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REPERTOIRE

IRINA KULIKOVA

Sonatina Mvt. 3
Federico Torroba

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"LISTENING TO GREAT MUSIC WRITTEN IN A SPANISH STYLE, OR WRITTEN ON A SPANISH FLAMENCO RHYTHM BY CLASSICAL MUSICIANS IS A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. AND OF COURSE THE FOUNDATION OF THIS CLASSICAL PIECE IS ACTUAL FLAMENCO MUSIC."

LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this lesson Irina Kulikova teaches the last movement of Federico Moreno Torroba's Sonatina. She guides us through the piece drawing our attention to its structure and motivic connections to the first and second movements.

Through an explanation of the foundation and form of the movement, she gives us an in depth understanding of the musical context of this movement. Irina gives us special insight into her interpretation of the piece, which she has been a fixture in her repertoire throughout her career.

With practice tips, fingerings, and interpretive advice, this lesson gives us a wholistic perspective on the final movement Torroba's masterpiece.

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. Primary theme
2. Secondary theme
3. Ornaments
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5. Primary theme's return
6. Practice tip
7. Development
8. Arpeggios
9. Transition
10. Direction
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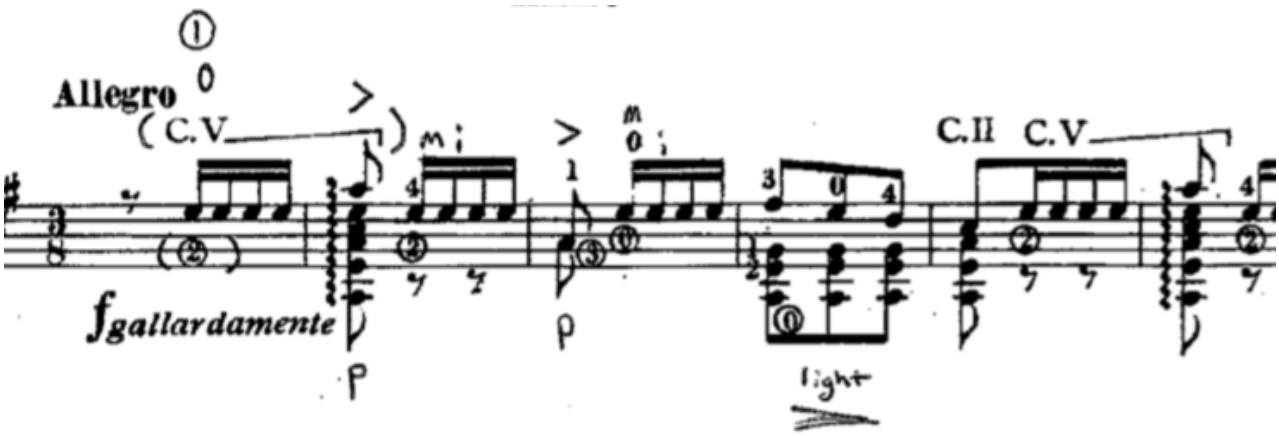
12. Coda

PRIMARY THEME

The first bar is very important as it sets up the mood for the rest of the piece. The key element of the first measure is the rest. Before we begin to play we have to be mentally prepared, already in the mood of the piece. Irina recommends internally saying “and” on the rest because it helps make sure that you are prepared and ensures that the sixteenth notes will be even.

It is important to practice this section slow so that we can accent in the right places, and create a sense of elegance. This section is very rhythmic, at the same time it is not rough. In order to create this effect we need to pay close attention to where we are accenting chords, and when we are playing light chords.

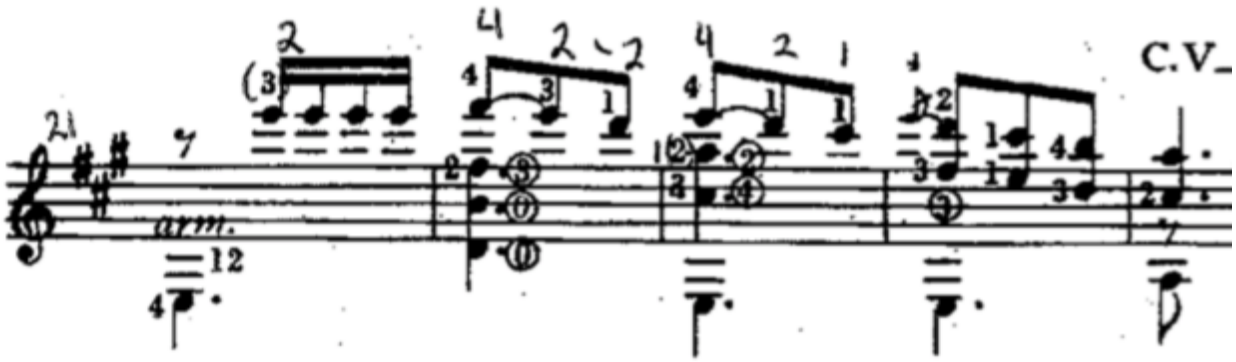


KEY TAKEAWAY

Try to practice measure 1 through the downbeat of measure 3 as a single phrase. Focus on making sure that your wrist does not move away from the guitar when you strum. If you travel too far with your wrist then it will be difficult to return to the string and play the next notes in time.

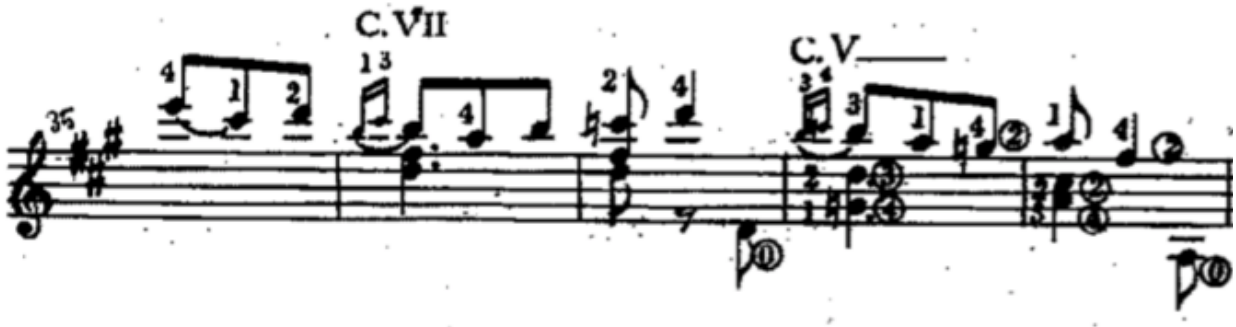
SECONDARY THEME

The mood quickly changes in measure 9, creating a contrast with the preceding phrase. We can highlight the change by using apoyando on the melodic line. In measures 21 and 22 Irina changes the fingering in order to help the hand be more stable. The F# to E slur is much stronger if the fingers aren't having to stretch too far beyond the neck.



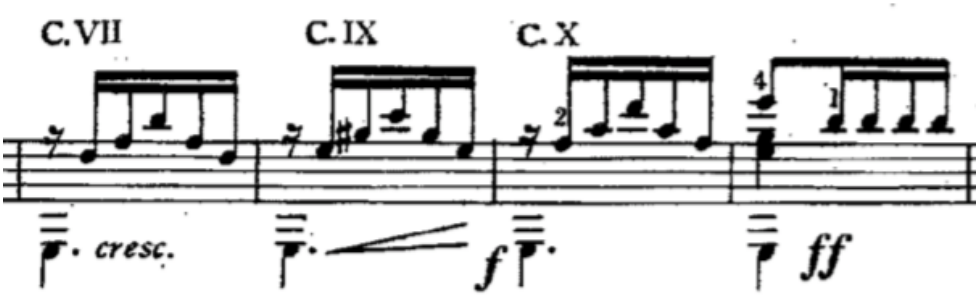
ONAMENTS

The ornaments in this section need to be very light and fast. In measure 38 for instance, we must quickly move to the string and then immediately relax the fourth finger. When the finger is free the slur can be fast. We should avoid aggressively slamming the finger on the fretboard because it will slow us down. The ornament should be quiet and swift.



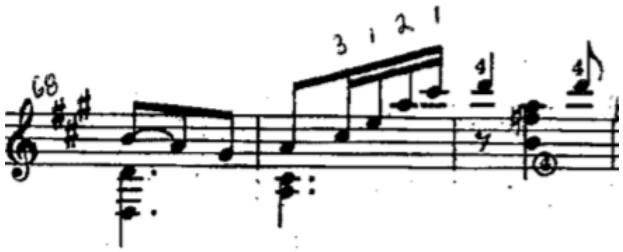
LINE

In measure 50 there is a crescendo as we play a series of arpeggios. The main difficulty is to bring out the line F#, G# A, B in the middle register. Irina recommends practicing this section with block chords first, making sure to incorporate the crescendo when moving from chord to chord. Next, practice the arpeggio slowly making sure to hear the line.



PRIMARY THEME'S RETURN

The primary theme returns in measure 57, but this time it modulates. In measure 69, Irina stresses once again how we should find fingerings that do not require the wrist to move too much. This flourish of notes is more of a gesture leading to measure 70, so we should try to practice so that there is no break.



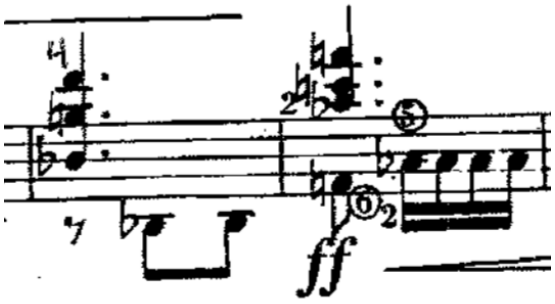
PRACTICE TIP

Irina shares a practice tip, saying that if we really want to be sure that something is polished, we need to practice consistency. We should try and play the short section that we are learning ten times in a row. If we mess up, we have to start over at one. This ensures that we are being diligent with each repetition and that we are able to consistently play the section. While this is not necessary for all of our practice, it is an especially effective technique when we are trying to develop muscle memory for a particularly difficult section.

DEVELOPMENT

At the culmination of the phrase we have a difficult leap from the B flat in the bass to the chord at the downbeat of measure 98. It is important that we don't leave a long break between the bass notes and the chord because this is the moment that the whole phrase has been leading up to.

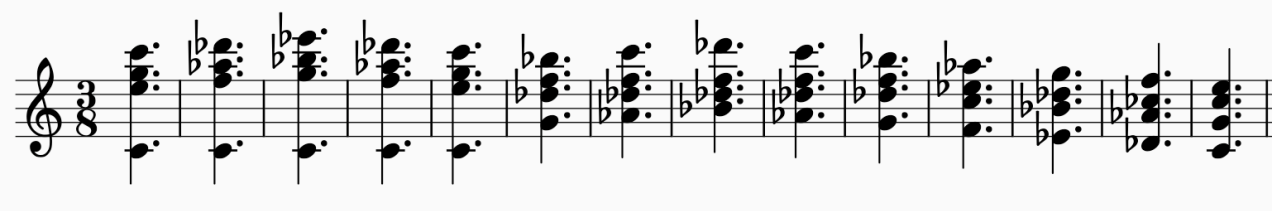
The key is to let the B flat ring out long enough that it does not sound short, and then make a very quick shift up to the chord.



The main interpretive features of measures 102 through 121 are the rubato and articulation. The rubato in the opening of this section is very free, and should feel like a direct contrast to the rhythmic, articulate motive that re enters in measure 106. We can use these interpretive techniques to highlight the two different characters.

ARPEGGIOS

The arpeggio sequence during the development (measures 122 through 134) are quite difficult for the left hand. Irina recommends taking time to practice the chords with the left hand as block chords. We should only add the right hand arpeggio when we are confident that we know exactly where the left hand is going through the whole passage.



We can also practice this section slowly focusing on the first note accent with the a finger thereby bringing out the melody. While we can practice this section with the metronome, Irina recommends not relying on it too heavily. She reminds us that it is crucial that we have our own internal sense of pulse.

When we finish playing the arpeggios we can use accents to help us maintain the energy and direction of the line (measures 135-138).

TRANSITION

The ostinato in the bass figure starting in measure 159 provides us with some interpretive freedom. We can play it in a variety of different ways depending on our mood and the space we are performing in. The bass is alone in measures 163 to 166, so we should pay particular attention to how we choose to articulate the line. Irina notes that she prefers to play the line alternating p and i so the line is more clear and energetic.

The transition ends with the markings accelerando, peasante, and piu tenuto. Torroba is giving us a lot of freedom with how we choose to interpret these bars. Whatever we choose to do, we should be aware that the quiet theme from the second movement of the piece is about to be reintroduced. With that in mind we should prepare the listener to go back to the gentle andante theme.

DIRECTION

One of the most important things for us to keep in mind is where we are going. It is easy to loose track of what is happening musically when so many themes are being developed and reintroduced. We have to be able to identify the differences each time a theme is introduced so that we know where the piece is going. Why? First of all it helps us not get lost in performance, but more importantly it helps us have a better overall concept of phrasing.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Take a look at each time the primary theme is introduced (in measures 1, 57, and 189). Each time the ending of the theme changes depending on what happens next. Once we understand how each one relates to the next section we will be able to avoid getting lost in the rondeau form.

MUSICAL INSPIRATION

Irina says that she gets inspiration for this piece by listening to Spanish pieces. She seeks inspiration for how to play this music with a Spanish flavor by listening to everything from Mikhail Glinka's Jota, to traditional flamenco music. She says even listening to the Spanish language can help us understand this distinctive character, and therefore help us interpret Torroba's piece.

CODA

The coda is the most powerful section of the piece. Irina says that it is important to use time and weight to draw the listener's ear to this section. We get the effect of a fortissimo by making making the chords a little bit heavier and using time and crescendos to keep the line moving forward. The final chord should be short and strong.

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

Jorge Caballero' Lesson on Turina's Sevillana
Learn another one classic Spanish piece with Jorge Caballero!

Irina Kulikova's Lessons on Torroba's Sonatina
Don't miss Irina Kulikova's tutorials on the first two movements of Torroba's Sonatina!

NOTES