

REPertoire

# SCOTT TENANT

## Recuerdos De La Alhambra (Tarrega)



WATCH THE LESSON  
AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)



*"IF YOU CAN MAKE FAST SOUND GOOD, THAT'S GREAT..... BUT YOUR FIRST GOAL AS A MUSIC LOVER SHOULD BE TO MAKE SOMETHING SOUND BEAUTIFUL, AND ALLOW SPEED TO COME LATER."*

## **LESSON DESCRIPTION**

In this short, yet comprehensive lesson, Scott Tennant talks about his practice strategy for 'Recuerdos De La Alhambra', an iconic piece by Francisco Tarrega. This piece requires mastery of the tremolo technique, which Scott has previously done a video on for tonebase. This lesson assumes you've watched and practice the exercises Scott introduces in that lesson. He has developed a simple method to learn any tremolo piece that involves isolating each hand and working on those movements individually until mastered.

He goes into detail about how he practices these movements and what common mistakes to watch out for. Once the lesson is complete, you should be prepared and motivated to both improve your tremolo technique and make beautiful music!



# ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Scott Tennant is considered to be one of the world's premiere guitar virtuosos, and is a favorite guest artist with orchestras, on music series and major guitar festivals around the world. He is a founding member of the Grammy®-winning ensemble L.A. Guitar Quartet, now in their 30th year.

He taught guitar at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music from 1989–1993, and has since been on the faculty of the USC Thornton School of Music.

## OUTLINE

1. Technical Foundation
2. Left Hand Chords
3. Aiming and Throwing
4. Right Hand Patterns
5. Beauty Over Speed

# TECHNICAL FOUNDATION



This lesson on 'Recuerdos De La Alhambra' with Scott Tennant is designed for those familiar with his previous lesson on the basics of tremolo. If you haven't, study the following lesson before coming to this one:

## **Link to Scott Tennant's Tremolo Lesson**

If you have mastered these exercises, it always helps to review them a bit before starting.

Scott will focus on how to prepare a composition that heavily showcases tremolo. He stresses that any advice he gives is only personally helpful for him. He has seen it work before, but take it with a grain of salt. As he says, "there are a lot of different ways to get to the top of the mountain"!

'Recuerdos' is very popular among young guitarists. When Scott was 18, his very first student was enamored with the goal of learning to play this piece. However, as best as they both tried, she struggled for months and never managed to learn the piece. Since then, he's had a few other students come to him with this same goal. Scott has now learned that there's a lot of technique one must master first in order to effectively execute 'Recuerdos De La Alhambra'. For this reason, learning the basics of tremolo is an essential first step!

Scott puts special importance on reviewing the exercises on one string while moving the thumb to each string.



There are a few things that make a tremolo piece particularly challenging. The first is thumb movement. Accuracy and comfort are the most important goals for the thumb. The second challenge, that ends up holding most people back from a successful performance, is the left hand. One can have the best tremolo, but, if the left hand isn't confident and in sync with the right, the piece doesn't come across successfully.

## LEFT HAND CHORDS



The first thing Scott does for any piece with tremolo is to map out the chords and practice the left hand in isolation. The left hand must be able to finger each chord quickly and accurately.

To practice this, Scott makes a reduction of the full score that only includes the chords produced at every thumbstroke. Samples of his reduction are on tonebase along with the full score. This effectively generates every chord- or, each position the left hand will have to play with minimal right hand movement.

**Andante** (♩ = 76-88)

*a a a a a a sim*

*p p P P P P sim. ③*

Then, he plays through the full piece very slowly to learn the left hand chords thoroughly. The thumb still jumps around as it would when every note is played. Spend a lot of time with this reduction until you can play it through with no issues and perfect time.



# AIMING AND THROWING



Once his left hand is comfortable, he will add each 32nd note back in. By now he is playing every note in the piece, but at a very slow, gentle, and undemanding tempo. An image he likes to use is that of “aiming and throwing” his left hand for every change. He pauses before each left hand change so that the final note speaks clearly, and for it’s full duration.

**Andante** (♩ = 76-88) **Francisco Tárrega**  
(1852-1909)

*p a m i*

Blocking out the chords in this way helps you gain confidence in the left hand movement so you can move without clenching up! Really focus on just this part for a few days or a week. This is the fastest avenue to success with tremolos.

# RIGHT HAND PATTERNS



Once the left hand is well coordinated and confident, it’s time to spend some time with the right hand movements.

Practice the whole piece this way, using only open strings. Most fingers stay on the same strings for a good amount of time. Many tremolo pieces will have a lot of inner strings- so it's advisable to go back and look at the exercises in the previous video that use inner strings.



## **KEY TAKEAWAY**

There are three separate steps to master any tremolo piece: Get the basic tremolo patterns comfortable, Get the left hand chords mapped out and learned very well, Practice the right hand patterns on open strings.

It's also a good exercise to write down the pattern you'll be playing with the right hand, especially if you're playing a piece besides 'Recuerdos' without a reduced version available. Sitting down with paper and writing out the patterns really helps you learn a piece more quickly, since you have to spend time thinking carefully about every measure.





Scott makes all his students write out the piece in this way and bring it in to him so he can ensure they are on the right track. He even writes out a piece himself that he is preparing to perform. Once you've practiced both hands by themselves for some time, your tremolo technique in this piece should be smooth.

## BEAUTY OVER SPEED



It's important to realize that it isn't always necessary to play a tremolo fast, either. Some of the most beautiful tremolos, to Scott, are rather slow, yet smooth, controlled, and beautiful. Scott prefers to hear a slower, beautiful, controlled tremolo, well expressed, over something that's really fast. What would be the point if all that mattered was speed? We're here to make music! Taking the piece slower than most allows you the room to shape it, and to really lean into important spots. The speed will come in time if it serves the music.

In the words of Scott, "Go forth, practice, and have fun!"



# RESOURCES



## **Thomas Viloteau's lesson On Tremolo**

We're a big believer in gaining multiple perspectives which is why we ask different artists to create lessons on the same technique. See how Thomas's tremolo differs from Scott's in this lesson.

## **Andrea De Vitis's lesson on Prelude No. 2 (Tarrega)**

Ready for some more Tarrega? We thought so! Check out this lesson on the second of his famous preludes for guitar, taught here by Italian virtuoso Andrea De Vitis.



# NOTES



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