 4th volume:

The basic element of any technique on every musical instrument is the scale; its study in most guitar methods is underrepresented. And this is completely wrong, because even if somebody knows the fingerboard quite well, he usually plays scales poorly, which is the downfall of most guitar players. H. Albert is the first among modern guitar players to have understood this shortcoming. He has eagerly remedied it in this part of his method. The way in which scales are dealt with is excellent and exhaustive.<sup>16</sup>

But also in other countries scale playing was described and promoted before Segovia’s publication. In 1921, Pascual Roch’s *Modern Method for Guitar* . . ., based on the method of Tárrega, was published in New York.<sup>17</sup> Roch himself, having been a student of Tárrega, had arranged scales not in the most common way following the circle of fifths, but in chromatic steps from C major to B major. He dealt with the minor scales the same way; but astonishingly, he treated scales in thirds and sixths in the traditional way (following the circle of fifths).

In his article of 1947 Segovia addressed the interested community with these words:

I would like to say to the guitarists who have the patience to read these lines that the fingering of diatonic scales and certain unpublished exercises, used by teachers and students at the present time, date from that period. Such was the firmness of my dedication to the guitar and the sureness with which it guided my studies, that I have not had to change or modify any of these exercises later, and after long years of practice and experience I am still satisfied with the results of those early labors.<sup>18</sup>

Amazingly, he does not even mention his Argentine edition of 1928. In another interview that he did two years later, under the pseudonym Vicente Espinel, he

<sup>10</sup> “Nota: Apareceran sucesivamente otros cuadernos con estudios progresivos para ambas manos. El proximo constara de 20 fórmulas de arpeggios sencillos y dobles.” Thanks go to Stefan Hackl who provided this information to me.

<sup>11</sup> Fritz Buek, “Tonleiterstudien von Andrés Segovia,” *Der Gitarrefreund* 9/10 (1928): 72–74.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas Stevens, “Luigi Mozzani in Germany,” in *Luigi Mozzani, vita e opere*, ed. Giovanni Intelisano (Bologna: Minerva Edizioni, 2008), 111–115.

<sup>13</sup> Heinrich Albert, “Über das Tonleiterstudium im besonderen” (sic), *Der Gitarrefreund*, 5/6 (1915): 19–21.

<sup>14</sup> Heinrich Albert, *Moderner Lehrgang des künstlerischen Gitarrespiels, III. Teil. Die Gitarre als Soloinstrument* (Berlin–München–Wien: Verlag Gitarrefreund, 1916), 5. “Viele Spieler sind der Meinung, das Tonleiterspiel sei bei der Gitarre nicht nötig, während es doch gerade eines der zehn Gebote ist.”

<sup>15</sup> “. . . daß das Skalenstudium vom Erlernen eines jeglichen Instrumentes unzertrennlich ist, und hauptsächlich trifft das bei der Gitarre zu, nichts bildet die Finger beider Hände mehr als gerade Tonleitern.”

<sup>16</sup> Fritz Buek, “Zum vierten Teil der Albert–Schule,” *Der Gitarrefreund* 4 (1919): 38. “Das Grundelement jeder Technik auf jedem Instrument ist die Tonleiter und ihrem Studium wird in den meisten Gitarreschulen nur ein ganz geringer Platz eingeräumt. Und sehr mit Unrecht! Denn wenn mancher schon sich einer gewissen Beherrschung des Griffbretts erfreut, so fehlt es in der Regel doch immer am Tonleiterspiel und hierin versagen gewöhnlich fast alle Gitarrespieler. H. Albert ist unter unseren modernen Gitarrespielern der erste, der diesen Mangel erkannt hat und bestrebt gewesen ist, in diesem Teil seiner Schule ihm abzuhelpfen. Die Art wie hier das Studium der Tonleiter behandelt worden ist, ist ganz vortrefflich und erschöpfend.”

<sup>17</sup> Pascual Roch, *A Modern Method for the Guitar, School of Tárrega* (New York: Schirmer, 1921).

<sup>18</sup> Andrés Segovia, “The Guitar and Myself,” *Guitar Review* 1, no. 4 (1947): 80.



## ANDRÉS SEGOVIA: (cont.)

recommends his own fingerings: “I would advise the student to play scales daily—those fingered by Segovia.”<sup>19</sup> Obviously the success of Segovia’s publication started during the years he resided in New York.

### Segovia’s Preface of 1953

The introductory text to Segovia’s first volume of his technical studies is quite remarkable. It reveals much about his views regarding guitar history and pedagogy. The comparison made by him between the piano and the guitar affirms how the guitar was lacking in adequate methods. He becomes more precise, bemoaning: “...the lack of a practical system of studies and exercises coordinated in such a way as to permit the faithful student to progress continuously from the first easy lessons to real mastery of the instrument.”<sup>20</sup>

Heinrich Albert, who also had access to the teaching methods of Carulli, Giuliani, Sor, Legnani, and Mertz, came to very similar conclusions with his analysis:

The technique of the guitar is so very different from the technique of other instruments concerning posture as well as the fingering and the touch, that there are absolutely no comparable elements to be found; the guitar stands at a distance from all other instruments and hampers its evolution and acceptance through its inadequate literature and because pedagogical and systematic teaching methods are extremely rare, compared to the wealth of material for the violin and piano.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to Segovia, who developed his guitar technique following the example of the piano, Albert saw no common ground with other instruments. But this did not prevent him from using piano and violin etudes in his method without saying so.

Let us not forget that there was a teaching method in Spain already in 1535 that claimed to offer a careful progression of studies: “The intention of this book is to explain the music of the vihuela de mano to a beginner who might never have played before, and to maintain with him the same order that a teacher would with a student.”<sup>22</sup>

At the time of his writing, it appears that Segovia was not yet familiar with the approach taken by Luis de Milan.

So he only refers to the contributions of Fernando Sor, Dionisio Aguado, and Francisco Tárrega, from whom he had fully expected a method that fulfilled the requirements. He probably had been searching in vain for suitable didactic literature. Not finding it, he had come to the conclusion that there was a genuine lack of scale studies for the guitar—even from the most important guitar composers. Fernando Sor, whose method of 1830 Segovia does not mention (probably because at that moment he was not yet familiar with it), nevertheless is praised by Segovia as a musician, because he left a substantial legacy of concert pieces. Later on, however, Segovia must have stumbled upon a number of Sor’s studies, which he (Segovia) later edited and published with great success in 1945.

Sor himself spoke in terms similar to what Segovia later would say about the need to develop a logical structure for teaching and learning guitar technique: “If I write a method it should contain only the rules that required me to fix my own playing through reflection and experience.”<sup>23</sup>

Segovia reproached Dionisio Aguado for having left his studies to posterity without putting them in good pedagogical order:

Aguado did continuously interest himself in the problems of teaching, and with worthy results. Indeed his didactic works are superior to his scant output as a composer. Although his “School of the Guitar” is a disorganized compilation of studies without progressive logic, it is useful for the student who is already far advanced and who does not require elementary lessons. The beginner who tries to learn from Aguado’s book will find himself floundering helplessly. The beautiful, useless lessons which comprise one part of the method please his ear without limbering his fingers, and the others will be far beyond his capabilities.<sup>24</sup>

Heinrich Albert reached a similar conclusion in the case of Aguado: “... whereas the Aguado method can only be partly regarded as such, because there are gaps in the logical progression of the left-hand- and playing-technique.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, he (Espinel/Segovia) recommended Aguado’s work in the absence of more adequate pieces, as the best available method in print:

<sup>19</sup> Vicente Espinel (Andrés Segovia), “The Academy,” *Guitar Review* 8 (1949): 47. Note: the real Vicente Espinel (1550–1624) was a Spanish writer and musician.

<sup>20</sup> Segovia, *Diatonic* (1953), Preface.

<sup>21</sup> Heinrich Albert, *Lehrgang für künstlerisches Gitarrespiel, IV. Teil: Das virtuose Gitarrespiel* (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Verlag Robert Lienau, 1952), 30. “Die Gitarrentechnik ist von der Technik anderer Instrumente so grundverschieden, sowohl was die Haltung als auch den Fingersatz und Anschlag betrifft, daß absolut keine Vergleichsmomente zu finden sind; sie steht abseits von allen Instrumenten und hindert ihre Entwicklung und volle Anerkennung durch ungenügende Literatur und weil pädagogisch-systematische Lehrwerke äußerst selten sind, an dem Reichtum der Geige oder des Klavieres gemessen.”

<sup>22</sup> Luis Milan, *El Maestro*, [imslp.org/wiki/Libro\\_de\\_M%C3%BAsica\\_de\\_Vihuela\\_de\\_mano\\_\(Mil%C3%A1n,\\_Luis\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Libro_de_M%C3%BAsica_de_Vihuela_de_mano_(Mil%C3%A1n,_Luis)), accessed 05. 07. 2017. “La intention deste presente libro es mostrar musica de vihuela de mano a un principate q nunca huiesse tanido: y tener aquella horden con el como tiene un maestro con un discipulo.”

<sup>23</sup> *Fernando Sor, Gitarre-Schule* (1830), ed. Wolfgang Dix (Heiligenhaus: private reprint, 1973). “Wenn ich eine Schule schreibe, so soll sie nur die Regeln enthalten, welche Nachdenken und Erfahrung mich zur Bildung meines Spiels festzusetzen nöthigten ...“

<sup>24</sup> Segovia, *Diatonic* (1953), Preface.

<sup>25</sup> Heinrich Albert, *Lehrgang für künstlerisches Gitarrespiel, IV. Teil Das virtuose Gitarrespiel*, (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Verlag Robert Lienau, 1952), 30. “während selbst die Aguado-Schule nur bedingt als solche angesprochen werden kann, wegen ihrer Lücken im logischen Aufbau der Greif- und Spieltechnik.”



“My advice is to get the Aguado method, but instead of following the fingering given, use the fingering which will appear in the *Guitar Review* from time to time.”

Segovia had high hopes that Francisco Tárrega would be the one to create the ideal teaching method for the newly rediscovered classical guitar. He called Tárrega the “...admirable *sensibilizador de la guitarra*,” which in the English translation sounds somewhat flat: “Tárrega who did so much to make the guitar the sensitive instrument it is today.”

Segovia had little respect, it seems, for Tárrega’s students. He called them “false followers who misguidedly teach the guitar in his name.”<sup>27</sup> This translation is somewhat milder than the literal translation of the Spanish word “torpemente,” which means “clumsy.” In moving words Segovia describes his hope and desire to find: “a few pages synthesizing his rich talent and the wisdom drawn from his [Tárrega’s] experience,” which could serve as a kind of artistic testament to guitarists: “The express statement of his intent as a teacher, unalterably preserved, would have rendered fruitful service to the guitar in the future in our own time by excommunicating all the false followers...”<sup>28</sup>

Having called for the creation of a well-grounded guitar method, and having found all previous efforts to be inadequate, Segovia here declares that *he himself* would take over the responsibility of creating it: “Since there is as yet no definitively established architecture of the study of our beloved instrument, we believe it is our duty to try to fill this lack.”<sup>29</sup> At the time of that writing he drafted his concept in a way that was intended to show how he had systematically overcome the problems he had encountered. The title of this series of publications was to be *Basic Technical Studies*. The volume that included the scales was intended to be the first of a series with progressive studies for both hands. The second volume was already announced: it was to contain 20 different simple and double arpeggios.

## A New Concept, a New Coauthor

In 1923 Segovia met Manuel Maria Ponce, the Mexican composer who from that moment on would dedicate much of his creative output to enlarging Segovia’s repertoire. Inspired by this happy and fertile cooperation, Segovia got the idea to integrate this esteemed composer into his pedagogic project. He says as much in a letter he wrote to him in May 1928:

My dear Manuel: here are some formulas for the studies. I have arranged (them) for right and left hands. As you do them so easily, do not be content with one from each type,

rather do two to choose the one that is closer to the proposed difficulty, or the two of them.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously Segovia’s idea of asking Ponce to take over the musical part of this project still was quite new. So he explained his concept in greater detail in the same letter: Every day I am more happy with the idea of these studies that will serve so that the guitar is worked like any other instrument. I will bring you a method of Sor and another of Aguado, so that, reviewing the text, you can note many other didactic formulas.

In the meantime, Segovia also proposed that Sor’s *Method* be consulted for inspiration. Here is how he introduced his ideas about a prospective publication to his composer friend:

If you think it is a good idea, two or three volumes will be published; Elementary Studies, Medium Difficulty, and Superior. Each one of these volumes will have studies for both hands and small pieces that do not go beyond the given difficulty. In those for the last grade, velocity and polyphonic studies. For the last ones you could compose little preludes followed by fugues, something that will have a formidable success. (*Segovia-Ponce*, 31.)

When he made this proposal to Ponce, Segovia might have had Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* in mind, with its famously paired preludes and fugues. In Segovia’s own words:

While you are doing these studies you should be sending them to me so that I see what difficulty they take, numbering them and writing the appropriate text. The text will not immediately precede each study, but instead everything will go at the beginning of the book, in the form of an explication and the studies will remain connected by the same number. I think that will be the best way to present it. I hate those methods where the exercises are always preceded by a series of verbal instructions. (*Segovia-Ponce*, 31.)

It is surprising that Segovia’s passionate enthusiasm for this project did not lead him to invest more in its realization. This pedagogical “Leitmotiv” of creating a definitive method for his beloved instrument haunted him for many years. Nine years later, in 1937, he made a second attempt:

What we can do is return to the idea of the method for guitar. This would be quite nice. Published in the United States, with the *enormous* increase in the study of the guitar

<sup>26</sup> Vicente Espinel (Andrés Segovia), “The Academy,” *Guitar Review* 8 (1949): 47.

<sup>27</sup> Segovia, *Diatonic* (1953), Preface.

<sup>28</sup> Segovia, *Diatonic* (1953), Preface.

<sup>29</sup> Segovia, *Diatonic* (1953), Preface.

<sup>30</sup> Andrés Segovia and Manuel M. Ponce, *The Segovia-Ponce Letters*, ed. Miguel Alcázar and trans. Peter Segal (Columbus: Editions Orpheus, 1989), 31.

that the whole world is taking, (it) would be a financial success of the first order. I am so certain of it, that I propose, to begin planning it during the first break. (*Segovia-Ponce*, 179.)

Once again Segovia expresses his unfulfilled longing and makes a new attempt to put it into effect:

You compose all the studies, from the simplest to the most complicated. I organize and finger them, and write the appropriate text for its exercise as well. The method can bear this title or something similar: “Methodical Study of the Guitar, collection of elementary and advanced exercises, composed by Manuel M. Ponce, organized, fingered and with a commentary by Andrés Segovia.” Half of the profit belongs to you. And I think we would both do good business... (*Segovia-Ponce*, 179.)

Segovia describes for Ponce in detail once again the existing classical guitar methods, providing this list of authors: “The best thing would be that you guide yourself by the exercises of Aguado, Carulli, Carcassi, Sor, and Giuliani. You understand the difficulty each of those studies proposes to conquer, and then you do one with the same idea.” (*Segovia-Ponce*, 180.)

Ponce had already written some preludes that were intended to be part of the method, but they proved to be too advanced for the given purpose. Segovia begs Ponce to simplify them: “Steal some time to write the studies for the method. They have to be much easier than the preludes you wrote in Paris. (Some of those if you have kept a copy, can be used).” (*Segovia-Ponce*, 180.)

But it seems that Ponce’s reply was not as positive as Segovia had hoped. So with a slightly bitter undertone he writes to the composer a year later, in 1938: “The idea of the Method is paralyzed because of you. You will tell me when you feel up to it so we can finish it. I assure you the economic success would be very important.” (*Segovia-Ponce*, 185.)

Even the repeated promise of enormous economic success was not enough to inspire Ponce to complete this work. The method was not mentioned again in their correspondence. With Ponce’s death in 1948, this project came to a halt.

## Segovia’s “Méthode sonore”

Segovia also tried another approach to realize his pedagogical goals—one that seemed more under his control. In 1939, while in Montevideo, he wrote to Sophocles Papas, who was very busy promoting the classical guitar in Washington DC:

I had also intended to record a collection of 20 études chosen from among the most useful and progressive of different composers. But the president of His Master’s Voice has doubts about the commercial value of such a recording because he does not know about the current surge of interest throughout the world in the study of the guitar.<sup>31</sup>

To counter such ignorance Segovia tried to persuade Papas to initiate a petition to convince the managers at his recording company:

Nevertheless something good has come of this; and that is to give me the idea of asking you to gather gradually a fair number of signatures on a petition addressed to Victor (Records), to the effect that I should record this kind of “Méthode sonore.” One could also present this proposal to the Victor agencies here in South America, in Europe, and in Japan.

In the end, a volume of the CD series, *The Segovia Collection*, was published in 1990 exclusively dedicated to 37 guitar studies by different composers. But this is a compilation of different recordings made between 1944 and 1972 in different studios and at different locations. It contains eight lessons by Aguado, fifteen studies from Sor, nine from Giuliani, five by Napoleon Coste, and one from Tárrega, with one authored by Segovia himself for good measure. There is no indication that an actual, deliberate *Méthode sonore* was ever realized, despite Segovia’s good intentions.

The American edition of Segovia’s scales, first published in 1953, did not include any information that might have hinted at a greater context. Meanwhile, the maestro had distanced himself from this initial project. Ponce’s death and Segovia’s numerous concerts, recordings, editions, and master classes had totally absorbed his energy. The revised edition of the *Scales* (1967) signaled in a way Segovia’s decision to retire from any grand design to restructure the fundamentals of classical guitar technique. It might have been an important part of Segovia’s legacy. It might have elevated the reputation and the level of classical guitar performance to that of other established concert instruments. Although he abandoned this project, Segovia never stopped regretting, as he put it in 1950, that his: “... beautiful instrument has so far been deprived of a well-structured pedagogy.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Elisabeth Papas Smith, *Sophocles Papas: The Guitar, His Life* (Columbia Music Co., dist. by Theodore Presser Co., 1998), 124.

<sup>32</sup> Stefano Picciano, “Andrés Segovia in Italia (1926–1950),” *Il fronimo* XLIV/173 (2016): 8. “Il mio bello strumento è stato privo, finora, di qualunque pedagogia razionale.”

## Some Alternative Realizations of Segovia's Didactic Vision

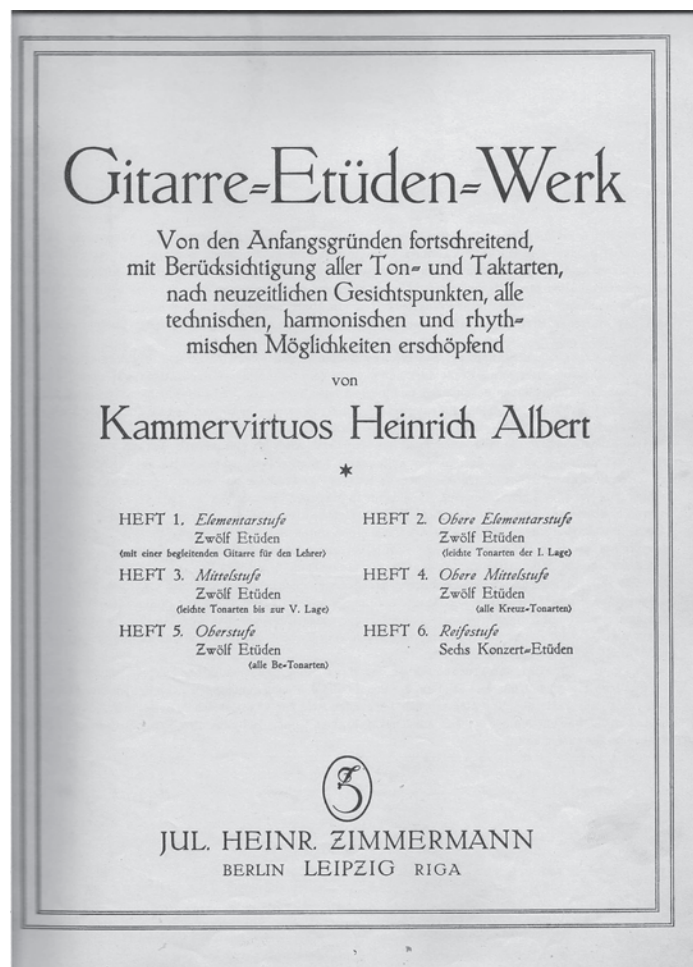


Figure 3: Heinrich Albert's comprehensive method of 1927–28.

The first complete compendium of guitar technique incorporating progressive studies appears to have been Heinrich Albert's *Gitarre=Etüden=Werk* (1927–28). See **Figure 3**. It presented a series of 66 studies in six volumes. The dense German title may seem puzzling, but Albert's objective becomes clear if we accept this simplified English translation: *Guitar=Studies=Opus. Progressing from the Rudiments, Including All Keys and Meters, Based on Modern Principles, Thoroughly Covering All Technical, Harmonic and Rhythmic Possibilities*.<sup>33</sup>

As we have noted, Segovia lamented that Aguado's musical and pedagogical legacy was inadequate, and that Tárrega's was virtually nonexistent. We meet both names again in an introductory essay that was written in 1933 by Manuel de Falla for Pujol's *Escuela Razonada de la Guitarra*.<sup>34</sup> Pujol, one of the so-called "false followers" of Tárrega, took several years to write his four-volume method based on the technique of the master he so admired. It was dedicated "to the memory of Francisco Tárrega with gratitude and admiration."

Although the idea for Pujol's project originated as early as 1923, decades separated the publication of the first volume in 1934 and the fourth volume in 1971. A fifth volume, containing Pujol's thoughts about interpretation, transcription, composition, pedagogy, aesthetics, and ethics, was never completed. So we have in the *Escuela Razonada* a comprehensive if unfinished guitar method on a scale that would have done Segovia proud.

More recently, Abel Carlevaro brought out another multivolume, systematic guitar method in parallel Spanish and English: *Serie Didáctica para Guitarra* (1966–1975). Observe that Vol. 1 is dedicated to the diatonic scales and Vol. 2 to the development of right-hand technique, mainly through a variety of arpeggios. One may reasonably speculate that Abel Carlevaro—one of the foremost students of Segovia—got the inspiration for this didactic work from none other than the maestro himself.<sup>35</sup>

For the sake of completeness it has to be mentioned that another volume of technical studies attributed to Segovia, dealing with slurs, trills, and octave exercises, first published in 1970, was revised by Larry Snitzler in 2014.<sup>36</sup> Besides that, there is a book of detailed photographs (by Vladimir Bobri) showing how Segovia held and played his guitar. *The Segovia Technique*<sup>37</sup> made its appearance in 1972. Another Segovia-inspired book, coauthored with George Mendoza and intended for juvenile guitarists, has the title *Segovia: My Book of the Guitar*.<sup>38</sup>

But with none of these publications did Segovia pursue or accomplish his initial objective: to publish a structured compendium of guitar technique for future generations of guitarists. Once (in 1949) when he was asked about the publication date of his planned method, Segovia simply answered: "I will publish it when I feel that I have acquired enough experience."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Albert, *Gitarre=Etüden=Werk Von den Anfangsgründen fortschreitend, mit Berücksichtigung aller Ton und Taktarten, nach neuzeitlichen Gesichtspunkten, alle technischen, harmonischen und rhythmischen Möglichkeiten erschöpfend, Heft 1–6*, (Berlin, Leipzig, Riga: Jul. Heinrich Zimmermann, 1927–1928).

<sup>34</sup> Emilio Pujol, *Escuela razonada de la guitarra, Libros I–IV* (Buenos Aires: Ricordi Americana, 1934–1971).

<sup>35</sup> Abel Carlevaro, *Serie Didáctica para Guitarra, Cuadernos 1–4* (Buenos Aires: Barry, 1966–1975). A digitized version of this entire method was freely available online at

the time of this writing (June 2017) at [www.academia.edu/6582961/Abel\\_Carlevaro\\_Serie\\_Didactica\\_para\\_guitarra\\_Tomo\\_1\\_al\\_4](http://www.academia.edu/6582961/Abel_Carlevaro_Serie_Didactica_para_guitarra_Tomo_1_al_4).

<sup>36</sup> Andrés Segovia, *Slur Exercises, Trills and Chromatic Octaves*, rev. and ed. Larry Snitzler (Washington DC: Columbia Music Co., 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

<sup>38</sup> *Segovia—My Book of the Guitar: Guidance for the Beginner* (Cleveland and New York: Collins, 1979).

<sup>39</sup> Espinel (Segovia), "The Academy," 47.