

Francisco Tárrega

Gran Vals



Have you ever wondered where that infamous Nokia ringtone came from? Well, fortunately for GT we have **Bridget Mermikides** on the line with the answer.

ABILITY RATING



Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fretting hand stamina
TEMPO: Various	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical repertoire
CD: Tracks 7-8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melodic interpretation

THIS MONTH'S CLASSICAL column features a tune that might claim to include the most played melody of all time: Gran Vals – a solo classical piece written in 1902 by the Spanish guitarist and composer Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909). However, its wide fame is not in its original solo classical guitar form but as a short extract taken from it in 1993 by Ansii Vanjoki and Lauri Kivinen of the Nokia Corporation. This simple, memorable and cheery 13-note melody (with the last note altered from the original) became the first identifiable, and most famous ring-tone of all time: the so-called Nokia Tune has gone global and is now heard an estimated 20,000 times a second – impressive stats for a 19th century solo guitar piece.

This extraordinary posthumous achievement aside, Tárrega's legacy is one of

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enhancing significantly the repertoire, technique and pedagogy of the modern classical guitar, and he remains a key figure in the discipline. Some of his other excellent works include Lagrima, Danza Mora, Capricho Arabe, numerous studies and the famous tremolo piece Recuerdos de la Alhambra (GT 135). He also transcribed many great works originally written for other instruments, for solo guitar including compositions by JS Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Albéniz's ever popular Asturias (GT 149).

Gran Vals – being specifically written for

the solo classical guitar – is more idiomatic than many of the other works in this series, but still poses some challenges in the execution of a smooth lyrical melody while maintaining the lilting 3/4 waltz accompaniment.

I've included detailed tab captions to guide you through the technical challenges so that you can perform it with the light and charming grace that the piece requires. Incidentally, this piece is currently set for Classical Guitar Grade 8, should you be interested in tracking your progress.

The work is constructed in clear, repeating sections so this will help in structuring your practice, which you should – as always – approach with honesty and patience.

When you do get this lovely piece together and find yourself performing it live, be sure to glare and tut disapprovingly at the audience when you get to the famous 'Nokia' melody. It's funny every time. 

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

FREE STROKE, REST STROKE

Two common picking techniques in classical guitar are free stroke and rest stroke. With rest stroke the picking finger plucks a string and then comes to rest against the adjacent one. With the thumb this is the next string down (towards the floor) and with fingers it's the next string up (towards the face). With free stroke the finger doesn't rest on an adjacent string after plucking, but floats free until it's required to pick again. Rest stroke is often favoured for single note playing, while free stroke is for polyphonic playing (chords and arpeggios).

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TRACK RECORD The Naxos CD Tárrega: Guitar Music features Gran Vals alongside a good selection of the composer's other works, while the Concerto Classics CD, Francisco Tárrega: Complete Works for Guitar solo is a truly comprehensive compilation. The Deutsche Grammophon recording, Tárrega: Guitar Works, by Narciso Yepes is also recommended.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 8

[FIRST SECTION] This piece consists of four sections; the first being repeated again at the end. The opening melody notes can be played rest stroke to help them stand out from the accompaniment. The tune begins on the second string and switches to the first string at bar 3 where a half barre at the 2nd fret is needed. If preferred, the melody can change to the first string a bar later. The bass notes should not be allowed ring over to their following bars and so should be muted by touching with the thumb immediately after the new bass note has

been played. At bar 7 the use of the fourth finger for the grace note pull-off is recommended for a crisp sound and a barre is needed for the Bm chord. At bar 11 a five-string barre should be applied in preparation for bar 12. At bar 13 comes the recognisable 'Nokia theme'. At bar 14 a half barre should be used to help get smoothly from the B to the D in the melody. At bar 28 the melody E note can be played open instead of on the second string if preferred and at bar 31 hold onto the A chord so it continues to ring over the bass line into the next bar.

The score is written for guitar, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes standard musical notation with a guitar-specific staff below the treble staff, showing fret numbers and string numbers (E, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom). Chord diagrams are provided above the staff for various chords. The score is divided into six systems, each starting with a system number (1, 6, 12, 18, 24) on the left. The chords and fret numbers are as follows:

- System 1 (Bars 1-5):** Chords: A, A6/E, A6, Amaj7/E, Amaj7, A. Fret numbers: 2/5, 5, 6/7, 6/7, 7, 6/7, 6/7, 2, 2/2, 2/2, 4, 2/2, 2/2, 4, 2/2, 5.
- System 2 (Bars 6-11):** Chords: A/E, Amaj7/E, Bm, E9, E7/B, E7sus4/B, E13. Fret numbers: 5, 2/2, 4, 4/2, 3/4, 3/4, 2, 3/4, 3/4, 4, 3/4, 5/4, 9, 9/7, 9/7.
- System 3 (Bars 12-17):** Chords: E7, A, A, AH, A. Fret numbers: 7, 9/7, 9/7, 12/10, 11/9, 9/7, 7/9, 7/5, 6/5, 2/5, 5, 6/7, 6/7.
- System 4 (Bars 18-23):** Chords: A6/E, A6, Amaj7/E, Amaj7, A, Bmsus4/D. Fret numbers: 7, 6/7, 6/7, 2, 2/2, 2/2, 4, 2/2, 2/2, 4, 2/2, 2/2, 5, 2/2, 2/2, 12, 12/11, 12/11.
- System 5 (Bars 24-29):** Chords: Bm/D, Bm, Dm, A/E, B/E. Fret numbers: 10, 12/11, 12/11, 7, 7/9, 7/9, 10, 10/10, 10/10, 9, 10/9, 10/9, 5, 6/7, 6/7, 7, 8/9, 8/9.

CD TRACK 8

it works, so is worth following. There are some slightly stretchy bars for the fretting hand and the hammer-ons and pull-offs should be cleanly executed so be patient and take your time learning this part.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 8

[THIRD SECTION] The next section in B major (from bar 65) requires a barre at the 2nd fret for the first eight bars. The melody line is now the middle voice so your aim is to make sure it stands out from the accompaniment and

always give the melody notes their full value in length. At bar 77 there is a little gliss sliding up to the G# and E on the third beat – this should not be made a big deal of; it's just a stylistically romantic feature of this music.

Sheet music for Francisco Tárrega's *Gran Vals*, Third Section, in B major. The music is written for guitar, showing a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The piece is divided into measures with bar numbers 74, 90, 80, 95, 97, 113, 100, 116, 106, 122, 111, 112, 127, and 128. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: D#7/A#, G#m, C#m6/E, C#m/E, B/F#, F#7, B, B7/F#, E, E/B, B7, E, E/B, E/G#, A, A6/E, and A6. The guitar part includes various techniques such as barre, glissando, and slurs. The bottom staff shows the guitar's fretboard with fingerings and bar numbers.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 8

[Bars 97-128] You'll notice that the next section in E major is played higher in register, as a nice contrast to the previous section and is delicate and tongue-in-cheek. The fingering is fairly straightforward; there are barres

during the 5th and 6th bars of this section. Lastly, as a kind of musical book-end, we have a final rendition of the first section (bars 129-end) to end the piece. Good luck and have fun!

Amaj7/E Amaj7 A A/E Amaj7 Bm E9

132

E7/B E7sus4/B E13 E7 A

138

A A6/E A6 Amaj7/E Amaj7

144

A Bmsus4/D Bm/D Bm Dm A/E

150

B/E E7 A A/E A/C# A

156