

REPERTOIRE

GOHAR VARDANYAN

Sevilla (Albeniz)



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*“PLAY THESE PASSAGES LIKE A SINGER
SPILLING THEIR SORROWS TO YOU!”*

LESSON DESCRIPTION

This lesson by Gohar Vardanyan focuses on Sevilla, the third of eight pieces in the “Suite Española”, originally written for piano by the Spanish composer Isaac Albeniz. This piece has strong roots in the Sevillana, a variant of the flamenco dance with specific formal and rhythmic elements that heavily inspired Sevilla. Gohar plays through examples of the Sevillana, and shows how Albeniz crafted his own original piece out of a historical tradition.

Gohar talks through important technical tips that help her find success such as stopping notes, strokes, slurs, and common fingers. While she doesn't change any fingerings, she makes a point to play the lyrical melodies very vocally. Finally, she stresses the importance of being flexible with the tempo to aid expression, but not so much that it obscures the rhythmical clarity of the piece. We hope you enjoy exploring this Albeniz masterpiece!



ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR



Widely admired for her technique and artistry, Armenian guitarist Gohar Vardanyan has performed throughout the United States for numerous guitar societies, universities, and arts organizations.

In addition to her performing career, Ms. Vardanyan is an avid teacher and prolific author. She frequently teaches master classes and guitar technique workshops during her concert stops.

OUTLINE

1. Sevillana
2. Voices
3. Rhythmic Freedom
4. Fingerings
5. Vocal Expression
6. Tempo
7. Conclusion



SEVILLANA



In this lesson by Gohar Vardanyan, you'll explore Sevilla by Isaac Albeniz. This piece is part of the "Suite Espanola", originally composed for piano. However, Albeniz did have the guitar in mind while writing, and this piece clearly conveys that. To Gohar's ear, the piece even sounds as if it was meant for guitar!

Part of the reason for this is that the piece is based on a flamenco dance form called Sevillana. This impacts the rhythmic structure, but the form itself is still original to Albeniz.

Sevillana pieces typically follow their own unique structure, and come in groups of three and four, usually in different keys to keep things exciting. They open with a rhythmic pattern consisting of tonic and dominant chords, and then move into a main melody, called a Salida. Next comes a *copla* that repeats three times. That entire pattern repeats three times to create just one Sevillana.

Listen to the video lesson to hear those rhythms and get that sound in your ear before beginning the opening of Albeniz's Sevilla.

If you were to change the opening slurred passage into rasgueados, the structure of the Sevillana is much more clear. Rhythm is the key element in driving this piece forward.



VOICES

At the same time, it's important to remember to play this piece in the classical style it was composed in. In the opening, there are three voices to follow. Bring out the middle voice the most. The notated articulation is very important to make the piece sound rhythmic. Cover the top note after playing each eighth note to keep them detached.



In measure three, the top voice can be very legato, but keep the bass more articulated.

Many players add rasgueados in measure six before beat three, but it is up to you how many to add. You're encouraged to study some more video performances of this piece to look for this!

In the minor section, be sure to let the B-flat in the bass ring. However, to keep the harmony clear, mute the low D in the measure marked "legato". If you stop this note with your p finger in the right hand, you will also be prepared for the following measure.

The low D should also be stopped before the following G, but Gohar prefers to use her second finger in her left hand to cut this note so the sound quality isn't compromised.

The image shows a musical score for guitar, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is in 8/8 time and features complex rhythmic patterns with many slurs and accents. The top staff has a 'legato' marking and a circled '3' above a measure. The bottom staff has a circled '2' above a measure. The score is labeled 'L 2800' at the bottom left.

When the melody returns down the octave on the next line, Gohar plays "rest stroke slurs", meaning she pulls downward in her right hand. This helps the descending line sound clear in the texture.



RHYTHMIC FREEDOM



To mimic the form of the Sevilliana, the same musical material repeats in a different key, E-flat. While it's important to keep the rhythm strict, don't forget to allow the music to breathe. This can often times include a slight pull or push in certain places. For example, the final chord before the key changes back to D is harmonically tense, suggesting a slight slow-down. It's healthy to have this musical freedom, but always jump right back into rhythm.



FINGERINGS



Gohar doesn't change any of the fingerings from the arrangement in the fast sixteenth note run. For the chords that follow, your pinky is the common finger that glues the chords together. Keep it down in between to keep the hand stable.

The most difficult transition is where the E-flat jumps down an octave. Practice this very slowly and carefully! Listening to every note in each of the chords helps keep them balanced.

The image shows a musical score for guitar in G major. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. Measure 1 is marked with a forte *f* dynamic and a fermata over the chord symbol ϕ II. Measures 2 and 3 contain chords CVII and CVIII, with fingerings 4, 2, 3, 4 and 4, 2, 3, 4 indicated. Measure 4 contains chord CIII with a fermata. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 5 is marked with a mezzo-forte *meno f* dynamic and a fermata over the chord symbol CII. Measures 6 and 7 contain chords CII and CII with fermatas. Measure 8 contains chord ϕ VII with a fermata. The score includes various fingerings (0, 3, 4, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 0) and dynamics (*f*, *meno f*). There are also some markings like *i m* and *f* at the bottom of the staff.

In the measure before the material repeats in G Major, Gohar likes to fill out the final beat so that it contains four sixteenth notes. While this provides more motion and excitement into the new key, it's up to your taste if you want to include it.

VOCAL EXPRESSION



The B Section provides opportunity for expression and dynamics. Make the line sing! Gohar tries to imagine a "sad flamenco singer" or an opera, and play as if a person is singing.

Since the line is lyrical (that is, it's largely stepwise motion with a few ornaments), it sounds natural to play like a singer.

This also means you have the freedom to include rubato and stretch time. Of course, always respect the basic rhythms in the music and continue to play notes in proportion to one another.



If you take extra time in one spot, make up for it later by speeding up later on. It doesn't have to be in the same measure, but do so within the phrase. Aim for longer phrases rather than short ones, and don't be afraid to really push and pull with emotion.

After the dominant chord leading to C minor, experiment with playing the next C longer than an eighth note. This lets the cadence breathe. Especially where triplets and duplets interact in the next line, add rubato without obscuring the written rhythmic values.

Listen to how these interacting rhythmic values create a melody that sounds almost like someone speaking their thoughts. Perhaps an answer comes a few measures later where the bass enters.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Whether by imaging a singing voice or a speaking one, personifying the music allows you to find deeper expression, and is always helpful!

TEMPO

Gohar stretches the time again with the measure of G notes to get a more romantic sound.



Be sure to keep the difference between the septuplet and sextuplet clear- quite a challenge, but it creates a very expressive effect!

Consider speeding up the tempo once the piece goes into octaves. If done with control, a faster speed can create a powerful contrast to the more melancholy rubato section that just finished.

When the expressive melody returns towards the ending, it can be appropriate to play it louder, since this is the second time it's being heard. Treat it more like a statement this time.



CONCLUSION

Arrive powerfully at the rhythmic part in the final two lines, since this begins the transition back to material from the introduction of the piece.

Sevilla doesn't contain material that's extremely complicated, and the same melodic material repeats in several keys, both Major and Minor. There isn't too much room for extreme expression with tempo and dynamics, but there is some room in particular sections to evoke vocal textures that can be really powerful.

Hopefully this was helpful information to help you with Sevilla! Once you're at a level high enough to play a piece such as this, you have enough knowledge to make this piece your own and perhaps break a few rules in the process. Good luck!



RESOURCES



Gohar Vardanyan's Lesson on Cordoba

If you want more lessons like this one, you're in luck! Watch as Gohar breaks down another piece in Albeniz's Suite Española, this time Cordoba.

Kai Narezo's Lesson On Rasgueados

Interested in learning more about rasgueados? Strengthen all sorts of flamenco techniques in this in-depth lesson by Kai Narezo.



