

Did Sor and Aguado Use Rest Stroke?

A closer look at Matanya Ophee's 1982 Guitar Review article: "The History of Apoyando"

by Tom Poore

From time to time, questionable ideas come to be accepted as true. This is particularly likely in the field of guitar history, where research into any given question is often left to a handful of people, and conclusions may be accepted with little critical inquiry by the guitar community. In his 1982 *Guitar Review* article "The History of Apoyando," Matanya Ophee concluded that Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado used rest stroke.¹ This conclusion quietly settled into the guitar history paradigm. For example, Brian Jeffery, in his introduction to the Tecla edition of *Aguado's New Guitar Method*, writes:

It may seem surprising to some but it is true, that all the essentials of today's guitar technique are already in Aguado. No major changes have taken place since his day. Hand-positions, angle of the fingers, type of stroke, use of the nails, arpeggio technique, special effects—are there in terms which are directly relevant to the modern player. Apoyando, for example, is discussed: see Lesson 50, in which Aguado insists that the right hand finger, after striking two strings, shall come to rest on the third.²

In a footnote, Jeffery credits Ophee for calling attention to this information. Ophee's article is also cited in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* entry for Francisco Tárrega.³ Further, in a 2004 *Soundboard* article, "The Tárrega School" Julio Gimeno García writes:

In regards to the rest stroke with the other fingers of the right hand Matanya Ophee has pointed out various cases in which it seems this technique may have been employed, although without the use of the term "rest stroke," by Federico Moretti, Fernando Sor, or Dionisio Aguado.⁴

On closely reading Ophee's apoyando article, however, I found that he poorly argued his case. Thus, I wish to examine the evidence he offered and the conclusions he drew from it.

I'm approaching my examination with two assumptions:

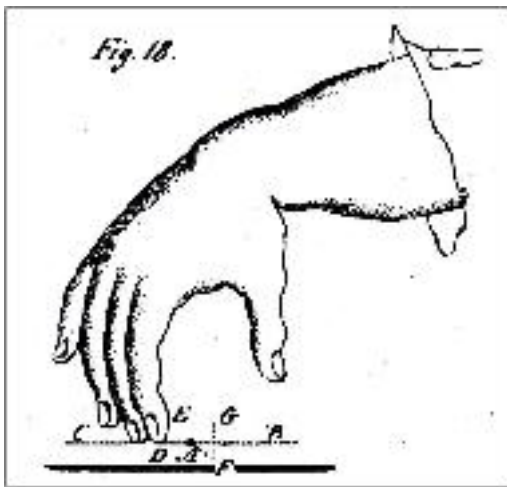
- Ophee accurately reproduced all citations from the treatises of Aguado and Sor.
- Ophee provided the best available evidence for his conclusion that Aguado and Sor used rest stroke—at least at the time he wrote his article.⁵

Before going on, I should address a possible criticism that might be directed at my examination. I'm not a historian, so it might be argued that I'm unqualified to comment on historical matters. Thus, I wish to emphasize that my goal isn't to question the accuracy of the historical sources Ophee presents. My goal is to dispute his interpretation of these sources. This requires something other than historical expertise—it requires a reasonable knowledge of music and guitar playing. As an experienced player and teacher, I'm qualified to do such an examination. In fact, as will become clear in this article, Ophee himself displays a questionable ability to interpret the evidence.

Did Sor Use Rest Stroke?

To support his claim that Sor used rest stroke, Ophee offers the following quote and illustration from Sor's *Méthode pour la Guitarra*:

...this induced me to establish as a principle from which I should never depart, to keep my fingers as little curved as possible, for the following reasons: by supposing point A to be the thickness of the string (Fig. 18), the index finger, in moving it communicates the impulse towards point B. The reaction must take place towards point C, and...the roundness of the finger-tip will compel it at the same time in the direction of F.



If this is illustrating rest stroke, as Ophee believes it is, then there are obvious problems. First, Sor doesn't say which string appears in the illustration. For all we know, it could be the sixth string, in which case there's no adjacent string for the finger to come to rest against. Ophee ignores this possibility. Second, Sor doesn't describe the movement of the finger after it departs the string. Ophee recognizes this problem and addresses it thus:

Clearly enough, Sor makes no reference to the position of the finger after it had struck the string and produced the sound—which is, to our contemporary mind, that which will indicate to us if the action was an *apoyando* or a *tirando* stroke. Fernando Sor was primarily interested in sound, not in finger movement. Therefore he restricts his description to that portion of the finger movement which occurs prior to and during the actual contact with the string, when the sound is actually produced. That the finger must come to rest against the adjacent string is of little consequence after the string had been set in motion, when it is already too late to do anything about it, and Sor does not dwell on it.

Ophee claims that Sor was interested in describing sound rather than movement. Sor himself, however, says nothing to support this claim. In fact, elsewhere in his method Sor offered the following description of right hand thumb movement:

With respect to the strings the fingers should not be curved more than those represented by the Fig. 11, that the act of striking the string should only be the action of closing the hand, without however closing it entirely, that the thumb should never move towards the hollow of the hand [the palm], but to act with its immediate finger [the index] as if it were going to form with it a cross, placing itself as the top of the cross, and to preserve line AB parallel with the plane of the strings, it was necessary for me to somewhat raise the hand on the side of the little finger.⁶

Clearly Sor is describing movement after the thumb departs the string, refuting Ophee's claim that Sor was uninterested in describing movement after a string is sounded. Ophee also claims there's no further consequence once the finger leaves the string, so there's no reason for Sor to describe this part of the movement. But if Sor is describing rest stroke, then coming to rest against the adjacent string has an obvious consequence: if a note on the adjacent string needs to sustain, then rest stroke would prematurely mute it. Would Sor have ignored such an obvious musical consequence?

There are further problems with concluding that Sor is describing rest stroke. Let's look more closely at this part of Sor's description:

...by supposing point A to be the thickness of the string (Fig. 18), the index finger, in moving it, communicates the impulse towards point B. The reaction must take place towards point C, and...the roundness of the finger-tip will compel it at the same time in the direction of F.

Is Sor saying, as Ophee concludes, that the finger should come to rest against the adjacent string? If so, he's being hopelessly vague. Why doesn't he plainly and explicitly say that the finger should come to rest against the adjacent string? If Sor is describing rest stroke, he's doing so in a way guaranteed to be misunderstood by many readers.

But what of Sor's statement that the finger communicates an impulse parallel to the plane of the soundboard? Doesn't this imply rest stroke? In fact, it doesn't. First, consider the context of Sor's statement. He's contrasting his description of parallel movement of the string with the common beginner's mistake of pulling the string upward, away from the soundboard. Compared to this faulty stroke, a well executed free stroke is indeed more parallel to the soundboard. Second, note that Sor

says the impulse—not the finger—is communicated toward point B. This is a crucial distinction. In a well executed free stroke, the finger pushes the string toward point B—at the point where the string departs the fingertip, the tip is moving almost parallel to the soundboard. The finger continues in an upward arc only after the string has departed the fingertip. In fact, the movement of the string in free stroke is more parallel to the soundboard than in rest stroke. Ophee seems unaware that rest stroke moves the string toward, not parallel to, the soundboard.

Careful observers of figure 18 will raise another question: what of Sor's statement that the roundness of the fingertip pushes the string toward point F—toward the soundboard? This indeed, could be taken to imply rest stroke. But this deflection of the string by the fingertip happens in both rest stroke and free stroke. Further, Sor clearly describes movement parallel to the soundboard as the desired string movement and treats the movement of the string toward F as an incidental matter. Since movement of the string toward the soundboard is the *raison d'être* of rest stroke, why doesn't Sor emphasize it?

Next, let's examine Ophee's interpretation of the starting position shown in figure 18:

But in figure 18, no super-human powers of observation are required to see that a string being moved in a plane which is parallel to the plane of the strings will come to rest against the adjacent string and qualify as a rest stroke—unless, of course, the player possess the precision it will take to stop the finger short of the adjacent string!

Again, Sor never says that the finger moves parallel to the plane of the strings—this is Ophee's claim. Further, Ophee fails to note that figure 18 could just as well show the starting position for free stroke.⁷ In fact, this is the more likely stroke. If the finger moves from either the middle or knuckle joints (or both), it will easily clear the adjacent string. To do rest stroke from the position in figure 18 the player must push downward from the knuckle joint while extending from the middle joint. Would Sor have advocated such an awkward movement? Maybe he did, but lacking an explicit description from Sor himself, we can't simply assume he did.

Ophee sometimes displays a surprising inability to correctly read the evidence he gives. Concerning sweep stroke⁸ with a single finger across adjacent strings, Ophee says:

[Sor] even went further and articulated verbally the purpose for which this fingering was used—to place a musical accent on one of the notes in a middle voice.

He then offers the following quote and musical excerpt from Sor's method:

When, in a passage in three parts, the middle part has more notes to be played than the melody part, and these notes require two strings, I check whether the musical accent falls on the highest or lowest note. If the accent is on the highest, then I play the lowest with the thumb; but if the accent is on the lowest, I play both notes with the index finger, *which I pass from one to the other*.



The figures indicate the fingers of the right hand (x=thumb; 1=index; 2=middle finger)

The italics are Ophee's, and he concludes that Sor is describing the use of rest stroke to produce a musical accent on the 3rd string A. But read Sor's statement carefully: he says that when he wants an accent on the lowest note of the middle voice, he uses the fingering indicated in the musical example. So it's the 4th string E—not the 3rd string A—that gets the accent. In this case, it's impossible for Sor to accent this E with an index finger rest stroke. If he did, it would prematurely mute the 5th string A, which he clearly intends to sustain.

As a final argument against Ophee's claim that Sor was describing rest stroke, consider the following circumstantial evidence. Assume for a moment that Ophee is correct. If so, then Sor obviously used both rest stroke and free stroke. (Would anyone argue that Sor used only rest stroke?) So where is Sor's description of free stroke? Are we to believe that Sor described and illustrated rest stroke, but didn't bother to do so for the more versatile and more often used free stroke?

To put it mildly, Ophee's evidence that Sor used rest stroke is unconvincing. It seems likely that Ophee selectively interpreted the facts to support his preconceived opinion. Indeed, there's strong evidence for this in his 1982 article: at one point Ophee

questions Sor's words because they conflict with his own opinion. Consider the following passage from Sor's method concerning the right hand, which Ophee quotes in his article:

Sometimes I employ the little finger, pressing it perpendicularly on the sounding-board below the first string, but take care to raise it as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

So Sor himself says that he sometimes posted his right hand little finger on the soundboard. Incredibly, Ophee argues with this first-hand testimony:

It is not quite clear what would have caused Sor to mention that he used occasionally the planted little finger technique when everything else he had to say about right hand technique suggests that he did not.

An unbiased reading of Sor's method reveals nothing to contradict his statement that he sometimes rested his little finger on the soundboard. Only in Ophee's selective interpretation does this statement appear contradictory. The fact that Ophee doubts Sor's own words about how he played should give us pause—is he a better judge of how Sor played than Sor himself?

Did Aguado Use Rest Stroke?

Turning to Aguado, Ophee seems to be on more solid ground. Indeed, he appears to have irrefutable evidence in the following quote from Aguado's method:

The forefinger can also pluck the first and second strings when they have to be sounded together, for example, in intervals of a third. If the nails are used, the first string must be plucked sharply so that the finger passes over the second string, sounding it, and then coming to rest on the third.

Ophee concludes:

What we are mainly concerned with in this quote is that the description is that of a finger motion in which it is stated clearly, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the finger comes to rest against the next available string, after completion of the stroke. In other words—APOYANDO!

Ophee's confidence seems justified. Aguado explicitly says the finger comes to rest against the adjacent string. If rest stroke is defined solely by this criterion, then Aguado is indeed describing a rest stroke.

But does this mean Aguado used rest stroke in the way we understand it today? Modern descriptions of rest stroke give some explanation, however brief, of its musical purpose—to produce a more full or powerful sound in scales, single line melodies, accented notes, etc.⁹ Yet Aguado offers no such explanation. This is a curious omission. Thus, we need to examine more closely whether Aguado actually used rest stroke in its modern sense.

One might argue that in his application of rest stroke when sounding two strings with one finger, Aguado used rest stroke to give more power and fullness to the notes. Given our current understanding of rest stroke, this is an easy assumption to make. But we shouldn't assume that our current understanding is also Aguado's.¹⁰

In fact, there's another explanation for why Aguado recommended rest stroke when playing two strings with one finger: it better ensures that the two notes will be evenly balanced. If a single finger plays two strings with free stroke, it moves in a shallow arc—such a movement can yield unbalanced sounds from the two strings. Rest stroke eliminates this problem. Of course, without an explanation from Aguado himself, my explanation is speculation. But since it's a plausible alternative, we can't simply assume Aguado used rest stroke in the way we use it today.

Further, consider that the only case in which Aguado explicitly describes rest stroke is a limited one: when a finger sounds two strings at once. This isn't the application that comes to mind when we describe rest stroke today. If Aguado used rest stroke as we use it, why would he describe it only in a narrow and atypical application?

In fact, there's circumstantial evidence that Aguado didn't use rest stroke in the modern sense. In the 1849 appendix to his method, Aguado gives a detailed list of how tone color can be varied:

A string can produce different qualities of the same sound:

1. When plucked a finger's distance from the bridge, then two, three finger's distance, etc., as far as the sound-hole and even higher;

2. When plucked with the inside of the fleshy part of the finger or nail;
3. When plucked with the middle of the fingertip or nail; in this case, the hand and fingers must be at right angles to the strings. The second of these methods is preferable because of the strength and sureness given to the plucking movement;
4. When plucked with the forefinger or thumb;
5. When the bass strings and even the upper strings are plucked with the thumb, bent at the last joint, and also with the soft part of the thumb, in which case the thumb is stiff. This gives almost imperceptible but clear sounds.¹¹

Conspicuously absent is any description of rest stroke. Are we to assume that Aguado used rest stroke as we use it today, but neglected to mention this obvious way of altering tone color? It seems more likely that Aguado didn't describe rest stroke simply because he didn't use it in the way we use it today.

In making his argument, Ophee attributes intentions to Aguado that Aguado himself never states. For example, Ophee displays musical example No. 13 from Aguado's method:



Ophee then says:

Aguado's purpose in this form of fingering is to impart a particular sound quality, by placing a secondary accent in full compliance with the rhythmic structure of the piece. But we all remember very well that when we learned to play the guitar we were told that this type of fingering is verboten. We were told that when fingering a descending pattern, a chord sequence, or a scale, the right hand fingers must alternate at all costs. And, when our teacher caught us doing what comes naturally—continuing downward with a finger which is rested against the adjacent lower string—we were given hell. And that's exactly the point: in the above example, Aguado's finger must rest on the adjacent string, after having struck the higher string *apoyando*!

Aguado, however, says nothing about sound quality or accents in the text accompanying this musical example. Ophee is also unclear about where he thinks Aguado is placing the "secondary accent." In the first measure, for example, is this accent on the second string C, or on the first of the two third string Gs? Neither makes musical sense—they would make the first note of each measure sound like an upbeat. Further, rest stroke on the second G in measure 5 would prematurely mute the bass. Finally, nowhere does Aguado say that the finger comes to rest against the adjacent string. Yet Ophee flatly says that "Aguado's finger must rest on the adjacent string, after having struck the higher string *apoyando*!" Why? Aguado easily could have played each adjacent string with free stroke. Ophee anticipates this objection and answers it thus:

Those who hold that Aguado used nothing but free strokes might argue that he must have used here two separate free strokes, instead of one continuous rest stroke. Undoubtedly, if this were the case, execution would have been awkward.

Ophee's skepticism aside, I don't find this awkward, nor would any reasonably accomplished guitarist.

Based on the evidence offered by Ophee, the only conclusion we can make is that Aguado used rest stroke in a limited and—to our way of thinking—atypical way. We can't conclude with certainty that Aguado used rest stroke in the modern sense.

Ambiguity, Polemics, Errors, Occam's Razor

To a careful reader, it's unclear what Ophee is trying to do in his article. On the one hand, there's evidence that Ophee wants to prove that Aguado and Sor used rest stroke as we currently understand it. Consider the following statement, in which Ophee discusses author Harvey Turnbull's claim that Tárrega established the use of rest stroke:

Even assuming that [Sor] did use the technique when performing arpeggios such as those that are in Ex. 20 cited above, it is clear that there would not be a need for apoyando in playing the upper notes of the arpeggio, and therefore, Sor could have very well used apoyando in other forms, such as scale passages, single line melodies, etc. Hence, my objections to Turnbull.

From this statement it's clear that Ophee wants us to believe that Sor used rest stroke in the modern sense. But throughout his article Ophee repeatedly discusses the 19th century use of sweep stroke as though sweep stroke and rest stroke are synonymous. This redefines our modern understanding of rest stroke, and Ophee should offer a well-argued justification for doing so. Ophee's article, however, reveals nothing to suggest he's given the matter any thought. He merely equates sweep stroke and rest stroke without a word of explanation. In a sense, his article is a bait and switch—he leads us to believe he's proving one thing, yet he actually proves nothing of the sort.

Ophee's article is also peppered with flawed polemics. We'll begin with some broadsides against modern pedagogy that have no basis in fact. First, consider Ophee's dismissive treatment of Abel Carlevaro's *Escuela de la Guitarra*:

The book is essentially a system of teaching which assumes that lack of knowledge, in this case, lack of technical facility, is a disease, and the purpose of education is to cure it. One would need only to follow the prescriptions of Dr. Carlevaro, and the cure is guaranteed. This is in effect the basic philosophy which guides many present day teachers of the guitar, who insist that technique is much more important than music.

Ophee's sarcasm is obvious. Absent, however, is any basis for his sarcasm. All methods—including those of Aguado and Sor—are written to address a real or perceived lack of knowledge. Further, where does Carlevaro "guarantee" that his concepts will work? Finally, where are the many present day teachers "who insist that technique is much more important than music"? I've never encountered a teacher who advocates such an absurd schism between music and technique.

Ophee also implies that Carlevaro copied ideas first set forth by Sor. To this, I offer three replies: 1) Ophee himself suggests that Carlevaro may not have read Sor's method. 2) Ophee quotes from Carlevaro's method regarding "fijación" and then links this to Sor. This is simply bizarre—there's nothing in the Sor method that can be equated with Carlevaro's fijación concept. 3) Ophee seems not to have considered that since both Sor and Carlevaro are writing about guitar playing, it makes sense that both would sometimes say the same things.

Another Ophee outburst:

But we all remember very well when we learned to play the guitar we were told that this type of fingering [single finger sweep stroke across adjacent strings] is verboten. We were told that when fingering a descending pattern, a chord sequence, or a scale, the right hand fingers must alternate at all costs.

Contrary to Ophee's claim, the single finger sweep stroke is commonly used by modern guitarists—one can find it in scores published throughout the 20th century. Further, I've seen many guitarists who have no qualms about playing consecutive notes with the same finger.¹² (I was taught that the purpose of alternation is speed, and when speed isn't a factor, then the decision to alternate is a matter of personal preference.) Also, in his list of circumstances under which we're supposedly told to alternate at all costs, Ophee includes chord sequences. I would be very interested in knowing who advocates right hand alternation at all costs in chord sequences.¹³

Ophee makes errors obvious to any careful reader. For example, referring to the Sor musical excerpt (see above) Ophee notes the fingering and says:

The natural tendency for us would be to pluck both notes of the A chord tirando, and then place a rest stroke on the E on the fourth string.

No musically literate guitarist would consider this, since an index finger rest stroke on the E would obviously mute the bass note A.

Here's another example. Ophee says:

An interesting peculiarity, at least from our contemporary point of view, is Aguado's occasional preference for repeating the same right hand finger on two consecutive notes. We have come to view alternation of r.h. fingers as a sacred cow, which must be worshipped and never, never betrayed. Of course the concept of alternation is as old as plucked instruments. The majority of guitar and lute tutors from the 17th century on describe it and prescribe it with various degrees of insistence. Even Aguado himself, in his *Escuela* of 1825, established a general rule that no finger, with the exception of the thumb, should strike the same string twice in succession. But when he was looking for special effects, such as staccato in a single line melody, or the placement of special accents in the body of polyphonic textures, he found it advantageous to depart from his own general rule. One example is in lesson No. 13 of the *Nuevo Método* of 1843: See the accompanying musical example.

We now expect lesson No. 13 to show a passage in which Aguado departs from his rule "that no finger, with the exception of the thumb, should strike the same string twice in succession." But examine lesson No. 13 closely. Nowhere does Aguado indicate that one string is to be played twice in succession with the same finger. Instead, Ophee points out the use of one finger on consecutive strings. Since this is unrelated to the Aguado proscription quoted in Ophee's paragraph, we're left to wonder: what's going on here? If we carefully reexamine Ophee's paragraph, we find our confusion is the result of Ophee's confusion. He falsely equates two different issues: playing adjacent strings in succession with the same finger (which Aguado doesn't proscribe), and playing successive notes on the same string with the same finger (which Aguado does proscribe).

A careful reading of Ophee's article suggests he's torturing the data to make it fit his conclusions. He would do well to heed Occam's Razor—the idea that when a simple explanation works, one should be wary of an improbably complex explanation. Consider the lengths Ophee goes to make the evidence fit his belief that Sor used rest stroke:

It is apparent, then, that the difficulty we have in recognizing Sor's right hand technique as that which we call "Apoyando," "Rest Stroke," "Supported Stroke," "Hammer Stroke," or whatever, is simply a semantic misunderstanding. Once you define a finger motion by the situation in which it was terminated, it is difficult to recognize the same finger motion when it is described in terms of an action in progress. If this may seem a highly revolutionary idea, it is justifiably so.

So Ophee credits Sor with a revolutionary approach to defining finger motion. This isn't surprising—since Sor offers no description of anything resembling rest stroke, Ophee must somehow explain it away. But consider what we must swallow to accept Ophee's belief that Sor used rest stroke: Sor didn't describe a finger coming to rest against an adjacent string because he was uninterested in describing movement after the string had sounded. But since in another situation he clearly described movement after the string had sounded, Sor's disinterest applied only where Ophee tries to prove Sor did something that Sor himself never described. Sor's approach was revolutionary. He offered not a word of explanation about his revolutionary approach.

All these improbabilities are swept aside by a simpler and obvious possibility: Sor didn't describe rest stroke because he didn't use it.

Coda

In closing, I wish to make the following points:

- I'm not saying that Sor and Aguado never used rest stroke. First, it's impossible to prove a negative. Second, Aguado clearly did describe a finger coming to rest against an adjacent string—albeit in a manner that doesn't match our current understanding of rest stroke. I'm saying that the evidence Ophee gave in his 1982 *Guitar Review* article doesn't prove that Sor used rest stroke. I'm also saying it's possible that Aguado didn't use rest stroke in the way we understand it today. Of course, there may be other sources that unequivocally prove both Sor and Aguado used rest stroke as we understand it. But as I pointed out earlier, I've reasonably assumed that Ophee offered the best available evidence in his article. If he or anyone else has better evidence, then I encourage them to make it known.

- I'm not insulting Sor or Aguado. On the contrary, I find them both to be careful in their descriptions of guitar playing. Their attention to detail suggests that if they used rest stroke as we understand it today, they would have described it as explicitly as they described other aspects of guitar technique. That they didn't do so doesn't lessen my respect for them. They were men of

their time, as are we all. The guitar, its technique, and music itself have changed since their day. It's no dishonor to guitarists living in the first half of the 19th century that they didn't anticipate every aspect of guitar playing in the late 20th century.

At best, the evidence for Ophee's conclusions is flimsy. At worst, he misreads the evidence he cites and makes claims unsupported by any evidence. Further, he shows little appreciation for subtlety—for example, he presents sweep stroke as equivalent to our current understanding of rest stroke. Finally, his misunderstanding of how rest stroke works—his assumption that the finger moves the string parallel to the soundboard when in reality it pushes the string toward the soundboard—shows his arguments to be flawed to the core.

To be charitable, Ophee's goal in his 1982 article was laudable. In trying to refute the flawed claims regarding the earliest use of rest stroke, he was trying to set the record straight. But nothing is gained by replacing one flawed claim with another.

Footnotes

1. Matanya Ophee: “The History of Apoyando,” *Guitar Review*, vol. 51, pp. 6-13. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Sor and Aguado methods used in my article are taken directly from Ophee’s article.
2. Dionisio Aguado: *New Guitar Method*. Tecla Editions, London, 1981, edited by Brian Jeffery, translation by Louise Bigwood, p. xvi.
3. Thomas Heck: “Tárrega (y Eixea), Francisco,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition, vol. 25, p. 107.
4. Julio Gimeno García: “The ‘Tárrega School.’ According to the Methods of Pascual Roch and Emilio Pujol,” translation by Edward Lugo, *Soundboard*, vol. XXX, No- 3, p. 16.
5. In an interview in *Classical Guitar Magazine*, Ophee claimed to have further evidence regarding the use of the rest stroke prior to Tárrega. He didn’t say, however, whether any of this evidence applied to Aguado and Sor.
6. Fernando Sor: *Method for Guitar*, Editions Orphée, Columbus, OH, 2010, translated & edited by Matanya Ophee, p. 9.
7. During a phone conversation, guitar historian Thomas Heck pointed out that one should be cautious in drawing conclusions from 19th century illustrations. Such illustrations can be cavalier in their fidelity to what they’re supposed to depict. Indeed, as Ophee himself points out, Aguado was disappointed with the illustrations in his method.
8. By “sweep stroke” I mean moving a right hand finger from one string to the next in one smooth motion—in other words, not two separate strokes. Curiously, there seems to be no commonly accepted name for this technique. In an informal survey, I found it variously referred to as “sliding,” “brush stroke,” “dragging,” “right hand glissando,” and “right hand slur.”
9. Loudness isn’t always the goal of rest stroke. Players with a discerning ear can use rest stroke in quiet passages where they want a fuller tone.
10. Ophee himself cautions against reading historical texts with a present day mindset: “However, it seems to me that applying our own standards to music of the past indiscriminately is not the most efficient way of learning what it was exactly the old masters were saying.” (“The History of Apoyando.” *Guitar Review*, vol. 51, p. 11)
11. Dionisio Aguado: *New Guitar Method*. Tecla Editions, London, 1981, edited by Brian Jeffery, translation by Louise Bigwood, p. 170.
12. I’m aware that Ophee’s comments on right hand alternation were written in 1982. My replies are based on guitar pedagogy as it stood in 1982. There were, of course, some at this time who insisted on alternation in single line passages. But to imply, as Ophee does, that everyone advocated this in 1982 is simply false.
13. I suspect Ophee chose his words badly—he probably meant right hand arpeggios.