

REPertoire

IRINA KULIKOVA

Sonatina Mvt. 2
Federico Torroba



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"WHEN I PLAY THIS PIECE I ALWAYS IMAGINE WHEN YOU ARE IN NATURE SOMEWHERE AND YOU SEE THE SKY, HOW DARK IT IS AND HOW MANY STARS ARE IN THE SKY. IT ALWAYS VERY ROMANTIC... ALL OF THESE HARMONIES, THEY SHOW THE SPARKLE OF THE NIGHT SKY. THIS IS WHAT I TRY TO PLAY WITH A VERY DEEP PROFOUND SOUND. I TRY TO DESCRIBE THE BEAUTIFUL ATMOSPHERE."

LESSON DESCRIPTION

In the second installment of her tutorial on Federico Moreno Torroba's Sonatina, Irina Kulikova guides us through the second movement, revealing how to bring Torroba's melody to life through an exploration of a variety of techniques. She highlights how in this rich, atmospheric movement it is crucial to maintain a singing, cantabile sound.

Irina goes through the piece measure by measure, giving advice on how to balance the right hand, how to get the most resonant harmonics possible and discussing everything from form to phrasing.



ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

With the rare beauty of her tone and her enchanting presence on stage, Irina Kulikova catches the hearts of audiences across the globe. Irina Kulikova tours far afield, with appearances at leading festivals in Europe, North America and Asia and in distinguished concert halls such as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, and many more. She has received over 30 awards for her artistry, including 1st prizes at the highly prestigious competitions of Michele Pittaluga in Italy, Guitarra Alhambra in Spain, Forum Gitarre Wien in Austria and Iserlohn in Germany.

OUTLINE

1. Setting the Tone
2. Melody
3. Balanced Articulation
4. Exercise
5. Dialogue
6. Interpretation
7. Reprise

SETTING THE TONE



Irina stresses that the first measure sets the tone for the piece. If we diligently work to identify our interpretive intensions then we can create the right mood from the very first moment. The first chord has direction, but is relaxed. The arpeggio moves to the F on the first string, which we must remember is the first note of the melody. This chord has to be connected to the melody.

In this first ascending line there is a feeling of movement, almost an *accelerando*. It is like the heart is beating a little bit faster. Because excitement is building, the line moves more as it goes up, and relaxes once it has arrived. When we play the passage in this way we can feel like we are really in the music, giving it life.

The final detail in measure 1 is the rest on the fourth beat in the bass. It is important to mute the bass gently. Stopping the resonances enables us to enjoy the silence, and helps us focus on specific moments without distraction.

KEY TAKEAWAY

It is very important to know how you want to build the line and to ensure that your accents don't counteract that idea. Work on balancing your right hand articulation and listening closely to the melody in order to ensure you are not breaking the line or creating fragmented phrases.



MELODY



Irina's main focus in this movement is on creating a singing voice in the melody throughout. She admits that playing cantabile is one of the most challenging things to do on the guitar, but says it is absolutely necessary in this movement.

What makes playing cantabile so difficult? Our right hand does not have the capability to sustain a note like the voice, a bow, or even a piano pedal can. Another challenging factor of creating a singing line is maintaining a good balance between the fingers of the right hand. In order to help us overcome these difficulties Irina provides some helpful exercises and tips.

BALANCED ARTICULATION

Though the right hand has different articulation in each finger it is a good exercise to practice creating a consistent sound with all of them. Irina demonstrates how playing the same note on the same string but alternating right hand fingers requires that you figure out how much strength each finger will need.

While the i and m fingers may be able to produce relatively even tone, the a finger may need a bit more strength in order to produce the same sound. Here is a very simple exercise to work on this technique.



EXERCISE

Choose one finger and play on one string from pianissimo gradually to fortissimo. Do this with each finger. This will help you become more aware of how well you are balancing your hand and consequently your melodies and cantabile lines. You'll become much more aware of the dynamics, colors, timbres, and textures that each finger can produce.

DIALOGUE

As the piece begins to develop in measure 9 Irina draws our attention to the interaction between voices. It is a dialogue of contrasts between the melody, and the bass which has an echo-like quality. Irina says that she thinks of this section as a conversation. She notes that people say that Mozart took normal conversations and converted them to notes when he was composing. In the same way we can think of the way people speak to inspire us when we play.



INTERPRETATION

Irina shares a some helpful ideas on how to use interpretive elements in the piece. She says that in order to make measures 13 through 16 sing we have to make sure that our emotions don't cause us to lose control of the line. To do this she recommends using rubato. The melody must be able to sing as you build the line gradually. Instead of letting our energy cause us to speed up, we can consider using some rubato to enhance the melody instead.

Another important moment in the piece is the transition into the reprise in measure 19, which is marked *rallentando*. We should have a clear concept of where our *rallentando* is going and what its direction is. We can actually shape the *rallentando* by doing a very subtle *accelerando* in the very beginning of the measure, and then slowing down and with a gradual *decrescendo*. This helps us avoid an overly metronomic *rallentando*, and leads into the reprise more elegantly.



REPRISE

Irina plays the reprise in a similar manner to the opening of the movement, but with a more dreamy mood and using a softer, calmer, more *tasto* sound. Measures 24 through 30 are very intimate and should be played softly, like a lullaby. Irina recommends using 2 as a guide finger in measure 26 in order to let the melodic line continue to sing. It is a very sensitive moment so we have to pay close attention to how the line sounds and make sure that there is no squeaking as we shift.



When playing the harmonics at the end of the piece Irina says to imagine that the string is hot, lifting your finger very quickly. This will help the string resonate more and will sound much fuller. Irina finishes the lesson by sharing that when she plays this movement she imagines the romanticism of the night sky filled with stars. She tries to describe the beautiful atmosphere through the music.

HISTORY



Federico Moreno Torroba (b Madrid, March 3, 1891; d Madrid, Sept 12, 1982) was a Spanish composer famous for his guitar works and zarzuelas. Torroba was inspired to write for the guitar by his friendship with Segovia and soon after became well known for his guitar compositions. Though Sonatina (1924) was one of his earliest pieces written for the guitar, it is still considered to be one of his finest works.

RESOURCES

Isaac Bustos' Lesson on Torroba's Nocturno

Learn another one of Federico Moreno Torroba's compositions with Isaac Bustos.

Thomas Viloteau's Lesson on Right Hand Technique

Looking for a more in depth look at the right hand? Check out Thomas Viloteau's lesson on Right Hand Technique.



NOTES

