

# SIGNE

By Eric Clapton

## Figure 1 – Intro and Theme

“Signe” is one of several songs Eric Clapton composed while mourning the death of his son Conor and healing himself. Composed in 1992, on a beautiful yacht of the same name, it was the first piece Clapton wrote in his healing process. On *Unplugged*, “Signe” is played as an ensemble tune and begins the concert. Eric and second guitarist Andy Fairweather Low render the samba-style instrumental on nylon-string acoustic guitars. Appropriately, they employ a fingerstyle plucking approach which has its roots in Brazilian bossa nova music of the sixties—as does the syncopation which is prevalent throughout the rhythm figures. Both aspects contribute to “Signe’s” light jazz feel.

Eric Clapton uses his customary three-fingers-and-thumb technique to pluck chords and single notes. Note that he does not position his hand in the traditional classical posture. Instead of the standard arched-wrist position, he favors a *collapsed wrist* approach which rests on the strings near or on the bridge, facilitating muting and anchoring. This is essentially an adaptation of Clapton’s electric-guitar fingerpicking technique.

The head of “Signe” employs simple extended chord voicings, such as minor sevenths and dominant sevenths with suspended fourths, in the thematic A–B/A–E/G# changes. The chord progression of D/F#–E7sus4–E7 was clearly a recurring thematic idea in Clapton’s writing of the period, and also appears prominently in “Tears in Heaven.”

3

**Featured Guitars:**  
Gtr. 1 meas. 1-24

4

**Slow Demos:**  
Gtr. 1 meas. 1-7;  
8-12; 13-16;  
17-20

Fig. 1

Intro 0:56

Moderately fast bossa nova feel ♩ = 176

\* Gtr. 1 (nylon-str. acous.)

\* Doubled by another nylon-str. acoustic, played simile.

1:08

9

B/A E/G# F# Bm7 E A

\* T = Thumb on ⑥

13

F# Bm7 E A

17

D/F# Dadd9/F# E7sus4 E7 A

T = Thumb on ⑥

21

D/F# Dadd9/F# E7sus4 E7 A

T = Thumb on ⑥

1:29

## Figure 2 – Bridge

The feel in the bridge (1:51) is more driving and rhythmic. Here accents and space are purposefully exploited for a strong result. The sound is more dynamic and “pianistic” with “claw-style” fingerplucking used by both guitarists. The hammered-on B/C#–C#m7 figure in measures 1 and 5 is crucial and calls for a bit of practice to acquire the necessary technique. Begin by building your left-hand strength and precision by playing a clean, buzz-free index barre at the fourth position. Then, focus on adding the E and G# notes with the second and third fingers while maintaining the barred shape below. Also noteworthy are the characteristic samba-based syncopations as well as the jazzy *cycle-of-fifths* progression of C#m7–F#m7–Bm7–A/B–E.

5

Featured Guitars:  
Gtr. 1 meas. 1-20

6

Slow Demos:  
Gtr. 1 meas. 1-4;  
9-12

Fig. 2

Bridge 1:51

\* Gtr. 1

Chords: B/C# C#m7, F#m7, Bm7, A/B E

\* Doubled by another nylon-str. gr., played simile.

Chords: B/C# C#m7, F#m7, Bm7, A/B E, N.C.

Chords: C#m7, F#m7, Bm7, A/B E, A

Chords: D/F#, Dadd9/F#, E7sus4, E7, A

Chords: D/F#, Dadd9/F#, E7sus4, E7, A

2:18