

PART ONE:
Theoretical and Practical

CHAPTER I
Concept of the guitar

1. The guitar is an instrument which is not as yet well known. Who would think that of all those used today it is perhaps the most suitable for producing the effect of an orchestra in miniature? It seems inconceivable at a first glance, but experience leaves no doubt. Thanks to the felicitous idea of fixing it in position, it is easy to practise it and examine its nature in order to seek unusual effects. As it is full of resources for expressing musical ideas, the guitar is suitable for improvisation, or as we might say, playing as the fancy takes us. The best evidence of this is that despite my advanced age and weak physical constitution, I have succeeded in producing the effects described, and would add, if I may be allowed, that I have succeeded in flattering my amour propre to the point of being satisfied with how I play. Much may be expected of the guitar in the young strong hands of persons of delicate sensitivity and fertile imagination. Its defect—if what I am about to describe can be so called—is that because of the length of the strings, and the way in which they are plucked, the sounds seem less loud than those of the piano and the harp, and yet, if one knows how to produce them, they are louder than one might think. Weak but well-trained hands can so use the strings as to produce pleasant and agreeable effects, but strong well-trained hands may well cause admiration, surprise and enthusiasm for the novelty and vigour of the effects.

2. In order for the guitar to produce brilliant sounds, it is essential not only for the strings to vibrate, but for the guitar itself to vibrate. All that interferes with this must be counterproductive, and in fact this has been the case in the methods of holding the guitar used until now, since it had to be supported on the thigh or the chair, and against the player's body and arm, thus preventing the vibrations of the different parts of the soundbox, and using energy to steady the instrument which should be occupied *entirely* by the fingers of both hands to produce the desired effects.

3. My first ideas of steadying the guitar in a fixed position came to me eight years ago and I made several attempts at it. I recently perfected the device I invented, and I have used it continually, because in addition to being simple, easy and aesthetic in appearance, it gives the guitar, whatever its form and build, all the angles at which the player may desire to hold it; it will be understood that I am referring to the Tripod or Aguado Device [*Trípode ó Máquina de Aguado*] (see Plate 2, figure 1).¹

¹ I have found it desirable to change the name of the device and abandon the first name I used—*trípódison*—which has given rise to some mistaken ideas. I am therefore using either of the two names appearing in the text, and in referring to this useful and profitable mechanism, I shall call it indiscriminately *tripod* or *device* [*trípode ó máquina*] instead of *trípódison*.