The Sooner The Better

Opus 7 No. 1 is the first of a set of 12 exercises designed to keep you moving around the guitar fingerboard through the chord changes by utilizing specific and unusual shifting techniques. These shifting techniques were developed and employed by the great classical guitar master, Andres Segovia, in his scale system. I practiced this system for several years. Opus 7 uses these shifting techniques as an approach to jazz technique improvement.

"The Sooner the Better" is in A Major. It begins with an A Major scale in Position V, therefore the 1st note, A, is played with the 2nd or middle finger and follows a typical major scale pattern. As it goes into the 2nd octave the 1st shift occurs on the 3rd string. This is indicated on the standard notation staff by the circled 3 meaning that the 4 notes over the dotted line are played on that string. So the shift is from C# with the 3rd finger, to D with the 1st finger. As the Tab indicates, continue ascending on the 2nd and 1st strings, then descend as you enter bar 3 and shift again on the 3rd string, this time from D with your index finger, to C# with your 3rd finger.

The next shift happens on the 4th string from G with your 2nd finger to F# with your 3rd finger. Bar 4 continues with a 4th finger shift from D to C#. 4th finger shifts while very unusual for a jazz player, are commonly employed in the Segovia scale system. Bar 4 ends by playing G with the 3rd finger, but then playing F# with the 1st finger, thus shifting you into position II.

The next shift in bar 5 is on the 4th string from F# with the 3rd finger to G# with the 1st finger. Bar 6 begins with a 1st finger shift from C# to D. Then just follow the notation (or Tab) in position VII until bar 8 which begins with a 1st finger shift from A to G# (Position VI). The 4th finger then moves down a fret to play the F natural, thus shifting you into position V. The final shift is with the 4th finger from C natural to B.

Practice suggestions.
Memorize the exercise so that you no longer need to look at the music and your fingers "know" what they need to do. Then use the included audio to practice the exercise with a rhythm section.

Get your metronome!
Find a comfortable setting so that you can play 2 notes per click. As you become comfortable with each setting, increase the tempo. Repeat that
process at 4 notes per click!

Play the exercise at 4 notes per click for a full 5 minutes. Increase the duration one minute at a time until you can play the exercise for ten minutes! Increase the tempo at your own rate. Do this every day for 10 minutes. You will soon discover that you are developing new skills, that it is worth the effort.

A quote is appropriate here from the great guitar master, George Van Eps.
"In order to play the guitar well one must be an athelete. That is why the diligent practice of awkward, difficult, and unusual hand positions, stretches, formations, and finger combinations are of utmost importance. Real advancement comes from tackling new things, work that is out of reach unless one really tries to accomplish the seemingly impossible - after all, they're only impossible for a while!"

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