

Fernando Sor

Study in A minor



This étude by Sor, transcribed for you by **Bridget Mermikides**, is a great exercise for the fingers whether classical guitar is your thing or not...

ABILITY RATING



Moderate/Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: E major	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fingerstyle staccato playing
TEMPO: 120 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chord muting
CD: TRACK 23	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chord switching fluency

THE WORLD OF the classical guitar owes a great deal to Fernando Sor. He played a key role in elevating the status of the guitar from a taverna instrument to one capable of music of the highest quality and worthy of the most prestigious concert halls.

During his lifetime Sor became famous as a guitarist-composer and was described by a respected critic of the time as, "The Beethoven of the guitar". He was praised for his profound musicianship and performed in concert with many celebrated artists including at least once with the young Franz Liszt.

Sor's guitar music began appearing in print as early as 1808 and he continued to compose until his death in 1839. Soon after this, the guitar suffered a drastic decline and practically all of Sor's music went out of print and many manuscripts were lost. Compared to his contemporaries such as

Schubert, Schumann, Beethoven and Chopin, Sor was considered an obscure and second-rate composer.

It was not until the extraordinary career of Andrés Segovia (1893-1987) that Sor's music began to be heard again. Segovia would commonly feature Sor's pieces in his concerts, in addition to making the first recordings of them.

Sor's guitar compositions included divertissements, studies, sonatas, fantasias, minuets, waltzes, marches, siciliennes, guitar duos and larger scales works including Serenade opus 37 and Caprice opus 50.

In 1945 Segovia published a volume of 20 carefully selected studies, chosen for their musical merit as well as their

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TECHNIQUE FOCUS ACCURATE CHORD FRETTING


This piece involves a sequence of staccato chords with an attractive harmonic progression that is not only fun and satisfying to play, but also one of the less technically demanding of the studies. Whether you play classical guitar or not it's a wonderful fretting-hand exercise. Picking hand fingernails should be rounded and smoothly filed for a clear tone, and a good classical sitting posture is recommended. The main objectives of this piece are to produce an evenly balanced and consistent sound on the chords, and then to mute the strings as cleanly as possible between them to execute the rests. This is mainly done by the picking hand fingers as they jump back onto the strings to mute after plucking (releasing fretting hand fingers also helps). For the fretting hand, aim to place the chord shapes down in one block for efficiency and good timing. This may mean consciously making the chord shape in the air above the strings before placing it down. Practise this slowly at first for accuracy.

GET THE TONE

I played a classical guitar made by Ken Leftwich, recorded with a stereo pair of AKG 414 microphones into Logic Pro 8 on an Apple Mac Pro and an Apogee Ensemble soundcard. The 'church reverb' was Logic's Space Designer plug-in. Any decent classical guitar would do the trick - see Technique Focus for some fingernail tips.

technical value, and in his footnote he says: "The studies can be used not only for the development of the technique of the student, but as well for the preservation of it at its height for the masters. They contain exercises of the arpeggios, chords, repeated notes, legatos, thirds, sixths, melodies in the higher register and in the bass, interwoven polyphonic structures, extensions for the left (fretting) hand and more... which if practised with intelligence, will develop vigor and flexibility in both hands and will finally lead to a better command of the instrument."

This same book is available today (published by Hal Leonard) and it is used by countless classical guitarists throughout the world as part of their standard technical and musical training. The piece featured here comes from this set.

The most recent significant event in the resurrection of Sor's music occurred in 1976 when the eminent musicologist Brian Jeffery republished Sor's complete known works for guitar after extensively searching for them in libraries and private collections - for the first time since Sor's death, guitarists finally had access to his music! It has since been revised and is published in a number of volumes by Tecla (www.tecla.com/authors/sor.htm). 



TRACK RECORD: The Segovia Collection Volume 3 includes 11 Sor studies and is worth having in any guitarist's album collection since Segovia redefined the way that guitar was appreciated. Goran Krivokapic Plays Sor features 12 studies, Fantasia No.2 and Divertimentos - it is truly superb! The entire works of Sor, played by Lawrence Johnson, can be found at CRGrecordings.com.



Fernando Sor:
undisputed composer
for classical guitar



Andrés Segovia:
The 20th century's
foremost classical
guitar virtuoso

LEBRECHT

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE / GETTY

PLAYING TIPS

For the first half of this piece it is recommended to use the thumb (p) for the lower notes and the first (i) and second (m) fingers on the upper ones.

There are no dynamics in the original score but this piece responds to a little light and shade, therefore some suggested 'hairpins' have been added.

Am E/G# Am Dm6 D#dim7 E F E/G# G#m|b5 Am A7/G D/F# F7

E E7/D Am/C E7/B Am Dm6 D#dim7 E C#dim7 D Bdim7 C F6 C/G G7

C E7/B Am etc



The musical score is presented in a system of five staves. Each staff consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, and a guitar-specific staff below it. The guitar staff shows fret numbers (0-7) for each string (E, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom). Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Some measures contain slurs or hairpins (crescendo and decrescendo lines) indicating dynamics. The piece ends with a final chord and a fermata over the last note.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 23

[Bar 16, previous page] From the third beat, try omitting the thumb and use the third (a), second (m) and first (i) finger for upper string tone consistency.

Pay attention to the quarter notes in the second half. These break up the persistent eighth note rhythms and give a real lift to the feel and sound of the piece.

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