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Inside:  
FREE COLOUR PRINT  
OF SÉGOVIA

# Guitar

the magazine for all guitarists

## SEGOVIA 90th Birthday Souvenir Issue

Segovia interviewed  
John Mills

Segovia  
Julian Bream

Segovia and Ramirez  
José Ramirez

Segovia's Tone  
John Duarte

Segovia and  
La Maja de Goya  
Carlos Bonell



IF IT CONCERN'S GUITAR YOU'LL READ ABOUT IT IN **Guitar**

It may be asked why, when Segovia's 90th birthday falls on 21st of next month, do we celebrate it now? The answer is simple: this is Segovia's year, and we want to celebrate the whole year, not 11/12ths of it. Because dilution, by definition weakens, we felt that only by devoting the whole of this souvenir issue to Segovia would our tribute be a complete one, therefore apart from strictly topical items all other features have been held over till February. We are sure you will agree with us.

In these days of advertising jargon where any product or person may not be described confidently without liberal superlatives, the use of the word legend, when talking about Segovia, may not have as much punch as the adman might like. He may then say true legend or living legend. Decline it as you will, the word, almost onomatopoeic, is so venerable that it must be used with extreme caution, for it cannot be devalued — it can only devalue its wrong user. In the world of the classic guitar Segovia's achievements together with the honours heaped on him for all sides (more, probably than any musician in history) are more than enough to make him a legend. The word, therefore, being synonymous with *the Legend*, its use in conjunction with anyone else is merely unworthy and embarrassing advertising copy.

We thank: Carlos Bonell and John Mills for taking time out from their extremely busy schedules to ensure we received their copy — and what wonderful copy — in time for our January copydate; José Ramirez for his affectionate tribute to Segovia; Sam Shulman for his composition *Romance*, for Segovia.



A typical house in Granada

# Guitar

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# SEGOVIA AT THE BARBICAN CENTRE

23 October 1982



Photo: George Clinton

"Even in a hall that can hold five thousand people, and without amplification — because this adulterates the quality of the sound — my idea is always to reduce this enormous quantity of people to the intimacy of eight or ten persons. To obtain from the audience the quality of silence and attention that the guitar needs, and then transform the whole audience into an intimate gathering." (Segovia, *Guitar* Dec. 1974)

It is fitting that the classic guitar's debut at the Barbican Centre should be in the hands of the guitar's legend, Andrés Segovia. Although the audience on this occasion is less than half that described above, the intimate atmosphere is evident even before Segovia has left his dressing room. As the Concert Hall begins to fill one notices greeting hands, heads nodding recognition, and here and there a figure leaves a seat to dart to another's to arrange a meeting at the bar, perhaps? As the magic hour approaches we all become increasingly aware of the bare stage running the width of the hall, with the single chair standing in a pool of light.

The hall is full now and the pervading sense of anticipation gives way to equanimity as we settle in our seats. Soon there's a hush, then silence, then thunderous applause as Segovia, is seen making his way ever so carefully to his chair. He bows graciously, sits, tunes perfunctorily, moves his footstool closer with his foot, pauses for the inevitable last-second coughs, and then plays to us.

His first item, *Andante, Allegretto*, by Sor are disparate pieces; the second, also by Sor, has been taped over on the printed programme, but by lifting it we can see it was to be *Allegro* followed by Five Studies. No good looking at the

notes, these appear to be written by someone who has read the wrong books at the last minute — Llobet a mentor of Segovia? Says who? Segovia adapting Ponce's *Sonata Mexicana*? From what, pray? I bet there will be a fuss when Segovia reads them.

During these first pieces it's clear that Segovia isn't happy with his tuning. Also the footstool is just a block of wood much lower than the height he is used to. Still, never a man to over-fuss, Segovia just bends a little lower over his Ramirez; but he plays with his left heel clear of the ground.

With Segovia it doesn't really matter what he plays, but that he plays, and so, as he works his way through the Tarrega pieces we smile at the way he knits them together, ignoring repeats here, and *da capos* there, according to his whim. Years ago we might have grumbled — to no avail; did he really once say "I play it that way because I can"? We discover his memory hasn't deteriorated as much as we've been told; however, you get the impression that Segovia worries about it and this gives his playing a hesitancy that belies a still good technique. His left hand fingers are not all that rusty, and when that great barre goes down it's as leak proof as ever. And the technique that produces the sound — that sound — is still good. The tone, or more accurately, the tones, are exquisite, and an example to all guitarists.

At the first mini interval (where Segovia takes a breather and fights the tuning) a man comes on with a second tier to the footstool. This proves disasterous as it continually slips around and in the end poor Segovia kicks it to one side and carries on as before with his left heel in the air, and worse, for much of Ponce's *Sonata Mexicana* this foot was completely off the ground. He certainly wasn't being well looked after this night. This discomfort probably was responsible for one or two severe memory lapses during the Ponce (where 2000-odd souls willed those fingers back on the right tracks). We learned later, however, that because the only chair available was too small, the Maestro's regular footstool could not be used.

Segovia finished with a bustling *Sevilla*. Two encores — *El Noy de la Mare* and Villa Lobos *Prelude* No.1, numerous standing ovations, decibels of rapturous applause, and he was gone — until next year, we fervently hope. Acoustical note: the acoustics are far better than the Festival Hall, a quiet note still sounds "afar" but clear as a bell; a cough, terrible.

George Clinton



# ANDRES SEGOVIA CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM

This Certificate is given by Domingo Prat from an authenticated copy that runs:

"Don Francisco Morales Abbales, priest of the parish of San Pedro in this capital, certifies: that on folio 66 verso of the 21st book of baptisms of this parochial archive appears the following — Item: In the city of Jaen, on the twenty fourth of March one thousand eight hundred and ninety three: I Don Juan Garrido y Quesada, Cura Coadjutor of this parish of San Pedro, with license from the priest of the same parish, have solemnly baptised a boy, who according to declaration made in due form before me and the witnesses likewise in this matter Jose Carpio and Miguel Moya, attached to this church, by one claiming to be and to be called Rosa Torres Cruz mother of the baptised, born on the seventeenth day of the current month at six thirty p.m. at No. 94, La Corredera, city of Linares, and residing there by accident, son — of Bonifacio Segobia y y Montoro and Rosa Torres Cruz: Paternal grandparents Andres and Maria Francisca; natives, the father and paternal grandparents, of this city; mother and maternal grandmother, of Malaga; maternal grandfather, of Churriana. I have given him the name of Andres. His godmother was Teresa Granadino, to whom I have made known the spiritual relationship and its obligations. For confirmation whereof I sign together with the Reverend Cura of the parish.

Signed: Juan Garrido.      Signed: Dn Romero

This is a literal copy of the original, to which I have referred.

Jaen, December 31st, 1930." (Bears the stamp of the Church, of San Pedro, of Jaen.)

Prat comments: "It is noteworthy that this baptismal certificate belongs to the Church of Jaen and not that of Linares where he was born, and makes clear that in the document transcribed the father's name is written with a B, i.e. Segobia, although he is known to us and universally as SEGOVIA. A curious biographical detail that may not be without importance for those interested".

John Roberts

Photo: George Clinton



# TIME LIFE Segovia Collection

Time Life records have released a beautiful boxed set of three Segovia records for their series Great Performers.

Accompanying the LPs is a large 24 page tribute to Segovia containing many colour and black and white photographs of Segovia, some from his earliest years. This is written by Otto Friedrick, ex-editor of *Time* and *Saturday Evening Post*.

The records are repressions from old masters, details and recording dates of which are as follows: Tedesco: Guitar Concerto (1949), Tarantella (1949), Bach: Gavotte (Partita No. 3) (1927), Courante from Suite No.3 (1927), Chaconne from Partita No.2 (1956), Scarlatti: Preambulo e Gavota (1956), Narváez: Var. "Guárdame las Vacas" (1956), Sor: Thème Varlé (1927), Three Studies (1962), Minuet in E Maj. (1967), Giuliani: Three Studies (1971), Tárrega: Recuerdos de la Alhambra (1927), Study in A Maj. (1935), Rodrigo: Fandango (1967), Fantasia para un Gentilhombre (1960), Granados: Tonadilla (1959), Torroba: Piezas Características (1959), Turina: Sevillana (1967), Albeniz: Leyenda (1967), Weiss: Prelude (1959), Ponce: Sonata Mexicana (1967), Villa-Lobos: Prelude No.3 (1956) Tedesco: Melancolia and La Primavera (1961/2).

The only criticism we have of this wonderful package is that it is only available in the U.S.A.

For further information write to: Time Life Records, 541 North Fairbanks Court, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Readers can take comfort, however, in two H.M.V. reissues advertised.

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## SEGOVIA IN MID-CAREER

by Domingo Prat

(*Domingo Prat in his Diccionario de Guitarristas, 1934, gives a reasoned and thoughtful account of Segovia's rise to fame. He has obviously considered the subject carefully and has given a judgement of permanent value.*)

translated by John Roberts

Down there in Granada, from his earliest childhood, he already played the guitar with rasgueado and falseta. The revelation of the musical instrument was given him by a friend and disciple of Tarrega, the Valencian ventriloquist and guitarist Paco Sanz, applauded in Buenos Aires about the year 1912. In one of this artist's continual tours through Spain, Segovia, happening to be in Andalucia, heard something of Tarrega's repertoire through the medium of the modest Sanz, (according to facts furnished by the latter). So the spark was produced. Segovia questioned, investigated, analyzed, studied, learned and freed himself from a provincial surrounding and a provincial semi-art; and, as if by magic, began to take effect in the manner described by an account in the Press that we give here: "Segovia, this romantic concert-giver, who goes from city to city and from region, carrying trapped in the magic strings of his guitar the pure breezes of art and poetry, that our insensitive public does not appreciate at their true value". (Bulletin of the Biblioteca Fortea, January 1914).

He sprang to Madrid, passed to Valencia, and reached Barcelona in the year 1915. He came forward, fought, and triumphed. The guitar in public concert, and paid for, is not known there in Barcelona, and if it is, only in little "Chapels" of humble aficionados, clotted with prejudice, admirers of this or the other Master. Segovia in the beginning was admired, helped and applauded by all, but although this appreciation upset their rickety existence, they did not discover or were incapable of seeing in him the artist who had been born for the world. With the guitar he conquered those who most represented the Fine Arts and the Science of the cultured City of Barcelona, where, we can affirm without fear of error, he won his "brevet" to fly throughout the musical universe.

In one of our visits to Barcelona in the year 1916 we met, heard, and became the comrade of Segovia. A group of admirers, among whom were many guitarists, offered him a supper in the Casa-Juan, a modest tavern of Parisian

type. There Segovia played. His decision, security, diction, sound and 'posse', as he proceeded to display his repertoire (well-known to us all) confirmed the happy augury that the writer's father had made with this prediction: "This is the artist that the guitar needs".

He began to give concerts continually.

The impresarios, lynxes in the matter, saw a new element of profit. He went to Argentina three times (always with contract), passed to New York (they fought to contract him), is applauded in London, Paris, Boston, Mexico City, Berlin, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Budapest, Rome, Vienna, and wherever he presents himself he is the best artist.

Segovia is the psychologist par excellence with respect to the public, that is one of the secrets of his triumphs. In his recitals he comes on to the proscenium deliberately, elegantly, unsmiling but correct. No harshness in his movements, no affected presentation. Seated now, before the audience, his unhurried preparation (*con tiempo prudential*) invites them to silence. When this is absolute he begins to play, convinced that those present must be silent and listen, since that is what they are there for. During the recital, he exacts religious silence from the devotees, the slightest sound irritates him, and he signs with a suave gesture that it be not repeated, giving to understand that whoever produces it should take himself off; and he stops playing in any part of a work if the noise continues to irritate or distract.

This moral force and continued serenity dominates the masses, predisposing them to feel the whole beauty of what he is playing. He is the true actor who, in possession of himself, 'speaks' as if in his own house; and in his turn interrogates the public with his gaze in order that, like himself, they may be compenetrated by the joy or sadness that holds him, according to the theme of what he is playing. The actor who is afraid of the public cannot abstract himself and give the complete artistic sensation of what he interprets; even so the guitarist who is not at ease can never present himself as a complete concert giver.

Segovia, free of these fears, secure of himself, desires with his whole soul the arrival of the date of his concerts, and experiences beforehand the joy of entering into contact with the public; a quality this, which, quite apart from its intrinsic value, has sustained him throughout his successes. It is quite understandable that the nervousness of the guitarist who does not possess these qualities will produce a cloudiness of the memory and a lack of the subtle tact that are so necessary for triumphal conquest. And if under these conditions he manages to save himself by dint of untiring study or ability in execution, he will receive no more than good-natured plaudits that are, at bottom, simply alms. Segovia never needed presents. By his own merit he conquers the applause, commands it, almost; because he knows that his guitar, his art, and his personality have a value that dominates and fascinates.

For this reason, without schooling, without masters in music, of humble origin and from surroundings in no way propitious, but strong and unique, he comes forward with a gesture of defiance, to throw into the faces of the studious failures his celebrated phrase: "I am glad that I never knew Tarrega; because if I had known him, I might have not been what I am today". Justified and profound is this independence of his, which reveals to us not only the concert player and the musician, but also the man himself, direct and virile. It is these exceptional gifts that have bewitched and attracted to the guitar the mages of the pentagram: Moreno Torroba, C. Pedrell, Turina, Tansman, Cyril Scott, Samazeuil, Ponce, and others who are legion, forcing them to write pages of beautiful music for the guitar, shining works that honour composer and player, thus reaffirming the beauty of the instrument.

The discs made by Segovia, though possessing a high value, are distortions of a natural and positive beauty that always escapes the recording. In sound there are subtleties that are impossible to entrap in a disc, as colours in a photograph. They are only approximate copies, establishing a plane of nearness that brings out the bad and spoils the good. Just as the whole beauty of an attractive woman cannot in the last analysis be condensed into a photograph, so the art of Segovia has subtleties that do not appear in any of his records.

Great in everything, and continually surpassing himself, perhaps he himself did not appreciate at its full value the great success he attained in his last visit to Buenos Aires in 1928. He arrived on the 30th June and gave his first concert four days later. He gave nine concerts, one after the other, two a week. In brief intervals he played in Montevideo, and parts of Argentina. He embarked for Europe on the 20th August, forgetting to carry out a concert announced for that date with the biggest musical association of the republic.

An interval of seven years had passed between his second and his last visit to Argentina. An almost complete

renewal of the works in his repertoire was an important factor in arousing the interest that produced the enthusiastic welcome he received. As a beautiful and suggestive detail of his success, we remember his seventh concert, given on the 8th August (in the afternoon, like all of them). At the same hour, and a few metres away, the distinguished pianist Rubinstein was giving his fourth concert, with an attractive programme. Segovia's six previous concerts, in spite of being close together, had all given rise to the welcome notice "House Full". At the seventh, coinciding in day and hour with Rubinstein's, we were waiting to see if the guitar would be at a disadvantage, in this accidental duel. The piano concert, in the Opera House, was completely full. But Segovia's was a unique public success, a house completely and absolutely full to overflowing. This example, besides bringing into relief in a unique manner the personality of Segovia, emphasises the high value of the musical culture of the public of Buenos Aires, and of its devotees of the guitar; and at the same time poses a suggestive question to those who present themselves with the same instrument and do not attain the success of which they dreamed.

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*Photo: Eric Auerbach*

# HOW I SEE ANDRES SEGOVIA

— BY —

## JOSE RAMIREZ

I proudly possess the privilege of having known Andrés Segovia for about 30 years and of having enjoyed his friendship and his always interesting conversations. But above all and with the pretext of having him try out my guitars, I am proud to have had the privilege of listening to him play complete concerts, with just myself as his only audience. During these occasions I was fully aware of the exceptional opportunity of being able to appreciate his art in the most complete freedom of expression, without the tension — no matter how slight, given his personality — which a large public or a recording studio can produce. And yet, in spite of all this, I dare not give an opinion of Segovia as a musician and performer since I consider that there are others, much more qualified than me, who

should undertake this task. What I do affirm, with full conviction of what my innermost feelings tell me, is that Andrés Segovia is one of the few exceptional artists that each century contributes to mankind.

In my opinion, he would have been a genius in any artistic field; he could easily have been a painter, sculptor, writer, or even an actor, etc., but fortunately for the guitar he centered all his interest on this instrument, revealing to the world all its hidden treasures of sweetness, sound and expressiveness, and exalted it to the category of a soloist instrument. Having such a vast knowledge of musical literature which was never before attained until his full dedication to the guitar, to all these feats he added his didactic work, moved by his love for this instrument in the

purest and highest concept of this feeling, demonstrated by the sacrifices which on many occasions he had to make in order to reach this objective and which have borne such magnificent results that guarantee, once and forever, the place that he has attained for the guitar in the music field. By saying this it is not my intention to disdain the work carried out by other previous venerable maestros who, in their time, materialized the advancements that simplified the culmination accomplished by Segovia.

My relations with the Maestro have generally been peaceful and very friendly, although on several occasions we had a few "storms" which were inevitable, taking into account his powerful personality. I shall start off by recognizing that my best teacher regarding guitar building has been, and still is, Segovia; not because he has given me technical indications or even the slightest opinion as to how any problem concerning this instrument had to be solved. His magisterial lesson simply consisted in saying exactly what he wanted in a guitar, both with regard to sound and action. In other words, he has always been an inexorable and unyielding critic whose word could not be questioned, most probably because he has always been in possession of the truth. If one accepts his criticisms with no reservation, the hard road towards perfectionism, no matter how painstaking, can be tackled. Since I first made his acquaintance, I started working on different guitar models which I showed him every year when he passed by Madrid, after his concert tours. His opinions were always such as this: "This guitar sounds fine but it's got the voice of a senorita". On another occasion when I showed him a guitar, he said that it was "impassable", referring to a specific detail of the guitar action. There were many other adverse criticisms such as these for a period of about ten years, but he always encouraged me to keep up the struggle to improve my work. One day, by means of our common friend, Dr. Rubio, I heard that he had said that due to my tenacity and interest he was convinced that I would someday build a good guitar. This stimulated me no end and I redoubled my effort with near obsession. Also, on another occasion I showed him a guitar that had cost me months of work and on which I had placed great hopes. After saying that he did not like it, he told me the following phrase which was meant to comfort me after seeing the look of dismay that came to my face: "My dear Ramirez, the guitar was invented by a fun-loving imp to enjoy himself with the desperation felt by those who make it as well as those who play it". Needless to say, these words helped me a lot.

At long last, in 1960, he played one of my guitars in one of his concert tours in Australia, and from 1963 on, he has played my guitars in most of his performances.

One of the "storms" that I had with the Maestro was due to an unforgivable lack of tact on my part. One day he telephoned and invited me for coffee at his house, to introduce me to a famous guitar builder from Barcelona who had come to Madrid to visit him. Segovia, most probably in an attempt to obtain a more perfect guitar, expected that the instrument of his dreams would be the outcome of an exchange of opinions between this guitar builder and me. However, he had forgotten that a dialogue between two guitar builders is extremely difficult, and so the inevitable happened. In the course of our conversation, the eternal problem of cracks in the wood was brought up. My illustrious colleague assured that he had solved this problem by exposing the wood to the sun for many hours. My response to this was that what he was doing was useless, since wood is a hygroscopic element and as such acquires the prevailing environmental humidity, no matter how long it is exposed to the sun and even if it is a hundred years old. I also pointed out that if in Barcelona (which is where this particular guitar builder carries out his work) the relative environmental humidity is 80%, the wood will

always have and maintain the corresponding humidity, regardless of how long it is exposed to the sun, and this can be verified in any elemental physics book.

The following day Segovia recriminated me for having treated my illustrious colleague as an apprentice. All the absolutely scientific arguments that I brought up in an attempt to pacify his anger were of no avail. My great mistake was having talked about guitars. I should have had the firm intention of broaching any other subject of conversation except "guitars", although I am afraid that this too would have angered the Maestro, since he has the gift of seeing through an insincere intention in any mind. I think that the situation then was beyond remedy; the Maestro had undoubtedly expected us to exchange 'professional secrets' — at least this is what I think he expected — ...although that would have been so difficult ...!

On the occasion of the guitar music course that takes place in Compostela, the Maestro asked me to donate a guitar as the first prize, I acceded with great pleasure since I consider that any collaboration with the Maestro in the course of his work is an obligation.

Another year, Segovia decided to present the prize in Madrid in an official act, and he asked me to attend as donor of the guitar.

Personally, I hate all ceremonies. I get very fidgety whenever I have to be the protagonist before the public. No one can imagine how uneasy I feel whenever I have to appear on television or talk over the radio. Consequently, I did not say no to Segovia for reasons of courtesy, but I did tell him that it was most probably that I would not be able to attend and that he was not to count on me. The Maestro, who rarely accepts no for an answer, took for granted that I would attend, but when the time came and I had not appeared, he was said to have exclaimed: "I will forgive him only if he has died!"

A few hours later I had to put up with his implacable bombardment of reproofs, and I had no way of getting a word in to justify myself. On this occasion, his tremendously powerful personality resulted overwhelming.

Segovia's humanity is as great as his art, although this may seem an exaggeration. He is a loyal friend to the most extreme limits. If one comes to him with clear and sincere intentions, he will find a true friend in the real sense of the word and, in addition to this, he is all generosity; this I was to realize only a few months ago.

One day, the hand program of one of his concerts contained the announcement that the guitar that he was going to play — perhaps because of a previous commitment — was not mine. I considered this perfectly legitimate, but what upset me was the fact that he did give the concert with one of my guitars.

Our mutual friend, Dr. Rubio, explained to me on the Maestro's behalf, that the program had been printed beforehand, that it was all a mistake, etc.

Now I feel somewhat indebted to the Maestro. He asked me to his studio to discuss an important matter with me. For approximately five hours we chatted about a hundred trivial things, in an atmosphere of placid contentment, when at a certain moment he said to me, in an affectionately reproachful tone: "Ramirez, it's been eight years since I last saw you ..."'

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Photo: Eric Auerbach

## Segovia and La Maja de Goya

Andrés Segovia's interpretation of Granados' *La Maja de Goya* is celebrated, for his playing is imbued with an extraordinary atmosphere of classical elegance and restrained passion. All the more wonder, then, that he could make so much of a piece whose curious and little-known origin lies in a topical, satirical and often outrageous song performed on theatre-stages at interval-time in the late 18th century! To fully appreciate Segovia's playing it is both entertaining and instructive to bring out into the open the distant inspiration of Granados' composition.

*La Maja de Goya* (Goya's girl) is one of a collection of pieces the composer called *Tonadillas written in the old style* for voice and piano. All the pieces in this collection are named after paintings and drawings by Goya, whose work was a constant inspiration to Granados, and which culminated in a set of piano pieces he called *Goyescas*. This you should really go out of your way to hear for it represents Granados' most mature style in a wonderful synthesis of Schumann-esque Romanticism and the Spanish Classicism of an earlier age. Alas, these pieces are so pianistic and dense in texture that they are quite inappropriate for playing on the guitar.

The Tonadillas, although they also refer back to Goya, are quite different in texture: they are more transparent and concise, with most of the emphasis placed on a

tortuous vocal line of unusual range and emotional depth. For this reason most of these songs are not playable as guitar solos, although I have performed the piano part on the guitar without too much pruning.

The *Tonadilla: La Maja de Goya* is certainly the most archaic in style, as well as more light-hearted than most. It is archaic because it is a direct throwback to the late 18th century tonadilla, a vocal form of anything from 5 to 15 minutes duration, which became amazingly popular in theatres and salons as a type of intermezzo between acts. The songs were often topical and satirical, and here is where Granados comes in with *La Maja de Goya*, for associated with this painting is the scandal and gossip of a whole era! The sitter for this nude portrait was rumoured to be (reliably so) the beautiful Duchess of Alba, from the very highest crust of the nobility. The story goes that Goya was commissioned to paint a formal portrait of the Duchess, things got out of hand, and one consequence was a nude portrait. When the Duke asked to see the progress of his commission Goya hurriedly put together another portrait, in exactly the same reclining posture as the nude, but now fully dressed. The haste in this painting is plain to see, with a curiously-angled head perched rather uncomfortably on a pair of thinly-veiled shoulders.

The first part of Granados' *Tonadilla: La Maja de Goya*

is a long piano solo/introduction with a spoken declamation by the singer making gossip-like references to the supposed affair between Goya and the Duchess. This is exactly in the style and tradition of the classical Tonadilla, which was at the height of its popularity during Goya's lifetime. The second part of the song is sung by the soprano as a recollection in the first person of the love between her and the painter. The sung portion of the song begins:

Example 1

Andantino quasi Allegretto  
bar 78

Yo no olvi - da - re en

What is lost in performing the entire piece on the guitar without the voice are all the stylistic and historical allusions I have described as well as Granados' original conception of the work. On the other hand *La Maja de Goya* is more often than not performed without the spoken declamation in the first half to the everlasting shame of the performers. Also, the 18th century tonadillas often included guitars in the accompaniment e.g. Blas de Laserna's *El treque de los amantes* of about 1785 was performed with four voices and two guitars. Considering that the Tonadilla had strong links with popular and contemporary songs and dances it was only natural that the guitar would figure largely and frequently in its performance. So really, we come round full circle: the guitar figured in the original tonadilla and 150 years later Segovia returns Granados' regenerated tonadilla to an authentic and the original accompanying instrument.

Segovia, however, was not the first guitarist to play and perform *La Maja* on the guitar: it was Miguel Llobet, and it was from him that Segovia learnt the piece: "I wanted so much to ask Llobet for copies of Granados' Dances ... When I did muster the courage to broach the subject timidly, he answered immediately, 'Actually, I haven't written down these works yet. But, why don't you come to my home in the mornings and learn them from me? Bring your guitar. I'll play the pieces on mine and pass the music on to you, phrase by phrase.' In less than ten days I memorized the two dances and a tonadilla by Granados."\*\*\*

By the time that he recorded the piece in 1945 there was a significant divergence between Segovia's version and Llobet's published transcription, much to the improvement of La Maja. For example: Llobet marks alternating passages of natural and pizzicato playing from bar 1 to bar 24, but Segovia wisely restricts the pizzicato to the first 8 bars; Segovia plays no bass-note on the first beats of bars 42 and 44 (unlike Llobet's arrangement of this passage in example 2 below), and in bars 78 Segovia plays a full G-major chord on the change of tempo (in the Granados original this is where the voice comes in), changes the slurring and drops the last g in the bar an octave. (see example 3).

Example 2 : Llobet arrangement

6th in D  
5th in G  
41

Example 3 : Segovia arrangement

6th in D  
5th in G  
78 CVII

All these changes not only make the piece sound more natural on the guitar but also enhance the music, as in example 3 where the full chord gives emphasis precisely where the original version would have had it: at the beginning of the sung section.

Segovia re-recorded the work in 1959 and there are many changes since the first time. Firstly, the first recording is about 30 seconds faster, which is a lot in a piece of 4-5 minutes duration, and secondly there are further changes to the transcription, with no harmonics being played between bars 50 and 55 unlike his first recording, and no pizzicato between bars 107-109 also unlike his first recording. In fact, the later recording is slower, more restrained and contemplative, and captures exactly the nostalgic recollection of the song's lyrics. The first version reminds me of his advice to a beginner: "Interpretation should be like life — an explosion of freedom ..."\*\*\*. As well as an explosion of freedom I would add an explosion of colour, dynamics, virtuosity — in fact a barely-contained excitement characterises that earlier version. The musical pulse and pacing, the emotional control, the sheer depth and range of nuance — these qualities developed between one recording and the next, and in a man already into his middle-age! What an object-lesson in self-criticism, application and musical sensitivity!

In spite of this superb playing, many people still question the point and musical ethics of transcriptions for the guitar. Segovia sums up articulately the case for transcriptions: "Transcribing is not merely passing literally from one instrument to another. It means finding equivalents which change neither the aesthetic spirit nor the harmonic structure of the work ... If the work transcribed gains in colour and expression, and is not weakened, not only is it permissible, but mandatory that such a transcription should be made".\*\*\*

Listen to Segovia's marvellous playing of *La Maja de Goya*: see and hear him evoke so many spectres as they float through the reverberant echo of his last recording — the spectres of Granados, Goya, the Duchess of Alba, and of the anonymous guitarist strumming an accompaniment to the singer of the Classical tonadilla, little imagining the apotheosis of his chosen instrument in the hands of Andrés Segovia.

#### Acknowledgements:

Granados: *La Maja de Goya* arr. Llobet pub. U.M.E.

\* Segovia: an autobiography of the years 1893-1920 publ. Marion Boyars

\*\* Segovia: my book of the guitar publ. Ariel

\*\*\* Segovia writing in an early edition of the 'Guitar Review', New York Ron Purcell and Graham Wade for providing dates of Segovia's recordings

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# ANDRES SEGOVIA

BY

## JULIAN BREAM

I first met Segovia in 1947 when I was introduced to him by Dr. Boris Perott then the President of the Philharmonic Society of Guitarists and who had given me some lessons in his unique Russian-cum-Italian style guitar playing. Segovia, of course, caused a tremendous sensation that year because throughout the war years he was not in Europe and there were even some rumours that he'd died, in 1944. When he came the effect of his playing was simply spellbinding and no words can describe the effect it had on me personally. It was, as it were, God come down to earth.

I eventually met him on that tour in London in his hotel room because my father and Dr. Perott were anxious for him to hear me and to give me what advice he thought necessary for my musical education. I remember very vividly playing the B minor study of Sor, very nervously — I think I missed half of the melodic line because my right hand was shaking up and down. The other problem I had was that I'd just taken up the use of the nail (hitherto I'd been a flesh player) but although I wasn't very advanced what little technique I had was inhibited and together with the nerves, I gave an appalling performance. The old boy however was very kind and sympathetic. Strangely enough he didn't have much to say about my technique but a lot about the musical interpretation and I was naturally very interested to hear what he had to say. I was even more fascinated when he took my guitar to explain a point and I heard the master really close to.

It's almost impossible to describe the effect of hearing him three or four feet from your ear. I was struck not only by the beauty and the sound but the depth of the sonority and not least the immense variety of sounds that he made with that characteristic burnished tone and general technique which has always been a feature of his playing. It was simply astounding that such polish, such elan could be achieved on the guitar. That was my first impression.

I seem to remember two lessons. There was a third one a year later but I was so nervous that I left the guitar in the train, but it was only when I got to the hotel that I realised what I'd done. He would have willingly lent me his instrument but he was recording the Ponce concerto the next morning and he'd just put some special non squeak strings on that only lasted a few hours in quality of sound



Photo: Eric Auerbach

and therefore he couldn't let me borrow it.

There was another occasion when I seem to have been in difficulty. Somebody had told Segovia that Dr. Perott believed there was nothing Segovia could teach me. That got back to him and when I arrived to see him with my father he was livid, naturally! My father did his best to ease the situation and to explain it certainly wasn't an utterance of mine. Nevertheless it did injure further chances of seeing him, so I had just the two lessons. He concentrated most of the time on musical interpretation. It would have been nice to have a few tips on technique, but there it was.

Another occasion when I met him, the row was patched up and I went to his hotel; but he had made some mistake and had to go to a party of friends. He left a note and invited me to join him; I remember it as a very nice occasion. Finally, the last time that we really talked about the guitar was in the late 1950s. He had been asked by the Halle Concert Society to do a programme, with John Barbirolli, he had agreed to play the Villa Lobos concerto. The Society rang me and asked if I would play it the next day in Leeds; Segovia couldn't do that, and the orchestra was rehearsed, so I said: "Provided the orchestra is rehearsed, that will be perfectly alright. I'm afraid I will be a poor substitute, but there again if you're willing to take me I'm willing to do it". Ironically, I was on tour in the Midlands and the day before I was due to play, I picked up the Manchester Guardian and saw that Segovia had changed the programme and was playing the Castelnuovo Tedesco instead. Of course I was thrown by that, because it meant that the orchestra was unrehearsed for my performance of the Villa Lobos. I tried to get the Halle to fix a little rehearsal that day for me, but to no avail. Anyway, the manager of the Halle took me to lunch in the Midlands Hotel to appease me, and calm me down — I was very nervous doing a concerto like that without rehearsals. And while we were having lunch who should I see across the way but Segovia also having lunch. So I went up to him



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and said "You've really landed me in the you-know-what, by not playing the Villa Lobos". He made some excuse about the Castelnuovo Tedesco being more beautiful and other reasons. By way of appeasement he said "Why don't you come and have a feast with me after my concert tonight?" which seemed to be a delightful idea. So after his concert I joined him and we talked a lot about guitar and music and a bit about instruments. I had at that time a Mönch guitar and I asked him for his opinion on it and he suggested that I bring it up to his hotel room. After playing it a little he agreed it was quite good. Then he said "Try this one", and he got out his old Hauser. It was a revelation playing that instrument, easily the finest I'd ever played, and I was shattered that he let me play it at all. He says it's the guitar of the century, and I would corroborate that. It was incredible in every way. We then started talking about the Villa Lobos concerto, he asked me about certain fingerings and I asked him about fingerings too and it really was a charming occasion because we played together. Sometimes I played the orchestral part on guitar and he played the solo part and vice versa so that was the only time I played duet was with Segovia! He played my Mönch and I played his beautiful Hauser. That was the last time that I saw him informally.

What I learnt from him was inestimable because just watching him play was an inspiration to me in every way, whenever I saw and heard him it was like having a most wonderful lesson with the maestro because my sensibilities, my nerve ends were so attuned that I could feel what it was like to pluck the string as Segovia was feeling it. I couldn't do it correctly myself necessarily, but I felt the tactile feel of the whole right hand technique. So I learnt a fantastic amount just from watching him.

It's first class technique. If you looked at him playing, twenty five years ago, say, you would see that every part of his technical equipment was worked out very thoroughly and very intellectually. It wasn't just the fact that he was gifted in playing the guitar. He had obviously worked at it so hard. He had rationalised technique in such a way that he had the most phenomenal control. This is basically what technique is about. It's not playing pretty well when you're in a good mood, it's being able to play very well when you're out of sorts. And that is control which is different from facility.

I would also say that he was gifted by nature with the most wonderful hands for guitar — he has big hands, heavy hands, but he can apply tremendous pressure, with fingers of the left hand so that his stopping of the strings is very secure. But he also has very tapering fingertips, this means that not only does he have very strong hands but he could manoeuvre well on the fingerboard because the tips themselves were so delicate.

I think he uses on his right hand a great deal of what one can only call relaxed rigidity. It's like using very much the dead weight of the wrist in order to achieve a maximum sonority with a minimum of movement. Another fascinating thing about his technique is the economy of it, and anything that really looks good and is economical, you can be damn sure is right as you'll get it.

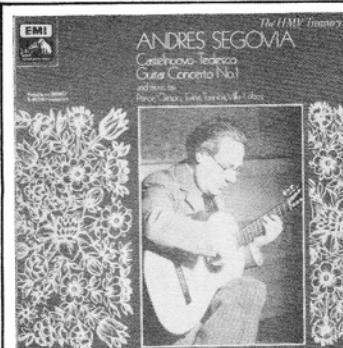
You asked me about his sound, well I think it was at its most beautiful in the gut string era judging from the old records. When I first heard him play he had just began to use nylon strings and there must be some element of materialism in the sound due to the inorganic structure of nylon, nevertheless his sound, playing on nylon is as ravishing as you are likely to hear. Also, the old Hauser guitar was a very alive instrument, very lightly built but not light as some Spanish guitars.

But the guts of the wood was always in the right place on a good Hauser and the string tension — providing it was strung correctly, that is with the gauge of string which suited that particular instrument — there was a tensile resilience

in the string which gave to Segovia's tone an incredible aristocratic quality.

And he understood this instrument so well and having played on it myself I would say he used a rather high action and I got the feeling that the sixth string was a heavy gauge string which tensed up the instrument a little bit more, together with the high action it made the instrument resonate in a unique and characteristic way. But he also understood every note of the fingerboard, the superior and inferior of its characteristics. And he could just pull out of the bag the most fantastic sound simply because not only did he know how to do it physically but on his particular Hauser it responded almost miraculously to his incredible right hand touch. But one mustn't forget the left hand and the pressure that he applied to the strings. With the immense strength of his left hand he could play on an action which was higher than most people could afford to have which, in its turn, produced a certain type of sonority which was unique.

*Excerpt from Julian Bream on Segovia, taken from Andrés Segovia by George Clinton, Musical New Services Limited.*



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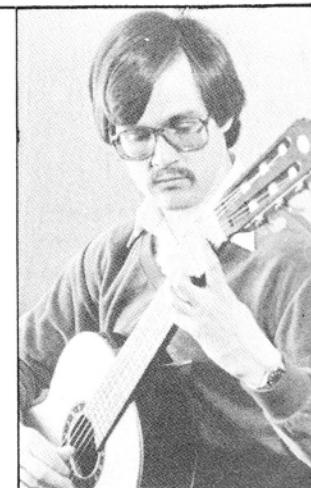
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Photo: George Clinton

# Segovia's Tone

by

## JOHN DUARTE



Who can explain it? We don't even understand properly what happens at the end of the fingers. There are a few things you can say. One is that you never produce a tone better than you want to. So it's an expression of his love of the guitar. His recognition that one of the prime purposes other than to play music is to produce beautiful sounds. Segovia does have very good fingers. They're not thin, they're not fat; thin fingers produce thin sounds and people with bony fingers will never produce Segovia's sound; this is simple mechanics. If you pluck a string with a thin pointed object you get a thin pointed sound. A broad object, a broad plectrum gives a softer sound. He uses both nail and flesh. I asked him years ago and he said: "I use the nail alone, tirando, but flesh and nail, apoyando, because it gives a fuller sound".

To use the nail entirely and no flesh is difficult unless you've nails an inch long. By not using the flesh one is throwing away fifty per cent of the range of sounds. A strong reason for the guitar's popularity has been beautiful sounds, and the range of sounds. People say "... I heard this record of Segovia," By using nails alone one is throwing away half of it; jeopardising the appeal. I've not heard a "nail only" player who could produce those ravishing sounds Segovia produces. Of course one doesn't want them all the time, but they're there, part of the whole picture.

Segovia's sound comes partially from his broad finger-ends and good broad nails; not a strong arch, which always

gives problems. They're fairly flat, without being so flat that they're weak. There isn't a great deal of free nail between finger-tip and end of nail. There's another factor: his gliding or sliding apoyando. In other words as the finger makes the stroke it slides along the string; touches the string and slides along, usually towards the fingerboard. The point at which it leaves the string can be an inch or more away, producing the effect of a broader finger-tip. You're ironing the string, like a shirt, smoothing its profile. All the lovely sounds come out that way. Another thing is, we're in danger of losing something through playing apoyando and tirando from one hand position. This is economy of movement. But Segovia, like Bream, Presti in her day and Diaz still use this difference in position so that the finger drives the string partially downwards in making apoyando. Not all the time. When he's playing mixed tirando and apoyando it is virtually from one hand position. And not loud. It's a misconception that apoyando has to be strong and loud. There is such a thing as a pianissimo apoyando and a fortissimo tirando. Apoyando is a direction of striking, a mode of striking with a fuller sound. From his films you see his hand goes right back towards the bass, his fingers are pushing the strings slightly downwards.

*Excerpt from John Duarte on Segovia taken from Andrés Segovia by George Clinton, Musical New Services Ltd.*

Happy Birthday, Maestro!

**Michael Lorimer**

L'image de Andrés Segovia reste-ra pour la guitare comme celle de Paganini pour le violon, Scarlatti pour le clavecin, et Casals pour le cello. C'est avec la plus grande joie que nous soluons son 90eme anniversaire.

**Turibio Santos**

Thank you for your lifetime's work. You set the standards.

**Juan Martin**

May your 90th birthday bring you as much happiness and joy, as your life and Art has brought to me!

**Carlos Bonell**

He is the true professor of all classical guitarists, because he is the first to have shown the musical world what professionalism on the guitar means.

**Martin Giertz**

I want to offer you my sincerest congratulations on your 90th birthday and I want to thank you for all you have done for the "guitar world" and for this admiring student.

**Christopher Parkening**

My hearty congratulations on your birthday. I wish you all the best; good health, happiness and joy. Thank you for all you did to make the guitar reach the position it deserves, and be sure, that all your fans in Austria would be glad to welcome you over here again.

**Siegfried Kobilza**

I would like to take this opportunity along with the rest of the classical guitar world to wish the maestro Don Andrés Segovia the best of health and happiness on his 90th birthday. It's quite amazing that when some of us were being born he had already lived for half a century, inspired thousands of guitarists and built the reputation of the guitar into something respectable. Felices fiestas Maestro.

**David Russell**

Best wishes, Maestro Segovia, for your 90th birthday, and many happy returns! I am, in a sense, one of your innumerable grandchildren of the guitar world, having begun and pursued my studies for many years with your own student, Jesús Silva; and your many records and concerts which I have enjoyed, as well as those few occasions in which I was privileged to spend a little time in your company, have given me much pleasure and inspiration. We are all grateful to you for the work you have accomplished in bringing the guitar to its present level, and I sincerely hope that your "great-grandchildren" will have many opportunities of hearing you play in the great concert halls of the world.

**Laurie Randolph**

Orpheus got his kithara from Mercury, Tamino got his magic flute from the Queen of Night. You took the guitar from the streets and brought it into concert halls, recording studios and music schools. We got the guitar from you. Thank you very much. Ad multos annos!

**Leo Witoszynskyj**

Maestro, God give you a long life just for making from this shy guitar a singing nightingale.

**Joseph Urshalmi**

Dear Maestro Segovia: On behalf of the Guitar Foundation of America we salute you and wish you the best of health during your ninth decade. Thanks to your recordings we, and generations to come, will be privileged for centuries to hear your poetic expression ring throughout the world. Abrazos

**Ron Purcell**

Für die bahnbrechende Arbeit, die Andrés Segovia für die Gitarre und ihren Platz im heutigen Musikleben geleistet hat, sei ihm an diesem hohen Festtag aufrichtig und von Herzen gedankt. Mein Dank sei verbunden mit dem Wunsch für noch viele gesegnete Jahre.

**Karl Scheit**

Congratulations, Maestro Segovia, on your 90th birthday. One of the truly legendary musical figures of our times, who has been a source of inspiration and admiration to millions of players and music lovers through most of the 20th century. Best wishes,

**Julian Byzantine**

Congratulations on his 90th birthday to the great Master of the guitar — Maestro Andrés Segovia.

In 1929, before I was born, the Maestro made his first tour of Japan. At that time there was no great tradition of Western music, yet the audiences were so astonished, impressed and fascinated that he became Japan's pioneer of the classical guitar. The first generation of Japanese guitar history had been formed. It is amazing that although most of that generation has now departed, the Maestro has made a third tour in 1980 and a fourth in 1982!

All the concerts were well received and fully booked. I hope these will help to form a third generation of Japan's classical guitarists.

The second generation, to which I belong, was formed in 1959 when the Maestro made his second tour. The guitar is very much alive and prosperous in Japan, even more so since his recent visit. We know what it is to love the guitar.

**Akinabu Matsuda**

La longevidad del Maestro Segovia es motivo de alegría para todos los guitarristas. También lo es su vitalidad, sus ganas de vivir y seguir prodigando su talento. Sin embargo la estatura artística de Don Andrés es legendaria; no se mide por años sino por la obra realizada.

Nos alegra enormemente que el Maestro siga con nosotros y descansamos que así sea por mucho tiempo. Pero quizás la gran alegría que sentimos sea también, en parte, orgullo; el orgullo de haber sido agraciados con el regalo que su madre le hiciera al mundo hace 90 años.

Un cariñoso recuerdo,

**Paco Peña**

To one of the Supermen of our times, musically and otherwise, on his 90th birthday. May there be many more, Maestro!

**Donn Pohren**

Dear Maestro — to say Happy Birthday seems so little for such a great musician. However, what better occasion or excuse could there be to celebrate the place in everyone's hearts for our beautiful instrument, which you have inspired so magnificently.

Many happy returns from your old student.

Affectionately **John Williams**

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**John Mack**

Through Segovia the instrument's history has been revealed, a vibrant present established, and a glorious future made possible. All of us owe Segovia a debt which can never be repaid; to the world, in a troubled century, Segovia represents artistic and spiritual values of an essential kind. I would like to join with guitarists everywhere to wish Segovia, happy birthday!

**Graham Wade**

Our professional association over the last quarter of a century has been one of the extraordinary highlights of my career.

Your artistry has brought guitar playing in the United States to a preeminent position through the sheer uniqueness of your own performance.

Your qualities as a musician have brought honor to the performing arts and been an inspiration to musicians and music lovers throughout the world.

**Sheldon Gold**

One can never say enough about the greatest guitarist on earth: Segovia. I hope I know him for 200 years! Happy Birthday Maestro, and many happy returns of the date.

**Laurindo Almeida**

Best wishes from the Wigmore Hall. Resonances of your many successes here, still linger.

**William Lyne**

I have been aware of the artistry of Andrés Segovia from my earliest years. His beautiful tone and elegant phrasing have had a profound influence on my musical development. His Herculean effort as the prophet of the guitar is the paradigm for all artists in their struggle to overcome the great difficulties that plague the outset of a career. In appreciation for all that he has done, I offer my congratulations on this, the occasion of his 90th birthday.

**George Sakellariou**, Chairman Guitar Dept., San Francisco Conservatory of Music

I can think of few greater honours than to pay tribute to a man whose glorious artistry, dedication and devotion have enriched the lives of so many. Thank you Maestro, not only for the many patient hours you have spent listening to me in private and offering advice and guidance, but also for forging the path which has enabled me to choose this magnificent instrument and beautiful life. Best wishes.

**Sharon (Isbin)**

Thomas Carlyle's "Music is well thought to be the speech of angels"; Congratulations to a master linguist.

**Ray Mitchell**

**Happy Birthday from all at *Guitar* and our readers everywhere.**

As a luthier and, I presume, with all the guitarists and guitar makers all over the world, I shall ever be grateful to the Maestro for his influence on guitar and guitar music. The renewal and prosperity of classical guitar is mostly due to his great talent.

**Robert Bouchet**

To Maestro Segovia. My personal best wishes on your birthday. Your monumental contribution to the world of music touches all guitarists intimately and deeply, and I am honoured to be among the many thousands of people who offer their heartfelt congratulations to you.

**Alan Rinehart**

Maestro: Siempre he considerado como augurio feliz el hecho de celebrar el 21 de Febrero. También como mi onomástica.

Al levantar mi copa, en esta fecha, en ilusionado brindis por el futuro, rindo respetuoso homenaje al hombre cuyo coraje sacó a la Guitarra de las Tinieblas y al artista cuyo mágico sonido illena de gozo el corazón de millones. Con mis más cálidos deseos de Felicidad para Ud y los suyos, y, con sincera y profunda admiración.

**Iznaola**

One way of assessing the immense international impact of Segovia's professional achievement is for each and every guitarist, at all levels, amateur and professional, in Tokyo, Toronto, Stockholm etc., to try to comprehend what the guitar scene in his own area would have been today had Segovia not in fact existed. It is given to few to create a major addition to International culture and this, Segovia has done, by talent, drive, industry and charisma. Whatever the 'plays' now showing, Segovia built the International 'theatre' for them to come into being.

**John Gavall**

Mi estimado Maestro: Two things: 1. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for rescuing single-handed the noblest of all musical instruments from almost the total oblivion it was in; and 2. Thank you for first introducing us to the beautifully elegant and inspired music of Manuel Ponce, whose centenary has just passed. Muy agradecido.

**Richard Stoker**

I wish to express my warmest appreciation of Maestro Segovia's great achievement for the beautiful world of the classical guitar. Maestro Segovia, the doyen of the guitarworld, has contributed much for this instrument and the guitarists of our time are thankful for his great work in his field.

I wish that God will give the Maestro good health, so that he may stay for many more years in robust form and freshness.

**Siegfried Behrend**

There is a sound created by you that we have never heard from any other guitarist, nor do we expect we ever shall. Whether it comes from your finger tips or your soul is an abstract question. Whichever way, it is pure magic. May God bless you and may you continue for many years yet to grace our lives with the beauty of your music.

**Leonard Williams**

To Andrés Segovia with all my love from  
**Malcolm Arnold**

Congratulations Maestro! We would like to extend our warmest wishes for a happy 90th Birthday, and to express our deep appreciation for your unique role in exalting our instrument. We only hope that the new generation of guitarists will be capable of carrying forth the legitimacy, spirit and respect for the instrument which you have given to the music world. Happy Birthday!

**Joanne Castellani & Michael Andriaccio**

For me Segovia is a member of that omnipresent internal pantheon that includes only family members and the closest of friends. Although my direct personal contact with "El Maestro" has been relatively limited, I turn to his image in a very natural way as a source of comfort in moments of crisis — with the death of a relative, when my love life is in upheaval, before take-off and landing in airplanes. He is for all of us, master, supreme poet and spiritual father. If any of us have achieved moments of distinction, this has been possible because Segovia has established the essential elements of the guitar played in the classical style. When we salute Segovia's 90th birthday, we honour not just a great artist but a way of life.

**Eliot Fisk**

"Felicitaciones Maestro Andrés Segovia por estos años vividos con tanta intensidad, mis mejores deseos para usted"

**Corazón Otero**

From the small opening paths of the guitarists of the past, Andrés Segovia fashioned a wide and majestic avenue on which the most important concert halls welcome the guitar with rapture!

**Robert J. Vidal**

Dear Maestro, Do you remember the first evening you came back to Seina after the War, sitting at a bar with a mere handful of students? I was one of them, and for me it was one of the greatest evenings of my musical career, because I was with the greatest performer alive, perhaps of all time, for who else has done so much?

No other single man has taken an instrument and made it loved by all the world. Adolphe Sax made his saxhorns and saxophones, but he didn't make people love them. The violin needed Corelli, Vivaldi, Paganini, Kreisler and a host of others to make it what it is. And it took much more than Chopin to make the piano.

Instead, without you, Maestro, the guitar would still be for strumming songs or an amateur's plaything. You have made the instrument live for us all — the most beautiful instrument that exists. God bless you on your 90th birthday.

**Reginald Smith Brindle**

Van, Maestro Segovia, en estas líneas mis sinceras felicitaciones en el noventa aniversario de su nacimiento.

Quiera que su Dios le proteja y encuentre en El cobijo y bienestar, y quiera que por muchos años más esa esplendorosa bahía malagueña sienta el privilegio de verse festejada por el embrujo de su gentil guitarra. Gracias le doy por el festín de sonidos que con tanta hombria y arte nos ha legado su alma andaluza. Su admirador,

**José L. Romanillos**

*Many Happy returns of your birthday and many good wishes in acknowledgement of your life's achievement.*

**Gilbert Biberman**

Maestro, we salute you on your birthday for your achievements over the past 90 years both in your personal life and in your music. We are all immensely proud of our association with you and remember with pleasure and affection the quality of our working relationship over so many years; in particular your patient dedication and your recognition of the contributions of all of us around you.

**Christopher Nupen, David Findlay, Peter Heelas** and all who worked on "Segovia and the Revival of the Guitar" (Stena) 1963, "Segovia at Los Olivos" (Almuneclar) 1968, "Andrés Segovia: The Song of the Guitar" (Granada) 1977

Dear Maestro, The years have slipped by so quickly since we first met (it was close to the time of your 55th birthday) that it comes almost as a shock to realise that you will soon be 90 years old. That you are still travelling the world and playing to capacity audiences, at an age most of us do not even succeed in reaching, is a gentle reproof to those of us who believe ourselves to be hard-worked. But then, you have been doing these and other things all your life and that is why all of those who are professionally involved in the guitar's microcosm are able to do what we love doing. Today's guitar scene is crowded with actors but it was you who built the stage and raised the curtain. I have long forgotten how many hours we have passed together, but not the countless things you have taught me — above all, a proper love of the guitar and of music. You have often said that you have never had a pupil, except for yourself, but it is impossible for any half-way intelligent person to spend time in your presence without learning. If it were not for the things you have done I might still be trying to convince myself that I enjoyed being a scientist; what others might have been doing with their lives is anyone's guess. If there is nothing new to be written or said about your achievements, we can at least say 'Thank you — and happy birthday'.

**John Duarte**

Maestro Segovia's masterful artistry and selfless dedication to his art have awakened the entire world to the guitar's special beauty and rich versatility.

**Mario Escudero**

Maestro Segovia is not only a great artist, but the greatest among the genius of musical interpretation. May God bless him and fill him with joy.

**Manuel López Ramos**

Maestro, many congratulations on your 90th birthday. The wonderful example you have given of complete love and utter devotion to the classical guitar has, and will continue to be, a great inspiration to us all. With every good wish on this special occasion.

**John Mills**

Andrés Segovia belongs to the generation of Stravinsky, Casals, Picasso and others who between them originated the best art of this century. We all recognise his incomparable services to the guitar; we have all been inspired by his very long and productive career and his example of what true musicianship can be. I should like to thank him for all he has given us and to offer many congratulations and good wishes on his ninetieth birthday.

**Anthea Gifford**

# Segovia

*Interviewed in London  
by John Mills*

photos by Hugh de Camillis



*During his recent British tour Maestro Segovia kindly consented to give an interview for Guitar Magazine, and the session with him that October afternoon showed him to be as strong and full of energy and humour as ever. He was however, suddenly, the strict school-master when I asked if he would mind signing one of his compositions for me, a piece published in Spain many years ago. The copy was taken from me, and calmly, deliberately, torn into about six hundred pieces and dropped into his waste basket! It seemed this was a piece from his youth which had subsequently been published without his knowledge. Luckily I also had with me a copy of the Three Daily Studies published by Schott, and a message of goodwill together with signature was given with no question at all. This was a most unusual and remarkable end to an interview, an interview which had been fascinating to say the least, for surely it must be a dream for any guitarist to have the opportunity to sit across a table from the greatest guitarist the world has known, and simply chat. This is what I was able to do, and the text of that session is set out below.*

*Maestro, I would first of all like to take this opportunity of welcoming you back to Britain, and to ask how you find playing in a large auditorium and comparing this to performing in a much smaller hall as you did in Swindon this time?*

Well do you know the smaller halls are very nice for the sound and poetical character of the guitar, but the instrument has a mysterious possibility of sending its tone a very great distance. This is proved when I play in the Royal Festival Hall, for example, which is a very large hall, of course. There, the guitar I think must be heard by the whole public, otherwise they would not applaud! The other day I went to hear Victoria de los Angeles at the Barbican — for on this tour I had to give a concert there too, and I wanted to see the auditorium for myself. Although it is a large hall, it is somewhat smaller than the Royal Festival Hall, and in that concert I sometimes would look around to see if people could hear, and I arrived at the conclusion that yes, everyone could hear, and that there should be no problem when I play the guitar there.

Tickets for concerts are not exactly cheap, and should the public find it difficult or impossible to hear well, then they will never return! So, thank God, every concert I have given in the Royal Festival Hall has always been full.

Another thing — every two years or so I play in a university near Detroit, and the auditorium there has a seating capacity of five thousand. In that hall I do not play any louder, or with a greater force or energy, because this is very bad for the guitar. As soon as one plays a little too forte, the sound becomes like vinegar — so I try to prevent myself arriving at that point.

It is one of the mysteries of the guitar that Tarrega and Sor, and the pupils of Tarrega, and the pupils of Sor, never imagined that the guitar could be heard in anything but a very small hall, because they did not try it! On my first visit to Barcelona, the final concert there was to take place in a rather large hall. However, before I agreed to play there, I had experimented in the auditorium, because the manager of the hall had said to me, "I know you want to play here, but will your guitar sound well in such a large place?" I answered him, "please, wait a minute — I will position myself on the stage, and if you will be so kind as to walk around the hall and tell me if you hear this?" (The Maestro then clicked his fingers several times.) "Do you hear?" — click — "Do you hear?" — click. "Now, change places with me and please do the same and I will go and listen for myself." And the result — magnificent!

Then, at that concert, I opened for the guitar the world of music, because until then the instrument had been reduced almost entirely to the intimacy of a room, in which some amateurs of the guitar gathered to play to each other.

*Did you ever meet Tarrega?*

No, never. I did not know him. He was to have come to Andalucia but unfortunately he died before this. That was in 1909.

*Before the Royal Festival Hall was built I believe you played often in the Wigmore Hall?*

Well, I was happy to play in a small hall, because I like to be able to express the little poetical subtleties of tone, and you know I have the intention of once again performing in the Wigmore Hall during the coming season. This would be to give a charity concert, and it will be nice to play in the same hall in which I gave my first London concert. Later of course, they built the Royal Festival Hall which is where most of my London performances have been since. There is an amusing story I would like to tell you relating to my first recital in the Royal Festival Hall. I told the manager of the hall, "listen, this is the first time I play here in this very big hall, please don't allow anybody to come to congratulate me until the end, till the end — nobody!" Nevertheless, a gentleman came during the interval, and he told me "well, I know you did not want to receive anybody, but allow me to tell you that I am coming in order that we may congratulate each other!" "Oh yes, and who are you?" I said. "I am the architect of the hall!" he replied. Then he continued, "I am very, very fond of music, and went to every corner of the hall to listen to the sound of your guitar, and I had to let you know that you may play absolutely calm, because there is no problem with the carrying power of the instrument and its excellent tone."

*When I first heard you nineteen years ago, it was in the Fairfield Hall, Croydon, and even though I was at the very back of the hall, every note came through clearly.*

Yes, but I should tell you that there, as indeed in any large hall, it is absolutely essential that the air-conditioning be turned off, for otherwise it reduces the volume of the guitar.

*We have read and enjoyed the first volume of your autobiography, and I understand you are working on the other two volumes. When will these be published?*

First I must tell you that there will be four books in all, not three, because my life is long and bright. I do not want these books to be simply an index of concerts and successes, no, I want to write my life myself, not with the aid of a ghost writer. The first volume is perhaps a little dull because it only covers the period up to about 1920, a period when I was trying to put the guitar in a better position. However, the second volume will be published very soon I hope.

*When did you make your first tour of Great Britain?*

That was in 1925, and it is curious that this was exactly the time Mrs. Tillett of Ibbs and Tillett was entering the organization as a secretary, for that year I entered the organization as an artist. She became the head of the concern eventually, when Mr. Tillett died. Sadly, Mrs. Tillett herself died recently, and I miss her very much. She was a very nice lady, and the only impresario I ever invited to spend some time during the summer in my country house in Andalucia. I always look forward to my tours in Britain, and I come with great pleasure. My little boy Carlos Andrés was born here, and he is very proud to be English.

*That 1925 tour in Britain was not your first major overseas tour though?*

No, before coming here I had already been in South America, and four or five months before visiting London I had played in Paris. That was a time when I was encouraging composers to write pieces for me, and the first symphonic composer who answered my call was Federico Moreno Torroba. Shortly afterwards Joaquin Turina also presented me with several pieces, and these were the first composers to write for me. This happened during the period between my first tour in South America and my first visit to Paris.

*You must have met a number of the well-known South American guitarists during those early years. Looking back, what were your impressions?*

Any pupil of mine today plays a thousand times better than most of them. One celebrated guitarist of that time ended up as a chief of police! No, I think the standard of playing today is many, many times better than it was in those early days.

*Did you ever meet Agustin Barrios?*

Yes, on several occasions. He was certainly gifted for composition, and I always had sympathy for him, but unfortunately he had not the whole knowledge for composing — he was instinctive. This is the reason why I never play anything by him, because in my opinion it is not really musical. As a person he was extremely good-hearted. I told him he should not use steel strings on his guitar, but he insisted. Maybe his right hand, when playing on the gut strings, had not enough force in the fingers to draw from the instrument a vigorous sound, and so he tried these steel strings, but the quality of the sound was not good.

*When did you begin giving master-classes, and do you still teach?*

I gave the first master-classes in Siena, Italy, where a magnificent Academy of high musical studies had been founded. They wanted me to teach there, and so in the summer I used to spend between one and two months in Siena. However, it was not always possible because I sometimes had to go to tour in South America, for when it is summer in Europe it is of course winter in South America, and that is the season for their concerts. It was only maybe a couple of years that I had to miss Siena

however.

Then, later, a friend and I founded "Music en Compostela" a summer school in the beautiful city of Santiago de Compostela in the North West part of Spain, and happily that course is still living. After that, I taught at the University in Berkeley, California, and last summer I also taught in Los Angeles. This was then followed by master-classes at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, it was very nice you know, and there came many, many players, but I could not accept all of them, it is always the same problem.

*You have mentioned Torroba and Turina, what were your impressions of Ponce?*

Well maybe Ponce is the best composer that has written for the guitar. Of course there are many other fine composers, but Ponce is the best. Now he is dead we can tell the truth, and I think nobody will be jealous about that. In the mid 1920's, I went for the first time to Mexico. After my first concert Ponce wrote a beautiful chronicle about the guitar and myself, and I wanted to know more about him, because everything he did revealed him as a musician. I got to meet him, and encouraged him to write for the guitar. He produced first the Sonata Mexicana which as you know I have been playing on this tour, and is a most beautiful work. Eventually he wrote five sonatas for me. There was another Sonata which had been sent to me in an incomplete form because of the war, and sadly this manuscript was lost, along with all my other possessions which had been kept in my house in Barcelona. This house and its contents were lost during the Civil War. I was far away when it happened, and it was terrible when I heard about it.

*As well as large-scale works, Ponce is also famous for many shorter pieces. What do you think of these, for example the Preludes?*

When Ponce was very young, he composed many popular songs that became so popular that even the name of the author was forgotten! He had a very great gift for composing melodies, but later on when he studied harmony and counterpoint in Germany, he then developed a magnificent imagination for harmony, counterpoint and fugue. Up to the present time, the *Twenty Variations and Fugue on "Folia de España"* is the best piece in that style that has been composed for the guitar. Of course, the *Nocturnal* by Benjamin Britten is a very fine composition — as a composition — but it is a little too arid!

In Ponce's smaller compositions there are the beautiful Preludes which you referred to in your question. Of these, twelve were eventually published. There were others, but when he died, Ponce was in Mexico and although his wife had many of the original manuscripts, I could not go there to look through them. He also had sent me the originals for many works, and as I have already said these were lost during the war, along with works by several other composers.

*Another composer we associate with you is Fernando Sor. What was it about his music that particularly attracted you?*

I found many beautiful things by Sor, pieces which seemed to be unknown to the pupils of Tarrega, and even to Tarrega himself. Tarrega advised his pupils not to play the music of Sor, maybe because he was, by accident, looking at one of the Fantasies which sometimes are a little dull! Sor of course produced many magnificent compositions. One of the best French critics of that time said about Sor, I think with a little exaggeration, but nevertheless said that Sor was the Beethoven of the guitar.

The studies of Sor are beautiful — really little concert pieces. Before I came here, I was in Japan, and I had to give four concerts each with a different programme, amounting to over seventy compositions. At one of those concerts I played a group of eight Sor studies. The twenty

studies of Fernando Sor which I selected for the book published some years ago, are I think the very best. They were chosen from his entire output of studies, but I would say that out of all his studies, only two or three are poor, the rest beautiful.

*The public owes you a great debt for bringing the guitar into the concert halls of the world. Also, because you have encouraged academies of music everywhere to employ good guitar teachers, the young players of today can enjoy possibilities of learning and study as never before. Can you therefore give a message to all would-be guitarists?*

I am very glad that my pupils are having wonderful careers, because they work for the guitar and its advancement. This is very important. Now, the advice I give always to all my pupils and all guitarists is to learn well music — do not rely too much on the guitar. Sometimes I advise my pupils to attend all concerts with the exception of guitar concerts; you know why? — because there are mediocrities amongst guitarists, and the time spent at a mediocre guitar recital has been lost, instead of going to a symphonic concert or something like that and perceiving all the beauties of these instruments, that is the most important thing.

Then the guitar student must study music properly, seriously. Do you know, a pianist, a violinist, a 'cellist, will go and make their careers in the conservatory over a period of eight years of study. Maybe some of them did not receive from Heaven the greatest of talent, but they may still become very good professors, very good musicians, if not perhaps great artists, and I console the pupils who are not apt for the life of a concert artist by saying "be quiet, for it is as noble to teach as to give a concert." These people must teach, because they know the guitar very well, for the quantities of "professors" who know nothing is terrible! Some of these professors in the institutions give master-classes and they do not know anything!

A young man has been here earlier to day for a lesson. He plays very well, but he is making his technique the principle thought and sentiment of his musical life, and I

do not approve of that. I told him he plays the piece too much like a straight horizontal line, not a curved musical line. I told him to remember that the melody was always given by Heaven, and the harmony, the counterpoint, the



"You don't really want this" says Maestro after tearing up his composition *Tornadilla*, composed in his teens

John Mills and Segovia discuss Ponce



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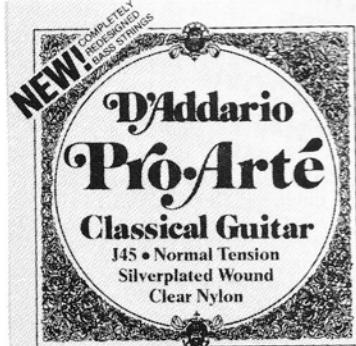
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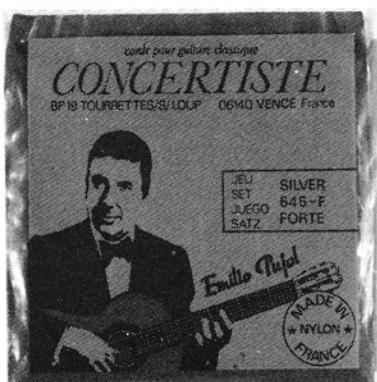
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form, all that belongs to what he has to learn himself. But he plays very well — no difficulty at all technically — he plays beyond all the difficulties.

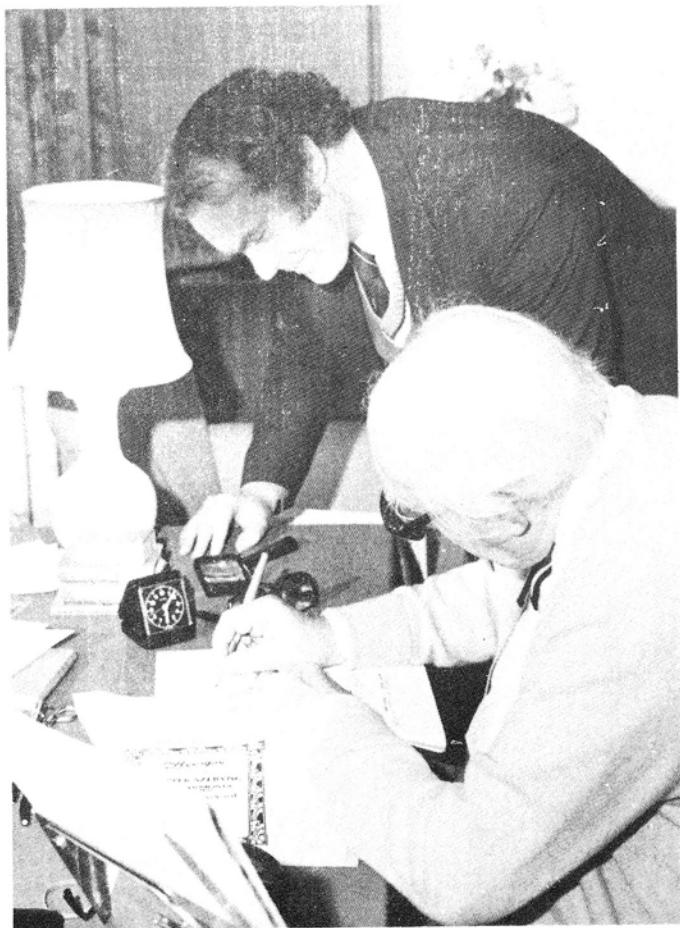
*Thinking of young up-and-coming players, what were your feelings about the Competition at Leeds Castle?*

I was not very happy about the outcome. In fact, I do not think I would like to sit on a jury again where the final placings were decided in that manner. And do you know what happened to the Japanese boy who won? He inflicted this terrible injury on himself so that he could not play anymore, when the whole world was open for him. Ten concerts in Great Britain after the competition, ten concerts in Spain, offers from Scandinavia, Germany, the United States — and he does that!

You know, sometimes I wonder what is happening in art. Painting for example; one of the most celebrated painters has for one of his paintings a circle coloured blue, in the centre a point in red, and then three or four lines across it. That is a painting! A very well-known sculptor has done a spiral like that (demonstrates). That is a sculpture! And in music, I saw the score of an orchestral work, in which the composer has put a note to the second violin section telling "here you may play whatever you like!" Now it seems in the world today, there are a thousand composers (if you can call them all composers,) — a thousand composers when before in one century there were only three or four great composers. Art has to progress, because it is a living thing, but not like that!

*Maestro, to end, can I ask you when in all your travelling and concert giving, which to put it mildly is a hectic life, do you have time to rest?*

When I am asked that question I always say that my life has been like an ascending line, a gradually ascending line, and I still have much I wish to accomplish. I do not feel the need to rest, for one day I will rest in Eternity.



Segovia autographs his *Three Daily Studies*

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This page contains ten staves of musical notation for a six-string guitar. The notation uses standard musical symbols like notes and rests, but includes tablature-specific elements such as vertical bar lines and horizontal dashes. Various performance instructions are scattered throughout the page:

- CVI (Staff 1)
- CIII (Staff 2)
- CVI (Staff 3)
- CIV (Staff 4)
- CIV (Staff 5)
- CI (Staff 6)
- a tempo (Staff 7)
- rit. (Staff 8)
- CII (Staff 9)
- CII (Staff 10)
- Harm. (Staff 11)

The music consists of six staves of sixteenth-note patterns, with some eighth-note patterns appearing in staves 7 through 10. The tablature shows fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) and string indications (e.g., b, d, g, b, e, a). The notation is primarily in common time, with some changes in key signature (e.g., from C major to G major).