

the strings. The merit of the maker lies in making the distance between the strings and the first frets so small that the strings seem nearly to touch the first fret, but without making a noise; the sound must be clear.\*

33. *Position of the guitar for practice.* It is a good idea for the neck of the guitar to be as horizontal as is compatible with being able to play. The left hand must then be turned towards the body of the instrument, while the fingers come naturally into position parallel to the frets and the left arm turns so that the elbow touches the body. It is very useful to practise in this position, because the left hand later plays more easily as the neck is raised to the angle which the player finds suits him, which is usually 20 to 25 degrees.

34. *It is useful to have two guitars.* During the period of study, it is desirable to practise with a guitar which offers more resistance to the action of plucking than does the instrument on which you show yourself to best advantage. In this case you must also be familiar with the plucking power of the instrument used for performance in order to graduate the strength required, and also so that the hands become well acquainted with the distances to be covered.

35. *Plucking with the fingertips and with the nails.* The right hand can pluck the strings with the tips of the fingers only, or first with the fingertips and then with that part of the nail which protrudes beyond the fingertip. These two forms of plucking require different uses of the fingers of the right hand. Without the nails, the fingers must be bent so as to grip the strings; with the nails, the fingers are less bent so that the string will *slide* along the nail. I had always used the nails of all the fingers I used to pluck, including the thumb, but after listening to my friend Sor I decided not to use the nail on the thumb, and I am very pleased to have done this because plucking with the flesh of the thumb when not parallel to the string (see Plate 2, figure 5), produces pleasing energetic sounds, appropriate for the bass part usually played on the lower strings. On my other fingers, I have kept the nails. As it is a point of the greatest interest, I hope that my long experience will allow me to give my frank opinion.

36. *Advantages of playing with the tips and nails of the fingers of the right hand.* I consider it preferable to play with the nails in order to produce from the strings of the guitar a sound which is unlike that of any other instrument. To my way of thinking, the guitar has its own particular nature: it is *sweet, harmonious, melancholy*; sometimes it can even be *majestic*, although it does not allow of the grandiosity of the harp or the piano. But it does offer very delicate effects, however, and its sounds are susceptible to modifications and combinations which make it *mysterious*, and very appropriate for melody and expression.

37. In order better to produce these effects, I prefer to play with the nails, because if they are properly used, the resulting sound is *clean, metallic, and sweet*; but it must be understood that the strings are not plucked only with the nails, because then the sound would certainly not be very agreeable. The string is *first* played with the fingertip *using the part nearest the thumb*, the finger slightly extended (not bent as for plucking with the fingertip only), and then the string is imme-

\* [This noise is today often described as "buzzing". -An addition to this paragraph is in the Appendix, paragraph 391 below.]

diately slid along the nail. The nails should not be very hard, and should be cut in an oval shape so as to protrude slightly beyond the tip of the finger, since if they are very long they hamper nimble movement because the string takes a long time to pass under the nail, and there is also the disadvantage that plucking is less sure. If the nails are used, runs can be performed very rapidly and clearly. There is an important exception, however. Persons with very long fingers should not play with the nails, because this gives each finger more leverage on the strings and thus diminishes the force used.

38. Some rest the little finger of the right hand on the soundboard so as to give sureness to the hand when plucking. This may have been useful for some people while the guitar was not in a fixed position, but now that it is played on the tripod I do not consider this support necessary because the fingers of the right hand depend on the support given by the forearm and wrist. Two more disadvantages are avoided in this way—the weight this finger lays on the soundboard which is a real impediment to its vibration, and the danger of staining it with the contact of the finger. Another advantage of this position is that the hand is more nimble and able to perform all the movements desired.

39. *Preference for the middle over the ring finger of the right hand.* In order to obtain from the strings all the tone they can give, I generally prefer to use the *middle finger* of the right hand rather than the ring finger since it is stronger. The plucking fingers should be vigorous so that with practice they will acquire simultaneous *energy* and *smoothness*, thus lending themselves to all the modifications and graduations which may be appropriately made in the sound.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Meaning of some words and abbreviations; how to tune the guitar; and how to choose strings*

40. *To stop* [*pisar*] is the action of the left hand in pressing the strings down onto the fingerboard. *To pluck* [*pulsar*] is the action of the right hand in producing sound from the strings. *Fingering* [*dedeo*] is the order or arrangement of the fingers of both hands; it applies more particularly to the left hand.<sup>12</sup> *Moving up* is the movement of the left hand towards the bridge. *Moving down* is the contrary. *Higher* is towards the bridge. *Lower*, towards the nut. *Forwards*, towards the bridge. *Backwards*, towards the nut. — All these six expressions refer to the sounds and not to the actual position of the guitar.

41. The front part of the fingerboard is that which lies towards the sound-hole; the back part, that which lies towards the nut.

42. RH, right hand; LH, left hand; p, thumb; i, forefinger; m, middle finger.

43. The guitar must be tuned in order for the pupil to practise. I shall explain one method of doing this.

A string is given a certain amount of tension, so that its sound can be used as a comparative point

<sup>12</sup> [Aguado writes in a footnote that the word *dedeo* is not Spanish but that he has adopted it to correspond to the French *doigter*.]