

# Lágrima

Music by Francisco Tárrega

Hot on the heels of 19th-century composer-virtuosos (Sor, Giuliani, Carcassi, et al.), Spaniard Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909) emerged as one of the guitar's towering central figures. Closely associated with the development of modern classical guitar and its technique, Tárrega, born in Villarreal, Castellón, was celebrated as a master performer, composer, transcriber, and pedagogue—a reputation that remains to this day. A romantic composer, Tárrega was fond of elegant miniatures with evocative titles depicting moods, atmospheres, places, and people. The lyrical prelude “Lágrima” is a popular example of his work.

Employing a simple ABA structure, “Lágrima” (Spanish for “tear”) ranges from a surprisingly wistful opening in the key of E major to an outright melancholic B section in E minor. According to one story, Tárrega was inspired to write this melody in 1880 during one of two performances in London, where he found both the weather and travel away from home disagreeable. “Lágrima” may also reflect other hardships in Tárrega’s life, including recurrent poverty as well as issues stemming from

a childhood mishap in an irrigation ditch that resulted in ophthalmia, a disease that caused Tárrega lifelong discomfort and poor eyesight.

Regardless, “Lágrima” presents few technical difficulties; the main concern lies with bringing out the melody and maintaining a sense of legato throughout. It helps to observe the fret-hand fingering closely—note, for example, that the fourth finger can act as a guide finger on the high E string throughout the first five measures, gliding up and down the string to help shift the hand into each position as the melody sings. Try also to avoid hitting the open B-string pedal (the repeated background note that the melody moves against) too hard; it should simply mark time softly, like a heartbeat. I like to strive for a vocal quality throughout, using varying vibrato speeds and carefully shaping each phrase.

—MICHAEL MILLHAM

The musical score for "Lágrima" is presented in four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is E major (one sharp). The piece is in 3/4 time. The first system (measures 1-4) features a melody in the treble clef and a bass clef accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pulse. The second system (measures 5-8) includes a key change to E minor, indicated by a double bar line and the marking "BII". The third system (measures 9-12) continues in E minor, with a key signature change to B minor indicated by a double bar line and "BVII". The fourth system (measures 13-16) returns to E major, marked "D.C. al Fine". The score includes various fingerings (1-4), dynamic markings (p), and articulation marks (accents, slurs). The piece concludes with a "Fine" marking.

© 2007 MICHAEL MILLHAM. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.