

MASTERY OF THE FLAMENCO GUITAR

VOLUME II SOLEARES AND ALEGRIAS

A Study Guide to accompany the video program

by Guillermo Rios

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**VOLUME II MASTERY OF THE FLAMENCO GUITAR
"SOLEARES AND ALEGRIAS"**

Congratulations on your purchase of Volume II of my "Mastery of the Flamenco Guitar," Soleares and Alegrias. I believe in the content of each volume of this series, especially that many of the mysteries of Flamenco music simply result from a misunderstanding of structure. In my 25 years of professional experience I have discovered that real knowledge of structure is the key to being a good player. Along the same vein, the technique of the Flamenco guitar and efficient ways of acquiring it, which I examine in Vol. I, must be correctly and thoroughly understood to avoid wasting valuable time. I recommend Vol. I as a reference source as you journey forward in your knowledge of Soleares and Alegrias.

This booklet is intended to provide you with supplemental information and guidance as you watch the program and have the guitar in your hand.

In my extensive teaching experience I have become increasingly convinced of the validity and merit of learning flamenco in the time honored traditional way. The maestro guiding and showing the student one on one. Recently, a great deal of flamenco music has been transcribed to standard musical notation and tablature, which enriches all of us. Keeping in mind that we now can enjoy the fruits of both worlds, I believe that flamenco music played as scored will not have the right feel, if the player is not familiar, indeed the master of its fundamental concepts and structure. Conversely, he who has learned this music in the traditional way will be able to not only enrich his repertoire from an accurate score, but also broaden his conceptual knowledge, giving added strength to development of personal style. Personal style is one of the necessary goals and laws in the growth of a flamenco guitarist. To develop this, one must master

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the other laws; i.e. understanding and mastery of rhythm, and how melody and harmony are interwoven and blended with this rhythm.

In this program I have included a drum machine programed accordingly for Soleares and Alegrias. This teaching aid clearly illustrates where time is going and how it supports and relates to melody and harmony. We are human and think we know what time and rhythmic structure are doing. The metronome or drum machine will show us that we are often not so smart as we think. These tools were invented by musicians who know of this tendency. We can now calibrate our minds with these invaluable inventions and constantly broaden and improve our accurate perception of time: This knowledge and the tireless practice required to achieve mastery of its principles is the only way for us to play the flamenco guitar the way we dream of playing it.

"Play one note at a time"

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"Speed is irrelevant; only tempo and note value will yield a musical result."

"When you have set a tempo, think of the second hand on a clock moving - always at the same pace."

Agustin Castellón "Sabicas"

Soleares

As you watch the program:

I recommend taking the time to view the whole program without the guitar in your hand. Simply to familiarize yourself with its flow and approach.

With the guitar in your hand, listen to my discussion of the rhythmic structure. Both the Soleares and Alegrias rhythmic measures are 12 beats in length. On this

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program I have set up the drum machine quite neutrally, that is with all the 12 beats played, some of them with a stronger accent. There are many, many ways to "accent" Soleares, but for the purposes of this program, I leave the drum machine in one place, in order to maximize the time permitted in a video demonstration. Here are some ways accents can be felt in the 12 beat measure of Soleares:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		o			o		o		o		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		o				o	o		o		o

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
					o						o
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
o			o				o		o		

As you move your hand, think of synchronizing your movement to the tempo of the drum machine. Gradually start adding rasgueados, and/or accents until you are doing what I am doing. The continuous rasgueado I am using here, follows a description of the right hand as P=thumb, i=index, m=middle, a=ring fingers. The sequence is a m i m a - a, m, i go down and then a, m come back up.

Practice this slowly and lightly at first. It is a very useful and "flamenco" sounding rasgueado. The main objective of this part of the program is to synchronize

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yourself with the tempo and "feel" of the drum machine. As you develop the rasgueado shown here, or an alternative, gradually insert it, but remember, time is king.

As we get to the chords of Soleares and their equivalents, stop the video, until you have each one correctly. Check yourself by going back and hearing if your chord sounds the same as mine. When applying these chords to the rhythm machine, take your time. Imitate my demonstration until you can do it. You may have to count out the beats at first until you can play without having to count. I stress this important point learn to hear how long the measure is by instinct rather than by counting. When your hear your telephone ring, you know how much time elapses between rings. Have each twelve beat bar as instinctively understood in your mind.

As you apply a melody to the Soleares time structure, do not be afraid to try any melody, within the chordal structure described.

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"From any voice of any chord, a melody can begin." Joe Pass

A good melody will stand alone, with no chordal support - Think That Way.

Another powerful way to hear and understand chords and their relationship to the Soleares rhythm is to play just one chord and nothing else for the whole 12 beats, or even longer. Play the chord at different places within the measure and then wait and see what you hear, or what the music suggests to you.

I spend some time playing Soleares in other keys. I recommend that you do this, and notice how from key to key certain relationships are maintained. What are some of these? The rhythm is maintained, also relative cadences, even melody similarities. Always think of ways where the swinging feel can be brought out and maintained. Go back often and listen to what I said about the different elements. Some concepts are

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harder to grasp than others, at first. With consistent practice they will reveal themselves to you. Listen to the solo I play, feeling the time and its relationship to the melody and then do the same thing yourself - conceptually not note for note.

Alegrias

As we move to Alegrias, the procedure with the drum machine is the same as Soleares. I have you doing the right hand only, so that you will acquire a sense of the time before actually making music. The measure is the same length as solea, but the feel is slightly different. Here is the way we are hearing the drum machine today, with o being the accents.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		o				o	o		o		

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As before, count along with me, and also by yourself, until you become familiar with the feel of the measure. By now, you have become more accustomed to such exercise! Gradually move away from having to count until, just as your telephone ring has a precise timing, so will your precision be accurate regarding the 12 beat measure.

Imitate the chords I show you and find any other chord equivalents you can. You may be more accustomed to melodies in a major key so take any one that you like and adapt it to the Alegrias time and feel. Spend time playing Alegrias in all the keys I suggest. This will broaden your concept of the form and give you many ideas of your own, which will inspire you to practice more. When listening to the solo that I play in the end of the program, try listening once with your eyes closed and hear the melody swings around the time. Go back to parts you cannot hear or understand. With repeated listening you will understand.

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Here are some closing observations: practicing the guitar must be an act of loving surrender to the music . Practice means going over what you cannot do, until you can. "Speed" and strength are developed by practicing with a metronome or drum machine and strictly observing note value. Control your dynamics - play at a tempo where you are really playing a passage, not trying to play it, and above all, enjoy and love the music you play----

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