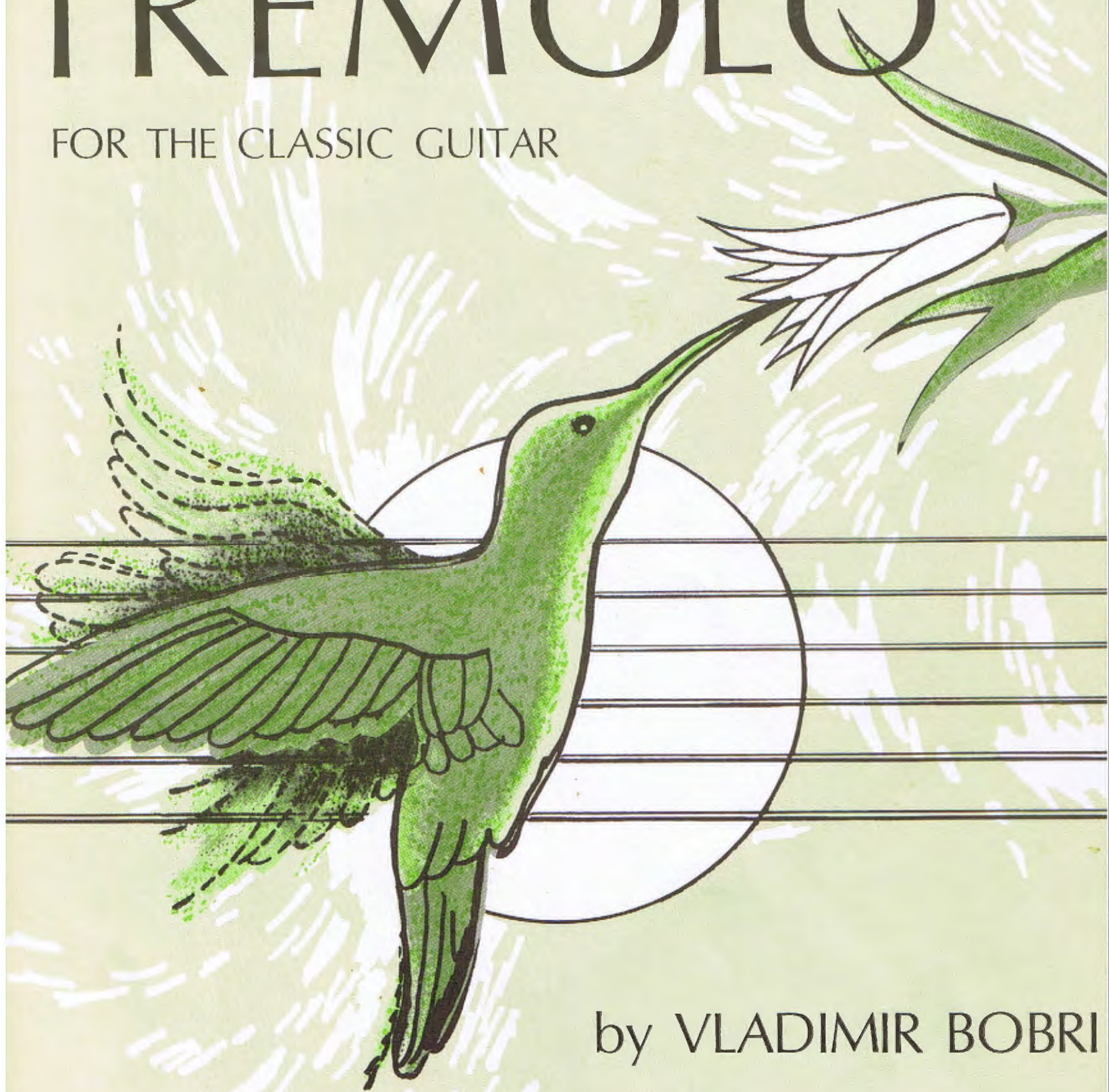


COMPLETE STUDY OF

TREMOLLO

FOR THE CLASSIC GUITAR



by VLADIMIR BOBRI

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Introductory Remarks

Compared with the bowed stringed instruments, the guitar has a relatively limited power to sustain its tone which decays rapidly, especially on the treble strings. To make it possible to play a continuously sustained melody line, which might be required by the nature of the composition, the tremolo technique has been developed. Yet, while it may have originated as an attempt to simulate a sustained melody, the tremolo has characteristics and charm peculiar to the guitar and should be regarded in this light.

The tremolo technique consists of the rapid repetition of the same note produced by alternating fingers of the right hand. It is difficult to execute and requires well controlled coordination of both hands, for which a prolonged and diligent study is necessary.

Although it is possible that, with determination and careful attention to details, the guitarist who must work completely without guidance may succeed (but with some danger of acquiring bad habits), the writer strongly feels that study of the guitar and its diverse techniques should be pursued under the guidance of a qualified teacher. Therefore, while an explanatory text is provided to illuminate the following studies, it is assumed that the student will have careful supervision.* It is also assumed that he will have mastered certain fundamental requirements: how to hold the guitar while maintaining good body posture and correct playing position of the right and left hands; the *apoyando* and *tirando* strokes; and the most favorable length and shaping of the fingernails of each hand, so important for the production of a strong clear tone and for the correct playing of all guitar techniques, but especially the tremolo.

Well executed, the tremolo is extremely effective. It has great popular appeal. Nearly all of the major composers for the guitar have written tremolo studies or introduced tremolo passages in their compositions. *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Francisco Tárrega is perhaps the best known example, and *Campañas del Alba* by Regino Sainz de la Maza is a favorite contemporary composition.

In order to play these pieces and others of lesser technical difficulty, the student is advised to proceed with these studies without undue haste, mastering every lesson well before attempting the next one. Rigid adherence to a set tempo, no matter how slow in the beginning, at which clarity and evenness can be maintained comfortably is much preferable to a reckless attempt at fast playing, without adequate preparation, inevitably resulting in an unclear, ragged, irregular, and faltering tremolo. Patience, in fact, is the secret of a refined tremolo, and the reward of achieving it is well worth the effort.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of playing different forms of *arpeggios*, as a preparation for playing the tremolo proper. This advice was given the writer years ago by Andrés Segovia. His comment that the tremolo should be regarded as an *arpeggio* on a single string has proved invaluable in providing a clear concept of this technique.

**Contact the Society of the Classic Guitar (non-profit organization founded in 1936), 409 East 50th Street, New York, New York 10022, for names and addresses of qualified teachers in the New York area and for the addresses of other Classic Guitar Societies which might help you with advice in your own locality.*

GUITAR NOTATIONS

STRINGS

- ① — 1st string e
② — 2nd string b
③ — 3rd string g
④ — 4th string d
⑤ — 5th string A
⑥ — 6th string E
-

- ② ————— to be played on the second string until termination of the line
⑤ ————— to be played on the fifth string until termination of the line
-

o — open string

har. 8ve — octave harmonic

har. 12 (7, 5, 4) — harmonic played on the fret indicated

RIGHT HAND

- p — thumb
i — index finger
m — middle finger
a — annular (ring) finger
s — small finger
-

↑
P arpeggiated chord (from bass to treble) played with the finger indicated by a small letter under the arrow

↓
i arpeggiated chord (from treble to bass) played with the finger indicated by a small letter above the arrow

↑
Rasgueado (Spanish), arpeggiated chord played by s, a, m, i fingers in rapid succession from bass to treble

LEFT HAND

- 1 — index finger
2 — middle finger
3 — annular (ring) finger
4 — little finger
-

1 — 1, 2 — 2, etc. use same finger by sliding without pressure

1----1, 2----2, etc. retain the position of the finger indicated

I — first position

II — second position

III — third position

IV, V, etc. — fourth, fifth position, etc.

The word *position* refers to the location of the left hand on the fingerboard, depending upon where the first finger is.

C bar all six strings with the index finger

CI, CII, CIII, etc.: bar all six strings at the position indicated

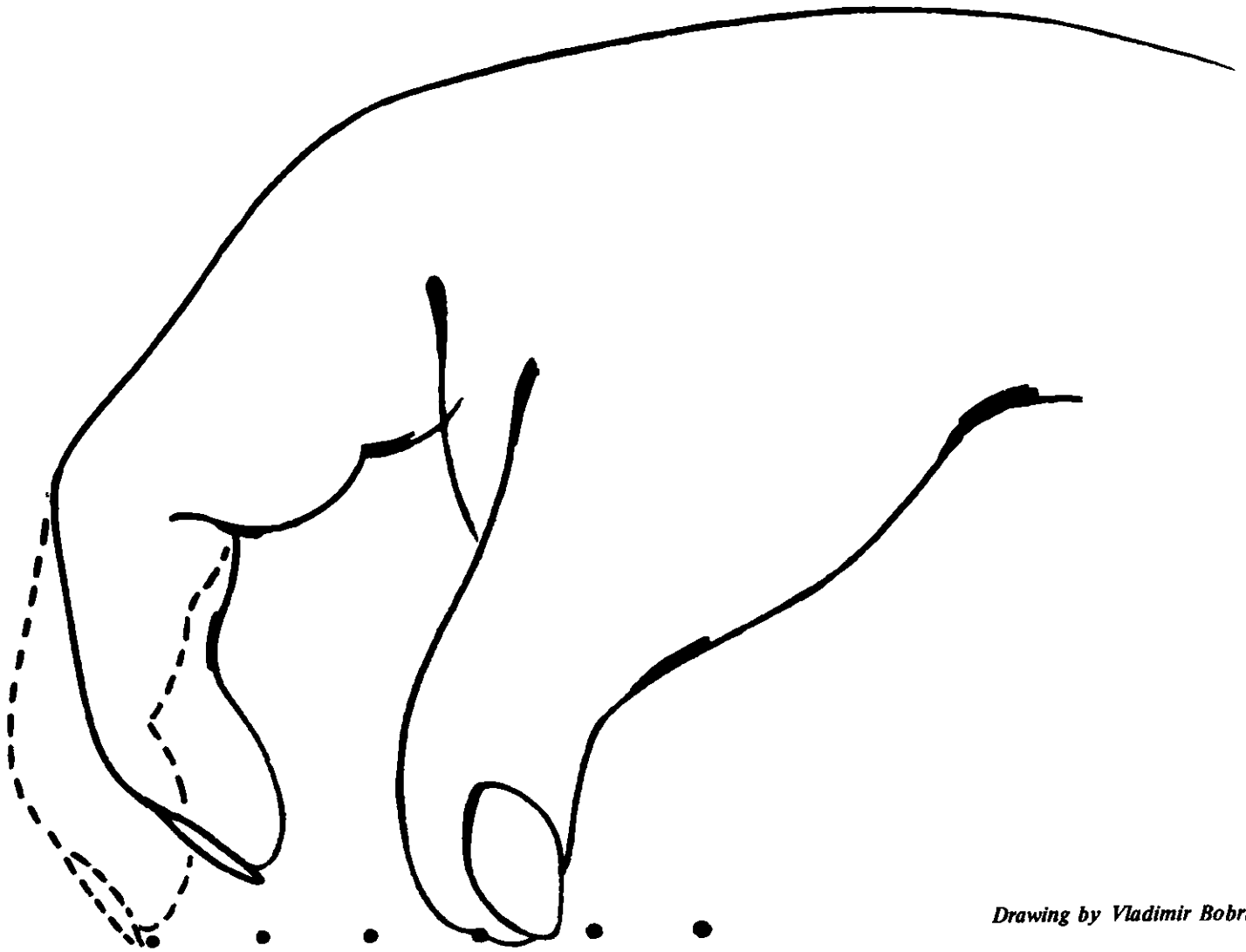
CIII ————— hold the barré until termination of the line

℄ bar the required strings, leaving free those needed open

℄I, ℄II, ℄III, etc.: bar the required strings at the position indicated

[1] bar the notes indicated by the bracket with the tip joint of the index or any other finger indicated

The Position of the Right Hand



Drawing by Vladimir Bobri

In order to strike the strings correctly, the right hand should be held with the wrist arched, allowing a distance of from three to four inches between the inner side of the wrist and the soundboard. The fingers should be held slightly curved. The fingertips describe a shallow arc toward the palm of the hand and clear the next string. The nails should be trimmed and shaped following the natural curve of the fingertips, and when the right hand is held with the palm toward the face and fingertips at eye level, the nails should be just long enough to be barely visible over the fingertips.

The action of the thumb is variable, depending on musical and technical requirements.

Lessons

To begin, hold the fingers *i*, *m*, and *a* very close to the first string. Support the hand by resting the thumb lightly on the third string.

As each finger plucks the first string, be sure that it moves clear of the second string. Play the exercise very slowly and in strict rhythm, paying full attention to the clarity of each note. When the exercise has become clearly articulated and rhythmically fluent at the slow tempo, try it at the next higher speed at which you can maintain clear articulation and rhythmical fluency. In this way, increase your speed gradually, taking care that the next faster tempo can be played without forcing. By following this procedure your technique will become more secure. When finally you achieve a high speed, the tremolo will be even and steady, giving the illusion of a sustained tone. Thus, while holding back, you actually progress more.

It would be valuable also to learn to control the dynamics of your tremolo. After you are able to play an exercise at an even tempo, try to play it alternately loud and soft, without disrupting the original tempo in any way.

It is very important that the right hand be completely relaxed. Any tension in the wrist should be avoided. The entire body, especially arms and shoulders, should be relaxed.

In order to train the right hand fingers to function rhythmically and to pluck the strings with equal force, it is advisable right from the beginning of these studies to learn to use various right hand finger patterns, making the change from one pattern to another with no interruption in tempo and no alteration in the quality of sound. Four different ways are given in this lesson, Formulae 1 and 2 using two fingers and Formulae 3 and 4 using three fingers:

Two fingers:

Formula 1 *m i m i*

Formula 2 *m a m a*

Three fingers:

Formula 3 *i m a m*

Formula 4 *a m i m*

Start with *m i m i*, the simplest. After you attain a fair degree of speed and evenness of tone, master the other three. Additional formulae will be introduced in later lessons. Meanwhile, no preference should be given in studying the formulae; practice them all equally.

1 In this as in all tremolo studies, use only the free unsupported *tirando* stroke in plucking the string.

Take care that the left hand fingers 1, 2, 3 remain on the fingerboard when you reach the G#. Rest the thumb on the B string, lightly supporting the hand.

Formula 1. m i m i } 2 fingers
 2. m a m a } 1

3. i m a m } 3 fingers
 4. a m i m }

2 This lesson is more difficult than the previous one, since it is played on the second string, with a danger of accidentally touching the first or third string. Great care should be taken to avoid this by restricting movement of fingers to a minimum. Rest the thumb on the G string lightly in order to support the hand. Start slowly, gradually increasing the tempo.

a m i m a m i m

Repeat, using formula i m a m

3 The only difference between this and the preceding lesson is that sixteenth notes are used, giving twice as many finger strokes to the beat. Rest the thumb lightly on the G string. It would be helpful to use a metronome; set it first at ♩ = 100, gradually increasing the speed.

i m a m

Repeat, using formula a m i m

4 One should be able to perform the tremolo on any given string of the guitar. The following lesson is a scale of C played in tremolo form. Do not support the right hand by resting the thumb on any string.

a m i m

Repeat, using formula i m a m

5 If you can play the thumb and tremolo with complete evenness on a single string, you will be able to also play it with complete evenness when the thumb plays a bass note and the tremolo is on another string. There will be times when you will want to achieve this type of smooth and unaccented effect. Notice the change in finger patterns half way through each of the three formulae. Learn to make these changes with no hesitation in rhythm and no alteration in dynamics.

1. p i m a
2. p m i a
3. p a m i

p i a m
p m a i
p a i m

Using the same left and right hand finger patterns, practice this exercise on all six strings.

6 Use a free unsupported *tirando* stroke for all fingers, including the thumb. Be sure that the right hand is completely relaxed.

* place fingers 1, 3, 2, at the same time

7 The following lesson introduces a combination of bass note, *arpeggio (broken chord)*, and tremolo and will help to develop evenness. Have the thumb and *i m a* fingers momentarily resting *lightly* on their respective strings ready to "roll" the broken chords terminating in the tremolo.

8 In this form of tremolo, the continuous alternation of fingers is interrupted at regular intervals by the action of the thumb playing the bass notes.

9 This lesson is more difficult to execute; it requires perfect articulation of the right hand fingers. The melody is now in the bass. Playing through the first time, use the *tirando* stroke for the thumb. On the repeat, use the *apoyando* (supported) stroke. This way you will learn control of the thumb and you will be able to use whichever stroke you desire.

10 A variation of the previous lesson.

11 A lesson with a suggestion of Flamenco. Play each section *forte* (loudly) the first time, then with contrasting *piano* (softly) when it is repeated.

The arrow pointing upwards in the second ending indicates that the chord is played by a brisk sweep of the thumb across all the strings, starting with the low E.

* Place fingers 3 and 4 at the same time.

12 Shift the diminished chord shape, ascending one semitone at a time until you reach the 12th fret. Then descend by semitones until you reach the starting point.

[On the guitar, the frets are one semitone apart. Therefore, when the term "ascending (or descending) by semitones" is used, it means moving up (or down) one fret at a time.]

13 An exercise similar to No. 12 but a little more difficult to execute, since the tremolo is now on the second string. Shift the chord shape, ascending by semitones to the 12th fret, then descending by semitones to the starting point.

14 One of the countless variations of the Flamenco form *Soleares* provides us with this study. Begin with a slow, steady tempo of $\text{♩} = 72$ and gradually increase speed daily.

15 Melodic Etude

V. B.

16 This exercise requires careful concentration on both hands. First, play it exactly as written. Then, using the same left hand sequence of Pattern 1 followed by Pattern 2, play with C II, C III, etc., through C VII. Then, starting with C VII, reverse the left hand pattern sequence ("2" now followed by "1"); similarly with C VI, C V, etc., through C I. The right hand fingering should be alternated from *p a m i* to *p i m a* every measure.

Left hand pattern 1 Left hand pattern 2

17. A study in sixths. Repeat many times.

18 This little dance presents a new problem, involving a tremolo figure alternating with a chord. The chord is played by the thumb sweeping rapidly across the strings from lower to higher-pitched strings. This should be played very rhythmically, but not too fast.

6th string to D

19 In pieces with a long drawn melodic line, the following form of tremolo could be used to achieve a sustained tone. It is excellent in developing the agility of the fingers. As usual, start by playing slowly. Increase the speed only after you attain a fair degree of proficiency at the slower tempo. After playing it as written, study it with two additional formulae:

p a m i m a m i ; p i m a m i m a .

V. B.

20 Using the left hand finger pattern of lesson 19, play the following rhythmic patterns at various speeds, with these four new formulae.

Exercise 20 consists of two staves of music. The first staff has two measures. The first measure is labeled 'a m i' with a '3' below it, indicating a triplet. The second measure is labeled 'a m i m a m' with '3' below it. The second staff also has two measures. The first measure is labeled 'a m i m' and the second is labeled 'a m i m'. Both staves feature a series of eighth notes with a dotted quarter note, and each measure begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking.

21 Etude

V. B.

Exercise 21 is an etude in G major, 2/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has two measures, with the first measure labeled 'i m a' and the second 'm i m i'. The second staff has four measures, with the first measure labeled 'I' and the second 'II'. The third staff has three measures, with the first labeled 'II' and the second 'III'. The fourth staff has four measures, with the first labeled 'C III' and the second 'I'. The piece includes various dynamics such as piano (p), mezzo-forte (mf), and forte (f), as well as articulations like 'rall.', 'a tempo', and 'rit.'. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The piece ends with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking.

Play the Etude given above with the following change of formula observed wherever applicable throughout the piece. These opening measures show you how this can be done.

This block shows the first four measures of the etude with a change in the formula. The first measure is labeled 'a m i m i m i'. The second measure is labeled 'a m i m i m i'. The third measure is labeled 'a m i m i m i'. The fourth measure is labeled 'a m i m i m i'. The piece ends with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking.

22 Etude

P. Agafoshin
revised by V. B.

mf p a m i

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piece begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes the lyrics "p a m i" above the first staff. The notation is characterized by dense sixteenth-note passages and various fingerings (1-4) and slurs. The first staff includes a circled '0' under the first note and a circled '1' under the second. The second staff has a circled '3' under the first note and a circled '2' under the second. The third staff features a circled '1' under the first note and a circled '2' under the second. The fourth staff has a circled '3' under the first note and a circled '1' under the second. The fifth staff includes a circled '0' under the first note and circled '3's under the second, third, and fourth notes. The sixth staff has a circled '0' under the first note and circled '3's under the second, third, and fourth notes. The seventh staff has a circled '2' under the first note and circled '1's under the second and third notes. The eighth staff has a circled '2' under the first note and circled '0's under the second and third notes. The ninth staff has a circled '3' under the first note and circled '0's under the second and third notes. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord.

23 The following Etude, attributed to the Polish guitarist, F. Horetzky, while not presenting any problems for the left hand, is excellent for "warming up" the "a" finger. To play measures 8 and 16, use the supported *apoyando* stroke.

Etude Felix Horetzky (c. 1846)
edited by V. B.

a m a m

mf *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

mf *p*

mf *p*

a m a m

rall. *p* *m* *i* *m* *i* *p*

8

a m a m

mp a tempo

mp

mp

16

rall. poco a poco *p*

24 A tremolo variation of the Russian folksong, "Do not scold me, dear", originally arranged for the 7-string Russian guitar by V. Sazonov. Revised and fingered by V. B.

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in a key of two sharps (D major) and a 2/4 time signature. It features a tremolo variation of a Russian folksong. The lyrics "i m p a m i" are placed above the first few notes. The score is divided into several measures, each with specific fingering and performance markings:

- Measure 1: *C VII*, notes *i* and *m*.
- Measure 2: *C VII*, notes *p*, *a*, *m*, *i*.
- Measure 3: *C VII*, notes *V* and *III*.
- Measure 4: *I*, *C II*.
- Measure 5: *C II*, *C VII*.
- Measure 6: *IV*, *II*, *C II*.
- Measure 7: *II*, *II*, *II*.
- Measure 8: *II*, *II*.
- Measure 9: *C III*, *C VII*.
- Measure 10: *IV*, *II*, *C II*, *C II* *harm.12*.

Performance markings include *poco rall.*, *rit.*, and *molto rit.*. The score also includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and circled numbers (4, 8) indicating specific techniques or fingerings.

25 Among the studies for the classic guitar by such masters as Fernando Carulli, Mauro Giuliani, Matteo Carcassi, Fernando Sor, and Francisco Tárrega, there are many easily converted for the study of the tremolo. Two examples are studies by Matteo Carcassi. The excerpts given below will give you a good indication how to continue.

Etude Op. 60 No. 16

♩ I
p a m i

Etude Op. 60 No. 19

a m i

p p.

Exercises in thirds, sixths, and octaves by Mauro Giuliani (1781 – 1829) played in tremolo form will be of great benefit to both hands.

p a m i

26 This splendid tremolo exercise by Francisco Tárrega (1852 – 1909) should be repeated ascending by semitones until the ninth position is reached. Study it in all the four right hand formulae given below.

C I
p i m a

Formula 2 Formula 3 Formula 4

p a m i p a m i p i m a m i p i m a m i p a m i m a p a m i m a

27 An example of tremolo from the "Grande Sonata", Op. 22, by Fernando Sor (1778 – 1839) provides us with good material for a lesson. Repeat, ascending by semitones until the ninth position is reached. The chord is played, of course, with a sweep of the thumb across the strings.

III
m i 6 m i simile
p p

∅ III
6

28 The No. 13 study by F. Sor from "26 Etudes pour la guitare" (2me livre, Lemoine - Paris) offers us another example of Sor's ingenuity in applying tremolo.

Moderato

a i m i m a
1 2 3 4 5
p p

etc.

29 Prelude

Matteo Carcassi (1792 – 1853)
fingered by V. B.

C II
p i m a m i m a p i m a C II
3 4 2 1 0 0 1 2
1 3 0 0 1 8 4 2
1 3 4 2 1 8 4 2
1 3 4 2 1 2
rall.

30 The tremolo in quintuplet form is very effective, the extra fifth note simulating a sustained quality even more than the standard four note formula. It was adopted by Flamenco guitarists as early as 1902, when we find an example of it in Rafael Marín's "Method for Flamenco Guitar", published in that year.

The Granainas, related to the ancient Verdial of the mountains of Ronda and Málaga from whence it spread to the town of Granada, is a solo form much favored by Flamenco guitarists. Its extended melody line ornamented with delicate filigree-like embellishments permits the soloist a display of great technical skill and musical imagination.

The following tremolo in quintuplet form is the tremolo variation from Juan García de la Mata's highly personal concert arrangement of Granainas for solo guitar.

Granainas (tremolo variation)

Juan de la Mata (b. 1920)
Used by permission of the composer.

5
m a m i simile

C VII C VIII

VII VI

IV I

m i m i m i m

1-1 2 3 4 5 6
p

31 In this excellent study by the Australian guitarist, Karl Ogdon, the relative ease with which it can be fingered by the left hand allows the student to concentrate on the tremolo itself. In addition to the right hand finger patterns suggested by the composer, try it with the various patterns given in lesson 33.

Tremolo Study

Karl Ogdon

The musical score for 'Tremolo Study' is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'p i m a' and the second 'p a m i'. The music features a tremolo pattern of eighth notes over a bass line of quarter notes. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and circled 5s. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

⑤ 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3

8 0 2 1 2 0 3 4 2 2 1 3

VI

2 8 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 8

2 0 0 0 3 1 2 1 3

2 1 3 2 8 2 3 1

2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 ⑤ 1 3

2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3

2 0 1 2 3 2 3

8 2 3 2

32 A passage from the music of Mauro Giuliani converted to a study for the five note tremolo.

Etude

Mauro Giuliani (1780 – 1829)

Moderato

p m a m i simile

The musical score is written on eight staves in treble clef with a common time signature. The first staff includes a fingering diagram for the notes p, m, a, m, i, with a '5' above the 'a' and 'simile' to the right. The piece is marked 'Moderato'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'f a tempo' and 'poco rit.'. The music consists of a continuous five-note tremolo pattern over a bass line of quarter notes.

33 The following tremolo patterns of progressive difficulty could be used in studying the musical examples in this book.

Closing Remarks

All forms of *arpeggios* as a preparatory step for the study of the tremolo are very advisable. Do not overstudy. Twenty to thirty minutes of concentrated study with full attention to the clarity of sound and firm unflinching rhythm will be more beneficial than hours spent in ragged and indifferent playing.