



Flamenco Guitarist Esaú Galván Remembers the Alhambra

By Christie Seely

Recently I heard talented flamenco guitarist Esaú Galván of La Cruz de Huancaxtle perfecting his presentation of the intricate music of *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, by Spanish composer and guitarist Francisco Tárrega. Galván plans to include this difficult piece in the new CD he is producing this summer along with other beautiful interpretations of Spanish classics and original works. A recent visit to Spain, enhancing his skills as master flamenco guitarist, seems to linger in his mind and is aching to be expressed in this new project.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra is a complicated piece, implementing the tremolo technique which is only attempted by accomplished flamenco guitarists. The technique requires a constant plucking of a single melody note with the ring, middle and index fingers throughout while at the same time the thumb plays an arpeggio-pattern accompaniment giving the impression of hearing two guitars instead of one. Esaú has spent many hours perfecting this challenging technique.

The Alhambra is located in Granada, Spain. It is a palace and fortress built on a hill over early Roman remains by Moorish emirates in the 13th century. The expansive compound is a romantic oasis overlooking the beautiful city of Granada and the historical Caves of Sacromonte where the gypsies (roma people) have lived and played music for centuries. *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* portrays the site exquisitely. The tremolo echoes the underlying beauty of the luxurious



architecture made up of gracefully connecting courtyards, grand halls and impressive chambers.

The music derives a mystical feeling as if emerging from the ancient stone.

For those of you who have visited the Alhambra, this extraordinary musical piece so elegantly executed by Esaú Galván will bring powerful memories: the impressively serene Court of the Lions, the softness of the filigreed Moorish arches, the fragrant gardens of olives, oranges and pomegranates and the scent of earth and of the past. Through his hard work Esaú will bring those images to us right here in Puerto Vallarta.

You can hear Esaú play regularly at Da Simone Restaurant Tuesday evenings, Daiquiri Dick's on Friday evenings, Saturday mornings at Cuates y Cuetes starting at 10:30, and with his group Tatewari Wednesday evenings at Cuates y Cuetes, 8:00. Read more about him on his website www.esaugalvan.com.

To hear *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Esaú visit youtube: <https://youtu.be/36i5EQI4gw>



The Oak Tree and the President

By John Warren

This week, in our search for the meaning of street names in Puerto Vallarta we are going to cross the river and stroll north, from the banks of the Rio Cuale towards the oldest hotel in town, the Rosita. However, there are sixteen streets that run east to west in that framework so it might take a few weeks to get there.

The first street is Calle Encino, which hugs the banks of the river for just three blocks. The word "Encino" means "Oak" in English, which was a bit surprising until I found out that there are 160 species of oak in Mexico. Unfortunately, many oak species in Mexico are threatened with extinction due to ecological threats like habitat loss, climate change, and increased human use and I don't see any along this street now.

Calle Encino is a neat street to wander along. The trees, not oaks, along the river bank give shade all day long and the wall along the river bank is just the right height for athletic, young people to hitch themselves up on to and enjoy a cool brew or check their ubiquitous phones.

Apparently, the Anthropology Gay Dance Club resides just to the west of Morelos and as we walk under the bridge going east we come to the Encino hotel, which boasts a rooftop pool with a view of the bay and rates three stars on Trip Advisor. Towards the west end of the street is Cafe Roma; a

great place for a pizza and a beer and owners who are very generous supporters of the Volcanes education project. Gracias!

The origin of name of the next street is a mystery. Who was Agustin Rodriguez? The only reference I can find is to a Mexican lawyer who lived from 1842 to 1920 but what his claim to fame was I don't know.

This street is host to the Co-Exist Restaurant, a pleasant, quiet spot for lunch and, at its west end, where the street terminates at Insurgentes, is the Cigar Factory, which serves great food, excellent coffee and rolls cigars for sale to those who like to impersonate the steam engines of the past.

Next street to the north is Libertad. Named after that very fleeting experience for some people, "Liberty." It is a busy, traffic-laden street with bus stops, drug stores, a barber shop and, at the west end before HSBC, is Capitan Cajun, a restaurant that scores 86% as "excellent" on Trip Advisor. Maybe check that out when you're in the area!

And now we come to Calle Guerrero. Vicente Ramón Guerrero Saldaña was, in the parlance of today, a cool dude. Born in 1782, a few years before the start of the French Revolution, in a small town 100 kms east of Acapulco to an African mother and a mixed race father he grew up to be tall, strong, fearless and, obviously of African descent. He was, at times, called "El Negro".

As an adult, Vicente was opposed to the Spanish colonial government and, in 1810, enlisted to fight in the southern Mexico against the Spanish occupiers in the country's War of Independence. By 1812 he had done so well as a soldier and officer that he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Three years later Guerrero was named Commander in Chief of the rebel forces.

The Mexican political and military history of those years is complex, so let me assure you that Guerrero became President of Mexico on 1st April 1829. But he lasted a scant nine months in office before being turfed out and fleeing back to his homeland in the south. Early in 1831 he was captured, tried, found guilty and shot by firing squad.

Historians have suggested that because Guerrero was of mixed blood and because the opposition to his presidency came from the great landowners, generals, clerics and Spaniards resident in Mexico, Guerrero's execution was perhaps a warning to men considered as socially and ethnically inferior not to dare to dream of becoming president.

But the ordinary people of Mexico came to venerate him as a national hero. During his rise to the presidency and during his short tenure of that office, Guerrero called for public schools, land title reforms, industry and trade development, and other programs that would benefit the country. We should be proud.