


TECHNIQUE

# PEPE ROMERO

## On Daily Routine



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*"I WANT A GUITAR THAT KNOWS ME AND I KNOW HER, AND THAT TOGETHER WE CAN DO WHATEVER THE DREAM IS, HOWEVER I FEEL LIKE IN THE MOMENT."*

## LESSON DESCRIPTION



Maintaining a daily routine on the guitar is important not only to free yourself of physical blockades, but to establish an awareness of the sounds you're producing and of the physical sensations that create them.

In this lesson, we are in Pepe Romero's home in Del Mar, California, listening as he takes us through his daily routine on the guitar. By the end of the lesson, you'll have a sense of the purpose of keeping a routine, and an understanding of the dedication required to maintain one!





# ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR



There are very few true living legends in the world of classical music, few who have sustained greatness and grown throughout their lives — Pepe Romero is such an artist.

Pepe was born in Málaga, Spain, in 1944. By age seven, Pepe set foot on the concert stage for the first time, at the Teatro Lope de Vega in Sevilla. And now, more than sixty years later, he continues to mesmerize audiences throughout the world.

He has worked with almost every major conductor and has to his credit more than 60 recordings.

## OUTLINE

1. Awareness
2. Overtones
3. Relationship to Guitar
4. Mobility
5. Technique and Musicality
6. Repertoire
7. End of the Day





# AWARENESS



When he first picks up the guitar in the morning, Pepe Romero prepares his mind and ears for practice. First he will take a second to appreciate the aesthetic look of the guitar, bringing joy to the front of his mind. Once he gets physically comfortable holding it, he'll tune the guitar using harmonics. Tuning not only serves the purpose of improving intonation, but it helps Romero practice listening deeply to the many different qualities of his sound.

Next, he'll focus on sensations involved in getting a full and rich sound. To do this, he will play something simple- a noise, phrase, or song he hears- and listen to the overtones he creates with the strings. As the guitar can feel different to play each day, these first few notes establish the feeling of playing for that particular day. While playing, Romero constantly evaluates and monitors his sound, as he is doing in this image. If he plays a string too hard, he stops, goes back, and softens his attack.

He will also be aware of the pressure he uses on the strings, and how the strings push back in response.





# OVERTONES



While playing one example, he is dissatisfied with the color of his sound, so he repeats a phrase in order to play it in a way that sets off more overtones, or a “more intense wave of harmonics”, as he describes it. Now he is more aware of how to calibrate the mechanics of his fingers for the day’s practice.

By searching for the best sound in this way, Romero will not only awaken his instruments’ ability to generate a rich body of overtones, but awaken his own ears to hear the overtones. For him, the range of overtones one can produce is the most important part of playing the guitar.

Overtone create a variety of nuances that lie beyond the note itself, and Romero wants his guitar to have the flexibility to access many different combinations of overtones, whenever called for by the music. By training his ears to hear the overtones, he can know when he is producing them, and ultimately control his use of them.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

While starting your day’s playing on the guitar, spend some time playing simple things and focus on listening to your sound and overtones. Feel the forces between your fingers and the strings, and develop a strong relationship between yourself and the instrument.



# RELATIONSHIP TO THE GUITAR

Finally, the relationship between the musician and the guitar must be strong enough that the musician can intuitively feel how the guitar will respond to his actions. Romero personifies the instrument in order to emulate certain aspects of a human relationship. He says, "I want a guitar that knows me and I know her, and that together we can do whatever the dream is, however I feel like in the moment". By cultivating this level of trust and intuition, Romero can connect the sound of his guitar directly to his mind, as if the instrument is an extension of his own body.

## MOBILITY

Before he even picks up the guitar for the day, however, Romero takes care of stretching his own fingers and body. He first practices mobility in individual fingers; by making small circles with one finger at a time and holding still the neighboring fingers, he practices muscle control.



He'll do a set of slow circles with the chosen finger, and then perhaps move two at a time. Finally, he'll use typical physical therapy stretches to wake up muscles in his shoulders, neck, elbows, and wrists until the entire mechanism he uses to play feels loose and ready.

## TECHNIQUE AND MUSICALITY



Back on the guitar, after working on his sound, he will begin technique exercises. Every day, he will practice a wide variety of different important techniques, starting with chromatic scales and variations.

This exercise below is just one of the many pattern-like exercises he warms up with.

continue ascending and descending.....

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains a sequence of eighth notes. Above the first two notes of each of the four measures, there is a bracket with the number '3', indicating a triplet of eighth notes. The notes are chromatic, moving up and then down. The exercise ends with a double bar line.

He will go on to practice major scales, minor scales, chords, arpeggios in inversions, tremolos, and rasgueados, among others. He will use Giuliani's Right Hand Studies to practice arpeggios, with a focus on the balance in volume between each of the strings. He will ask himself, which voice is loudest, and which softest? He will also listen for legato, or that the notes are sustained and connected to one another without overlapping.



Whichever exercises he is doing, he always plays with dynamics that give the exercises a direction and a sense of musicality. As he moves to higher notes he will often crescendo, and as he moves to lower notes he often decrescendos. Even a simple C Major scale can come to life with dynamic expressiveness and an awareness of feel, touch, and overtones, as he demonstrates about ten minutes into the lesson.



Romero will spend an hour and a half or more each day going through each of these necessary fundamental exercises. The purpose of such a large quantity of practice each day is to become fully connected to one's instrument. Anytime we perform, especially if we play fast or if we're under stress, we can become blocked in our physical connection to the guitar. Working on technique frees movement, so no physical obstacles are in our way, and the path is cleared for making music.



# REPERTOIRE

Once the physical connection is established, Romero can at last come to his performance repertoire. He sets out his sheet music at night, before he goes to bed, so that, in the morning, his day's work is ready for him. On this particular day, he is working on Giuliani's Grand Overture, Mertz's Hungarian Fantasy, and Rodrigo's Invocation et Danse, among others. He'll work on any music he has to perform for upcoming concerts and recordings, spending two to three hours each day working on this music.

# END OF THE DAY

Once his repertoire is finished, he will take a break for lunch and have a short nap. Importantly, he uses his time to listen to music. Listening to music develops the inner ear, which allows one to imagine a greater variety of sounds and interpretations while playing. In the evening, Romero will perform any piece he wants for himself. It is, after all, important that music remains fun, and not only hard work.

This concludes Pepe Romero's long yet fulfilling day with the guitar! Hopefully you now have a sense of the dedication necessary to keep a daily routine, and can see how beneficial it can be, even to one of the world's most talented guitarists.



# RESOURCES



## **Thomas Viloteau's lesson On How To Practice**

Looking for some actionable steps to make your practice time more efficient? Thomas shows you how to get the most out of every single minute because "Life's too short!"

## **Pepe Romero's Interview in Del Mar, California**

Get even more inspiration from Pepe by watching his interview where he talks about his family of guitarists, his advice for young guitarists, and much more!





