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The Intimate Virtuoso:
The Guitar, the Rhetoric of Transformation, and Issues of Spectacle in
Music by Fernando Sor, Johann K. Mertz, and Giulio Regondi

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Abstract

Studies of virtuosity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have tended to focus on the piano and the violin. These instruments were obviously virtuosic and lent themselves to visual and aural displays of power, most notably in the case of Liszt and Paganini. These virtuosi crafted spectacles that were often described with metaphors of power and violence. These spectacles came to characterise the virtuosity of the early nineteenth century. However, the guitar has been largely neglected in scholarship dealing with virtuosity from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This is due, in large part, to the status of the guitar within that period. Though popular as an accompanying instrument and in the home, the guitar struggled to find a secure position as a legitimate solo instrument in the public arena. While guitarists such as Dionisio Aguado and Mauro Giuliani were described as 'virtuosi', their instrument, unlike the piano and the violin, did not give itself to a spectacle that conveyed notions of power and violence. Rather, the guitar is an intimate instrument, quieter than the piano or the violin, and utilising small movements in the hands. These aspects of the instrument, so often perceived as 'limitations' led many writers to dismiss it as an inappropriate instrument for performance in the public spheres occupied by the piano and the violin.

Guitarist-composers sought to play to the guitar's strengths in ways that contrasted with the conventional metaphors of power and violence. Some of these attempts rhetorically aligned the guitar with genres and instruments that carried greater cultural capital. Composers used orchestral metaphors and emphasised the guitar's ability to imitate other instruments. Other guitarist-composers sought to create a greater spectacle both in and beyond the music itself by emphasising physical movements within the music and writing extra-musical gestures into the music. The rhetoric of transformation was used either by or about the guitarist-composers Fernando Sor, Dionisio Aguado, Johann Kaspar Mertz, and Giulio Regondi, all of whom this exegesis focuses on, demonstrating a desire to legitimise the guitar at a time when it struggled not only to find traction as a 'serious' classical instrument, but also a place amongst more obviously virtuosic instruments.

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Introduction

'Je suis le Paganini de la guitare!' – Trinity Francis Huerta-y-Caturla

Not many guitarists are familiar with the name Trinity Francis Huerta-y-Caturla, probably much to Huerta's disappointment, given his self-aggrandising comparison with the leading violin virtuoso of his day. Huerta was a Spanish guitarist who arrived in London at some point before March 1827, when he published three waltzes which were reviewed unfavourably. While he was one of the early guitarists to attempt to popularise the guitar as a solo instrument in England, his extroverted nature did not appeal to the reserved nature of the English – apparently, he would cry out during a performance, 'Je suis le Paganini de la guitare!' The flamboyance with which he must have played won him little praise – one critic mocked Huerta, writing that he 'hears the numerous and various chords of a whole orchestra sounding in his own head' and that 'because he feels all the echoes of his soul vibrating through his being in every tone, he fancies he can convey all this volcano of internal harmony upon ... the guitar.' The critic went on to say that Huerta was the 'only person deceived on this point'.¹

This revealing anecdote demonstrates just one manifestation of the seeming incompatibility between the spectacle associated with the virtuosity of Paganini, and the guitar. It raises questions about the guitar's relationship with broader issues concerning virtuosity, reception, and Romantic aesthetics. What did it mean to be a guitar virtuoso in the nineteenth century? While guitarists were described as virtuosi, how were they perceived differently from the virtuosi of the piano and the violin? How did the guitar engage with notions of virtuosity in the early nineteenth century? Considering the popularity of the instrument in the same social settings, why did the guitar not succeed in winning a more permanent place alongside the piano and the violin in the public sphere?

Simplistic answers have been given to this later question for many years. Hector Berlioz, for example, suggested composers used the guitar little because of its 'weak sonority', while Graham Wade in 2001 wrote of the guitar's 'abiding problems', namely its lack of volume

¹ Stewart Button, *The Guitar in England, 1800-1924* (New York, London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 59-60.

and the 'paucity of its repertoire'.² Such an answer, however, only serves to negate any kind of discussion about the merits of the guitar as comprehended by its nineteenth-century audiences, and the ways it engaged positively with nineteenth-century musical culture and aesthetics. In this exegesis, I consider several specific examples from the guitar repertoire and suggest some ways in which the guitar engaged with virtuosity. However, before entering into this interesting and complex topic, it will be illuminating to briefly consider the broader context of the kind of scholarship in which I situate this study.

Musicology has for a long period of its history been concerned with musical texts and their authors, with much time being devoted to recovering, cataloguing, and describing historic documents. The discipline has unwittingly (and, in some respects, intentionally) retained much of its ideological underpinnings grounded particularly in an Austro-Germanic aesthetic. This history has on the whole foregrounded Germanic composers and their great Germanic works to the exclusion of performers as well as non-Germanic composers and traditions, mainly through the constructions 'work' and 'canon', terms which assume the value of Austro-Germanic works. Though scholars have begun to explore other areas, this tendency has continued to shape musicology, with much scholarly effort being expended on the great 'work'. In other words, scholars have been more concerned with the meaning and reception of works rather than with the performance separating a work from its listeners – an event on which the dissemination of (and even the very existence of) music has depended entirely.³ The cost of maintaining what are, at heart, Germanic ideologies has been the exclusion of the performer and the undervaluing of non-Germanic composers and traditions.⁴

The increasing interest in performer-based studies is just one corollary of the work undertaken by scholars and performers who have been questioning and critiquing a group of theories and practices that have long been taken for granted. Scholars have challenged, historicised, and contextualised constructions such as the 'work' and 'canon'. They have

² Hugh MacDonald, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86; Graham Wade, *A Concise History of the Classic Guitar* (Pacific, Missouri: Mel Bay Publications, 2001), 88.

³ Mary Hunter, "'To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer": The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/2 (2005), 361.

⁴ Jim Samson, for example, acknowledges this: Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: the Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

questioned value judgements that privilege one tradition, music, or theoretical framework at the expense of others. The dominance of work-based practices has been challenged, therefore, on the grounds that it rose out of an ideologically charged desire to uphold Austro-Germanic repertoire which places performance as secondary to the work. Nicholas Cook suggests that the very way performance is talked about reinforces its secondary status – we speak of performing *something*, of a performance *of something*, of music *and* performance: ‘the process of performance [is] supplementary to the product that occasions it.’⁵

Undertaking research into the phenomenon of virtuosity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is important because it focuses on a negotiation *between* music-as-text and music-as-performance, what Jim Samson has called the ‘object-status’ and ‘event-status’ of music, rather than simply perpetuating the status quo and taking performance’s secondary status as a given.⁶ Furthermore, virtuosity raises questions of ontology for modern day scholars because by its very nature it requires a methodology that is prepared to question the hegemony of work-based theories and practices – the music-as-text paradigm – so beloved by twentieth-century critical discipline. Virtuosity asks the scholar to, first, make room for the performer in music histories and, then, to think and feel like those performers (or like *a* performer) where scholars have almost exclusively dissected musical scores and asked questions solely of the composer. In other words, virtuosity questions the exclusive control of the music-as-text paradigm and forces reconsiderations of values and aesthetics. Considering the performer in early nineteenth-century music thus nuances the work concept by reintroducing the voice of the performer – focusing on the ‘doing’ rather than the ‘making’.⁷

The repertoires of virtuoso musicians in the early nineteenth century seem most suited to such an approach as they appear to focus our attention on the performer rather than the composer. Dana Gooley’s study of Liszt’s relationship to Carl Maria von Weber’s *Konzertstück* in the context of Liszt’s public image is a good example. Liszt uses the music in

⁵ Nicholas Cook, ‘Music as Performance,’ in *The Cultural Study of Music*, eds. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (London: Routledge, 2003), 204-213.

⁶ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 2.

⁷ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 214.

particular ways to craft the public's perception of him.⁸ There are obvious and concrete ways in which Liszt as a virtuoso performer is presented in, through, and alongside the music. However, music that seeks to transcend its material world including its performer, is perhaps less obviously suited to a consideration of the performer. Music that supposedly rejects virtuosity or, like much of Romantic music, is built around a poetic ideal, makes its connection to the performer more subtle. An approach that asks questions of the performer here is more difficult to sustain. But even if the performer was simply transcended (if possible) or had no say in how the work was to be performed, surely this would be reason enough to consider his or her role. Furthermore, the very physical presence of a performer communicates at least a small degree of relationship between performer and music: How might the performer be inscribed in the work? What role does he or she play in communicating the work? Is there room for the performer to assert his or her identity? Performers may retain some kind of presence in the discourse, or paradoxically, they may mostly disappear under the weight of the work. These are important questions for scholars willing to unravel the complex relationship between music and text.

Studies concerning virtuosity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe have mainly considered the piano and the violin, as these were instruments that were played throughout society, and they embodied an important shift in conceptions of virtuosity in the early nineteenth century.⁹ However, despite also enjoying popularity in certain important social settings, the guitar has been left out of this scholarly discussion. The guitar occupies a complex position with regards to the discourse surrounding virtuosity. It fitted well into the Parisian and Viennese virtuosity of the early nineteenth century because of its melodic qualities and popular status. However, its perceived limitations – its quieter volume, the difficulty of playing fast, and its relatively narrow pitch range – prevented it from becoming a vehicle for the spectacle of sheer power and technical brilliance as was the

⁸ Dana Gooley, 'Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's "Konzertstück", and the Cult of Napoléon,' *19th-Century Music* 24/1 (2000), 62-88; also found in Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78-116.

⁹ I have chosen to ignore the voice because my argument deals mainly with the visual aspects of playing a physical object outside the body.

case for the piano and the violin.¹⁰ As an intimate instrument, the guitar, therefore, interacted with virtuosity in a different way to more powerful instruments. This exegesis seeks to show how the guitar related to a discourse dominated by pianistic and violinistic conceptions of virtuosity and considers music that ranges from virtuosic showpieces to intimate and poetic miniatures. It will engage these works using an analytical approach that seeks to understand the bodily effects of the musical score. This, in turn, will address issues that arise concerning the guitar's place in nineteenth-century notions of virtuosity.

Much of the history of the guitar has been characterised by a struggle for recognition as more than an accompanying instrument. A critic in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in 1808, bluntly typified this attitude, writing,

... isn't it almost unbelievably amateurish to devote such great talent, as Giuliani has done, to this perennially weak-volumed instrument? ... has not every instrument its own limits decreed by nature? And if these are violated, must not the result be something strangely artificial, or even deformed? We must put the guitar back in its place – let it stick to accompaniment – and we will always be happy to hear it ...¹¹

While guitarists were recognised frequently as virtuosi, the 'project' to legitimise the guitar as a virtuoso solo instrument on a par with the piano and the violin took on several characteristics, conveying at times an almost nervous fear of failure: that the guitar would be proven after all to be no more than an accompaniment instrument or a hobby of young ladies in the home. The rhetoric surrounding guitaristic virtuosity particularly shows this, especially when the guitar is compared to other instruments, something Frederic V. Grunfeld, an author, journalist, and writer of a guitar history, called 'instrumental

¹⁰ The author of the review I go on to quote in footnote 11 shows the kind of criticisms levelled at the guitar by many nineteenth-century critics. This particular review invokes 'limits decreed by nature' to marginalise the guitar as a legitimate solo instrument. The same criticism is found even in twentieth-century criticism as the guitar struggled once more to gain both popularity and weight as a 'serious' classical solo instrument. One reviewer was quick to criticise the guitar thus: '... although guitar recitals are featured regularly at the Wigmore Hall this season, it seems that even imagination and mastery of fiendish technical problems hardly compensate for the instrument's crippling musical limitations ...' – no date or name of publication, quoted in Harvey Turnbull, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1974), 123.

¹¹ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1808), quoted in Thomas Heck, *Mauro Giuliani: Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer* (Columbus: Editions Orphée, 1995), 39-40.

transvestism'.¹² This approach sought to legitimise the guitar by associating it with instruments and genres that carried greater cultural capital. This rhetoric of imitation and of transformation is evident in all three guitarist-composers I shall look at.

Before examining examples of the guitar repertoire in more depth, Chapter One will explore the inherent technical difficulties of the guitar, its intimacy of gesture and dynamic in performance, and the problems with reconciling these characteristics with nineteenth-century virtuosity frameworks, particularly the visual spectacle.

Chapter Two will consider the *Grand Solo*, Op. 14, written by Fernando Sor (1778-1839) and refined by Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849). I contend that Aguado's approach to the work is in the same vein as a pianistic model exemplified by Liszt's approach to performing Carl Maria von Weber's *Konzertstück*, discussed by Dana Gooley.¹³ Gooley argues that the several significant changes Liszt made to Weber's score aligned Liszt with the military hero of the work's programme. The nature of Liszt's changes was such that they visually and aurally enhanced the image of Liszt as the conquering hero, forcefully dominating both the piano and the orchestra. These changes show Liszt consciously cultivated a powerful and central persona in virtuoso performance. The particular context of the guitar nuances this Lisztian approach in the case of Aguado's revisiting of the *Grand Solo*.

Chapter Three explores repertoire by Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806-1856). I argue that Mertz's extensive musical descriptors in the *Fantasie Hongroise*, Op. 65, imply extra-musical gestures which are not necessarily inherent in the music itself. This demonstrates a desire to play up the spectacle by 'enlarging' the music. Several of Mertz's poetic miniatures engage with virtuosity in other ways – forcing the performer to make technically uncomfortable movements, simply denying virtuosity in a poetic ideal, or 'elevating' virtuosity by using it in the service of poetic expression.

Chapter Four considers visual spectacle and the rhetoric of imitation and transformation in the *Introduction and Caprice*, Op. 23 by Giulio Regondi (1822-1872). Regondi was frequently described in reviews as transforming the guitar into other instruments. While it is possible

¹² Frederic V. Grunfeld, *The Art and Times of the Guitar: An Illustrated History of Guitars and Guitarists* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1969), 140.

¹³ Gooley, 'Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's "Konzertstück", and the Cult of Napoléon,' 62-88.

he contributed to this by using tone colours in particular ways, the use of this rhetoric has a longer history and shows an attempt to legitimise the guitar. Regondi's work also combines visual and aural elements, showing an awareness of spectacle.

Chapter One: Guitar as Spectacle?

Displays of extraordinary skill and mastery have always tended to elicit strong feelings, whether positive or negative, and seldom has this debate played out as strongly as in the realm of music. The virtuoso has been the subject of intense scrutiny in all ages, raising both the adulation and ire of critics and audiences alike, and the guitarist has been no exception. The guitar's place among the so-called 'virtuoso' instruments is far from obvious, however. It is an instrument which has, on the whole, struggled to find a real and permanent place alongside other instruments, particularly the piano and the violin. While guitarists in the early nineteenth century are frequently described as 'virtuosi', such descriptions are often tied to doubts and misgivings about the suitability or the worth of the guitar as a solo instrument. For example, in December of 1829, the *Harmonicon* introduced the harpolyre as one of the few improvements on the guitar, criticising the guitar thus:

Many distinguished professors of the guitar have endeavoured to raise the instrument from the inferior rank which it holds in the sonorous class. But vainly has their skill conquered the difficulties of fingering etc.; still only a thin, brief, and dry sound has proceeded from the frail machine; and while the talent of the performer is admired, we regret to see the talent wasted in conquering the defects of an unfavourable instrument.¹⁴

While recognising the ability of performers to lift or 'raise' the guitar beyond its perceived limitations, writers often struggled to comprehend its value outside its more familiar contexts: as being an accompanying instrument and in domestic settings. In other situations, critics recognised and even praised the musical ability and 'intelligence' of certain guitarists but they also often expressed frustration that the performer had not chosen another instrument:

Monsieur Sor does very pretty things on the guitar; but I confess that I have always regretted that this artist, whose musical intelligence is far from ordinary, does not devote himself to an instrument which would offer greater resources to his ability.

¹⁴ *The Harmonicon* (December 1829), quoted in Harvey Turnbull, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1974), 71.

On hearing M. Sor one recognises a superior artist; but, I repeat, why does he play the guitar?¹⁵

Apprehensions about the guitar's status as a solo instrument were frequently based on its lack of 'resource' in terms of volume, as it was much quieter than the piano or the violin. This might be labelled more positively as the guitar's 'intimacy' in performance. Criticisms also came of the thin and harsh tone which some performers produced. For example, the critic F. J. Fétis reproached Fernando Sor for his 'persistence in playing with a sharp sound'.¹⁶

Twenty-first century audiences are much more familiar with the guitar as a solo instrument on the concert stage and its status as a 'serious' classical instrument is much more secure, while in other styles of music, its virtuosic potential is much more obvious, particularly in those that use amplification. Music schools and conservatories typically have a guitar department and the level of skill and musicianship among young emerging professionals is at a level where it is competitive with other instrumentalists. This chapter introduces some of the ways in which the guitar's virtuosity functioned in different ways to other instruments in the early nineteenth century, hence departing from more traditional conceptions of virtuosity.

To begin with, the guitar would seem to sit well in the popular classical style cultivated in the home during the early nineteenth century. This music both encouraged and was encouraged by the development of the postclassical repertory of the early nineteenth century. Jim Samson defines the 'postclassical' aesthetic when he writes, 'This music was designed to be popular, and happy to accept its commodity status.'¹⁷ It cultivated a style that emphasised 'musical recreation and entertainment' – pleasing melodies, tunefulness, and appeal, rather than more Romantic ideals such as 'expressive intensity', edification through an experience of the poetic and the sublime, and transcendence.¹⁸ Instead of pursuing 'Romantic individualism and subjectivity', the postclassical aesthetic encouraged

¹⁵ *Revue Musicale* 12 (1832-3), 22, quoted in Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor: Composer and Guitarist* (Miami: Hansen Publications, 1977), 106.

¹⁶ *Revue Musicale* 3 (1828), 302-4, quoted in Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 104.

¹⁷ Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁸ Stefaniak, "'Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music,' Ph.D. Diss., University of Rochester (2012), 14-17 and 36-37.

stylistic conformity and a ‘formidable’ pedagogical programme fortified that orthodoxy.¹⁹ This style, as can be imagined, flourished to an extraordinary extent with a large-scale growth in both the publishing industry and domestic music making. The postclassical preoccupation with entertainment and appeal was in many ways a perfect fit for the guitar, especially in the domestic setting. The following excerpt from Elizabeth Appleton’s *Private Education or a Practical Plan for the Study of Young Ladies* (1815) shows playing guitar to be a popular and fashionable undertaking by young ladies in the home:

If there be in one family several daughters, and they must all attend to music, would it not be infinitely better to distribute our musical instruments amongst them, and to allow of only one to either? Piano-forte, harp, guitar, or harmonica, harp-lute, castanets, and tambourine. Many a girl is obliged to touch (I can hardly say practise) three, four, and five of these, with what advantage to her domestic character as a daughter, a female, a member of society, a friend to the poor, or to her character as a human being and a Christian, it is impossible for me to conceive.²⁰

The purpose of such study, Appleton writes, is to ‘gratify the musical fondness of parents, the unfolding taste of childhood, avoid the shame of being outdone in fashion, open another source of amusement, or add to feminine attraction’.²¹ There are hints of a disjointed relationship, however, once the instrument moves into the public arena, a space where the confines of the home no longer protect the guitar from having to confront its intimacy.

The nineteenth century was, on the whole, the century of the virtuoso. The historian Paul Metzner has examined the cultural and societal shifts that combined to fuel the rise of the virtuoso in Paris, a city Jim Samson has called the capital of virtuosity.²² While much of his analysis might be applied beyond the French capital, it was in Paris that these factors were concentrated. Metzner describes ‘revolutions’ in three areas which brought about or encouraged three corresponding characteristics in diverse occupations such as music

¹⁹ Jim Samson, ‘The Practice of Early Nineteenth-Century Pianism,’ in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 116-117; Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 21-22.

²⁰ Elizabeth Appleton, *Private Education or a Practical Plan for the Study of Young Ladies* (Harvard University: H. Colburn, 1815), 162.

²¹ Appleton, *Private Education or a Practical Plan for the Study of Young Ladies*, 135-136.

²² Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 4.

performance, crime-detection, and automaton-building. These revolutions were in the proliferation and use of public space, the increasing value placed on knowledge and skill, and in the centralising of the self in the common worldview. The revolution in public space encouraged spectacle-making, the increasing value of knowledge stimulated the cultivation of technical skill, and the self-centred worldview fostered self-promotion in public as much as it encouraged an increasingly retiring private life.²³ For Metzner, then, the nineteenth-century Parisian virtuoso was someone in whom all three features were present. Metzner's goal is certainly to assess the historical phenomenon of virtuosity at a broader level but how an instrument like the guitar participated in this culture is not immediately obvious. The particular question that arises in the case of the guitar is one related to spectacle-making – how can an intimate instrument participate in a culture fascinated by the spectacle when its perceived limitations are so obvious? Before attempting an answer, it will be useful to consider the nature of these 'limitations'.

One defining characteristic of both Franz Liszt and Niccolò Paganini was their ability to create spectacles. Audiences described their feats as superhuman, even demonic in Paganini's case, and with adjectives such as 'explosive', 'brilliant', and even 'incomprehensible'.²⁴ Kawabata attributes at least part of their extraordinary success to the 'bourgeois era's obsession with the cult of personality, individualism, and the self', claiming they 'epitomised the Romantic "cult of the virtuoso" with its emphasis on soloistic, heroic performance'.²⁵

Paganini at his violin was, for many in the nineteenth century, an image of both militaristic and masculine power, a spectacle of domination, both violent and sexual. Maiko Kawabata has shown how the cult of Napoleon combined with the symbolism of the bow as a sword to strengthen the metaphor of violinist as military hero.²⁶ New changes in bow craftsmanship in the 1780s and 90s meant the bow looked more like a sword – it became slightly concave rather than convex and sharper at the tip. For example, Paganini's bow was described by a

²³ Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso*, 1-2 and 9.

²⁴ Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso*, 124-129; James Johnson, *Listening in Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 265-267; see also Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuosity, the Violin, and the Devil... What Really Made Paganini "Demonic"?' *Current Musicology* 83 (2007), 7-30.

²⁵ Mai Kawabata, *Paganini: The Demonic Virtuoso* (Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press, 2013), 18.

²⁶ Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender (1789-1830),' *19th-Century Music* 28/2 (2004), 99-103.

reviewer as ‘at his side like a sword’, while another of Paganini’s performances saw him as ‘a general in the midst of his soldiers’, directing with his ‘baton of command’.²⁷ A further metaphor that coloured nineteenth-century characterisations of virtuoso violinists was that of the violin and its voice as feminine, and the bow as a phallic symbol (Figure 1.1).²⁸ Both of these inherently gendered metaphors informed the way nineteenth-century audiences responded to violinists. Many times, these metaphors were used negatively to critique female violinists who were only seen as successful when they played ‘in a masculine manner’.²⁹

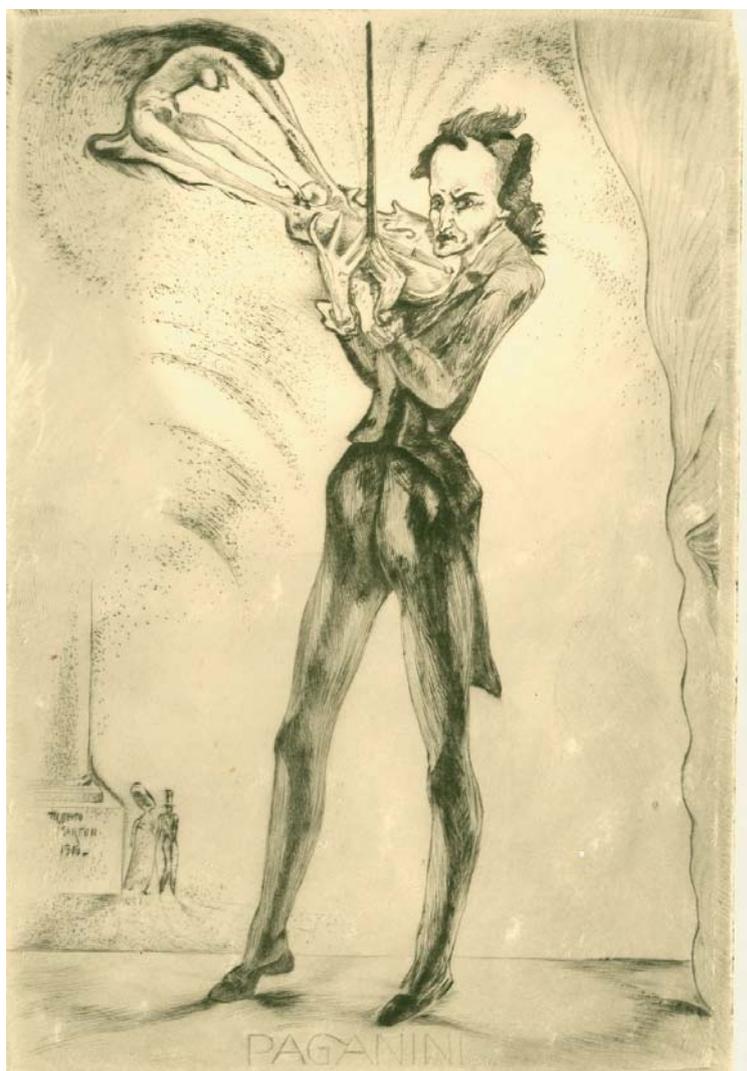


Figure 1.1. Caricature of Paganini.

²⁷ Reviews quoted in Kawabata, ‘Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance,’ 100-101.

²⁸ Image held in the Whittall Collection, Library of Congress; found at <<http://blogs.loc.gov/music/2013/02/paganewni-composers-rise-to-the-paganini-challenge-a-paganini-project-update/>> (3 January 2014).

²⁹ Kawabata, ‘Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance,’ 103-106.

Liszt at the piano was, for many, also an image of militaristic power. The 1832 caricature of Liszt astride a warhorse shows this vividly (Figure 1.2).³⁰ Liszt was seen as a conquering Napoleon, and his piano both the weapon and the victim, its strings and hammers often breaking.³¹ In concertos, Liszt again was seen as the general leading his troop or conquering them with his piano depending on the particular work.³²



Figure 1.2. Liszt. A. Lorentz, *Miroir Drôlatique*, 1832.

³⁰ Reproduced in Yane Fromrich, *Musique et Caricature en France au XIXe Siècle* (Genève: Editions Minkoff, 1973), 98.

³¹ Alan Walker, et al, 'Liszt, Franz,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (25 November 2013).

³² Dana Gooley, 'Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's "Konzertstück", and the Cult of Napoléon,' *19th-Century Music* 24/1 (2000), 62-88.

The spectacle created by Liszt and Paganini stands at odds with the image of a guitarist performing because these kinds of metaphors and images were foreign to guitar performance in the domestic postclassical setting. The guitar never participated in these metaphors for obvious reasons – it does not make use of a sword-like bow, the movements it requires of the hands are small and subtle, and in terms of volume, it is neither as loud as the piano nor as sustained as the violin. The guitar has a particularly intimate quality due not only to its subtlety but also to its open and even vulnerable position in performance. The guitarist does not make large movements like the violinist, or expressive gestures like singers are able to do, being trained in operatic theatricality.³³ The guitarist is unique in that his or her movements are subtle but all is laid out before the audience as they look directly on his hands and straight at the fingerboard of the guitar. This vulnerability creates an intimacy that is counter-intuitive to nineteenth-century metaphors of power and violence. Furthermore, the guitar could never hope to match the sheer volume of either the violin or the piano, especially considering that the nineteenth-century guitar was smaller than its modern counterpart. Also, the use of gut strings would have contributed to a softer or less sustained sound than modern strings. This leads to another point – the guitar is not an instrument that easily sustains notes and after a note is plucked, it quickly decays. It is no surprise then that it was only with the rise of the electric guitar with its power, sheer volume, sustaining abilities, and obvious ‘spectacular’ qualities that both the gendered and violent metaphors came to be associated with the guitar.³⁴

In terms of pure scale speed, the guitar struggles to compete with the violin, and to a lesser extent, with the piano. One of the main reasons for this is that the guitarist must coordinate both hands – the left hand must place the finger on the note at the same time as the right hand plucks the string. The fingers must be coordinated for every (non-repeated) note. The action of plucking a string is similar to the action of striking a key on the piano but the difference is the pianist’s finger has nowhere to go after striking the note except to return to

³³ Between phrases, the guitarist is able to lift his hands away from the guitar creating a sense of gesture, but the act of playing the note is subtle. This kind of movement is not generally encouraged because it creates room for error when returning to the strings, especially considering the precision of movement that is required to pluck the strings. The Polish guitarist Marek Pascieczny is an example of a particularly gestural guitarist.

³⁴ For example, see Kawabata’s brief discussion of gender and hypersexualisation in modern electric guitar music – Kawabata, *Paganini*, 71; Kawabata cites *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990).

a playing position while the guitarist's finger follows through the string before relaxing to a ready-to-play position. This complexity means guitarists struggle to approach tempi that pianists achieve while violinists can play entire scales in a single bow, their speed only restricted by how fast they can place their left-hand fingers.³⁵

The brief discussion above shows that guitar performance cannot provide the kind of spectacle that the piano and the violin do. In short, it is quieter, less gestural, and more intimate. Two questions arise here: How did audiences respond to the spectacle? And, how did guitarists in the nineteenth-century 'compensate' for the intimacy of their instrument?

Audiences' response to the spectacle was certainly complex despite its seeming enthusiasm. To begin with, one might make the obvious observation that a spectacle is no spectacle without an audience. In Europe, and Paris particularly, the publicisation of government, of space, and all facets of social, political, and economic life meant the public had more freedom than ever before.³⁶ Part of this expansion created an 'explosion of public concerts'.³⁷ The public flocked to these concerts, increasingly awed not only by the virtuoso but by works of the 'great' composers: Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.³⁸ Transfixed by the spectacle, audiences became at the same time quieter, in awe of 'Art' with a capital A and its disciples, and more frenzied, as virtuosos like Paganini and Liszt created spectacles of power, passion, and impossibility, culminating dramatically in the craze dubbed 'Lisztomania' that swept Berlin in 1842 and Paris in 1844.³⁹ Liszt became rich very quickly due to high ticket sales and he did so well that he could afford to give generously to charity – Gooley suggests that this protected Liszt from the anti-virtuosity critics who equated the flurry of notes with greed.⁴⁰ Paganini, too, did handsomely, bestowing upon Berlioz a large gift of twenty thousand francs, enabling him to compose his penultimate symphony.⁴¹

³⁵ Admittedly, flamenco guitarists achieve extraordinary tempi that most classical guitarists envy.

³⁶ Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso*, 213-221.

³⁷ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 72.

³⁸ Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 257-269; William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: the Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 6-8.

³⁹ Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 201-203.

⁴⁰ Dana Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity,' in *Franz Liszt and His World*, ed. Christopher Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 95-97.

⁴¹ Edward Neill, 'Paganini, Nicolò,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (25 November 2013); Cécile Reynaud, 'Berlioz, Liszt, and the Question of Virtuosity,' in *Berlioz: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Peter Bloom (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 109.

However, while Lisztomania was at its zenith, anti-virtuosity sentiment was also at an all-time high, and by the late 1860s, it enjoyed cultural hegemony.⁴² Robert Schumann led the German critique of virtuosity with the journal he founded, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, set up to counter the popular taste for virtuosos, though he saved most of his criticisms for reviews of sheet music.⁴³ A large part of the criticism of the virtuoso culture was its commercialism, but spectacles have always been simultaneously fascinating and divisive.⁴⁴ As much as early nineteenth-century audiences loved display, spectacle, and individualism, excessive individuality was frowned upon, especially when that display was seen to be detrimental to 'true creativity'.⁴⁵ This criticism was certainly not unique to the nineteenth-century, it arose earlier in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

The French dancer and ballet-master, Jean-Georges Noverre, in his *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets* (1760), revealed his anxieties about virtuosity by criticising the spectacle created by a 'showy' Italian violinist:

Taste is seldom compatible with difficult exertions I consider these curious and difficult passages, both in music and dancing, as a mere jargon, absolutely foreign and superfluous An Italian performer, such as I have described comes to Paris [The audience's] ears have enjoyed no satisfaction in his performance; nor has his hand given them the least pleasure; but their eyes have been amused ... he accompanies all these dexterities with a thousand awkward [*sic*] distortions of his body, and seems to say to the audience, 'Gentlemen, look at me, but do not listen to me – this passage is extremely difficult' Though he doubtless exercises his fingers very dextrously, yet this automaton, this piece of machinery, receives all that approbation which is constantly refused to a French performer.⁴⁷

Noverre describes the spectacle negatively, claiming that, however impressive it may be, it detracts from the real purpose of music. The purpose of the performance, according to

⁴² Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity,' 104.

⁴³ Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity,' 77, 80-82 and 86.

⁴⁴ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 151-152.

⁴⁵ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 4.

⁴⁶ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 69.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 137. Le Guin suggests the violinist may have been Domenico Ferrari though there is not enough evidence to be certain – 307n36.

Noverre, was to be seen and not listened to – the violinist’s performance was aimed at impressing an audience rather than being ‘addressed to the heart’. Noverre’s description shows a focus on the visual – their eyes are ‘amused’, and the performer produces ‘dexterities’ and ‘awkward distortions of his body’. Such a ‘distortion’ leads Noverre to describe the performer as a cold, sterile automaton.⁴⁸

August Kahlert, a German critic and one of the contributors to the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, also criticised the performer for making music about the performer, rather than being subservient to the work:

The result amounts to saying that if before one wanted compositions by the masters explained and called into consciousness through the delivery of a virtuoso, now the interest is reversed, and one would much rather admire the skill of the individual. From the earlier perspective it was the object, but it is now the person that becomes the main thing.⁴⁹

Kahlert’s complaint, written in the early 1840s and aimed at the postclassical virtuosity of pianist-composers such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and Henri Herz (1803-1888), invokes a distinction between a performance-based practice and a work-based practice.⁵⁰ His concern is that one has come at the expense of the other. Kahlert also criticises the virtuoso for theatricality, saying, ‘His beloved I becomes the main point of the whole task.’⁵¹ Where the Romantic aesthetic sought an inward and spiritual experience of a work, virtuoso performances emphasised technical prowess and physical spectacle.

Noverre’s and Kahlert’s criticisms are rooted in an ideology that crystallised around the turn of the nineteenth century into a cultural phenomenon that was later described as the ‘work concept’, according to Lydia Goehr’s analysis. Goehr argues that, around 1800, various ideas, as well as changes in society and in culture, came together resulting in a cementing of

⁴⁸ Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body*, 137-138.

⁴⁹ August Kahlert, ‘Das Concertwesen der Gegenwart,’ *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 16 (1842), 106, quoted in David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 142. Though Kahlert seems to get these practices around the wrong way in the light of Goehr’s argument, his complaint opens the way to nuance, as well as extend, the history Goehr paints by drawing our attention to the role of the performer within early nineteenth-century pianism.

⁵⁰ Stefaniak, “Poetic Virtuosity,” 38.

⁵¹ As quoted by Gooley, ‘The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity,’ 93.

the idea of a 'work' and its centrality to the Western art music tradition. One of the more important of these changes was the liberation of composers from patronage-type systems of employment – they found greater autonomy in their creative control and artistic aspirations outside of a system that had, on the whole, dictated the nature of their work. As composers found greater autonomy, so did their works. Changes in copyright law and developing ideals around originality and individuality combined with this greater freedom to create an aura around the idea of the work. This culminated in the idea of the 'untouchable' work which meant that performers were expected to submit fully to the composer's intentions and could not in any way interfere with it.⁵² This concept was more quickly codified in Austro-Germany than in other parts of Europe whose music it does not describe so effectively.⁵³

While more concerned about the developing work concept, Goehr briefly addresses how this affected performers. She argues that as composers exercised their authority, performers sought also to find their own autonomy and they did this through virtuosity, in particular.⁵⁴ In performing pieces of their own composition, as well as frequently improvising, performers found the freedom to do as they pleased (though the expectations of an audience have always shaped a performer's approach). By improvising, or writing their own music, they could make the act of performance and the demonstration of skill, one of, if not, *the* central feature of performance.⁵⁵ In this way, a virtuoso had a niche where he or she could find recognition for his or her impressive abilities rather than remaining under the stifling weight and absolute control of the composer's work. It was here virtuosos found celebrity status among an adoring public. However, the work concept eventually came to

⁵² Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 176-242; see also Mary Hunter's work in this regard – "'To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer": The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/2 (2005), 357-398.

⁵³ While there is debate around how strongly to assert the work concept and its point of solidification, most musicologists are happy to recognise this basic trajectory. Nonetheless its relationship to music from non-Germanic cultures often differs in the details and sometimes more significantly. See Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Musical Work: Reality Or Invention?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), especially Reinhard Strohm's chapter, 'Looking Back at Ourselves: The Problem with the Musical Work-Concept.'

⁵⁴ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 229-234.

⁵⁵ Taking the act of performance as the subject of an artwork is a critical part of a definition of 'virtuosic works' argued for by Thomas Carson Mark in a more philosophical arena and one largely outside of my present concern. Mark offers several more conditions to his definition of virtuosic works as 'taking the act of performance as the subject of an artwork' is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to describe such a work – Thomas Carson Mark, 'On Works of Virtuosity,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 77/1 (1980), 28-45.

dominate musical practice. This is symbolised, perhaps, by Liszt's departure later in life from his virtuoso years, becoming primarily a composer.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the spectacle, according to Metzner, was the defining feature of Parisian virtuosity, and arguably the defining feature of the nineteenth-century virtuoso phenomenon.

How then did guitarists deal with the characteristics of the instrument, so often seen negatively as limitations and inhibiting the spectacle? A brief answer will suffice to show the direction of the following chapters which go on to explore this question in more detail and in specific instances.

As in any other situation where weaknesses might be outlined, guitarists played instead to their strengths. One way they did this was to compose music that was 'tactile' – W. Dean Sutcliffe describes a similar concept with his term 'unthinking hand-motives', referring to the way particular parts of the music feel natural, easy, and good or pleasant to play.⁵⁷ Sutcliffe writes about Scarlatti's keyboard sonata in A major, K. 65, using this term to approach aspects of Scarlatti's music that find their genesis in the hands on the keyboard rather than in more intellectual approaches to composition – in other words, music that one might come up with in improvisation as they 'let their fingers go'.⁵⁸ These are expressions of 'sheer joy in playing', offering the performer a chance to sound virtuosic without requiring 'taxing' execution.⁵⁹ Particular techniques, such as upward or downward arpeggios, can be played at speed on the guitar (and the piano) because the whole hand can move as one in a manner perhaps best described as a controlled roll. This plays to the instrumentalist's advantage because he can create the illusion of difficulty in music that is technically straightforward, making him seem much more virtuosic than he might actually be. All of the guitarist-composers I study in this exegesis employ music that is 'tactile'.

⁵⁶ Gooley notes much Lisztian scholarship has been defensive, seeking to remove Liszt from criticisms of 'self-aggrandisement' by claiming he 'placed little value on his popularity as a virtuoso, and that his true desire was to compose' – Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 12-13.

⁵⁷ W. Dean Sutcliffe, "'Una genuina música de tecla,'" in *The Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 276-283.

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Le Guin refers to a similar concept which she calls 'idiotism' where the compositional process is not necessarily derived from 'any generally constituted standard of originality or novelty, but from a particularly constituted one made up of the utterer's own irreducible habits'. Rather than flowing from 'general laws', music informed by *idiotism* comes from the hand and is thus irreducible to other compositional models (models which have largely informed analytical approaches to the exclusion of other modes of 'knowing') – Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 131-132.

⁵⁹ Sutcliffe, "'Una genuina música de tecla,'" 283-284.

Another of the guitar's particular strengths is the variety of tone colours, sounds, and effects it can produce. Guitarists such as Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado went out of their way to emphasise the guitar's strengths in being able to offer a large variety of tone colours and sounds. Aguado, particularly, repeatedly describes the guitar and its effects as orchestral. He devotes an entire chapter of his 1843 method to how different sounds can be achieved on the same note – playing it on different strings, at different points on the same string, and playing it with different parts of the right-hand finger, or at different angles.

A further way that guitarist-composers dealt with the intimacy of the guitar was to 'transcend' it through gesture and facial expression. For example, Johann Kaspar Mertz showed an awareness of the spectacle and the limits of the guitar when he wrote seemingly extra-musical gestural instructions into some of his music. These seem designed to play up the drama of the music, creating a spectacle of gesture where the music does not itself suggest any particular drama or gesture. Mertz thus moves beyond the guitar itself in order to create a virtuosic spectacle. Likewise, Regondi's virtuosity was seen in his ability to embody the music gesturally, combining the visual and the aural, but also in his ability to 'transform' the guitar into another instrument. This gave audiences and critics a framework to positively assess guitar virtuosity when its perceived limitations threatened to keep it from achieving legitimacy as a 'serious' solo instrument. This is also demonstrated in reviews of Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829), showing a longer precedent to this trope.

The above discussion demonstrates an awareness of the guitar's strengths among nineteenth-century guitarists and an approach that sought to 'compensate' for the lack of spectacle. The following three chapters explore these ideas in more depth.

Chapter Two: Aguado's 'Warhorse'

In the late 1820s, two of the most influential guitarists in the history of the instrument took up residence in Paris. The first, Fernando Sor (1778-1839), had been politically exiled from Spain in 1813, eventually settling in Paris in 1826 after spending nearly a decade in London and several more years traveling around Europe. The other, also a Spaniard, Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849), had undertaken the journey to Paris from Madrid in 1825 or 1826 in order to meet Sor, according to one nineteenth-century Spanish historian.⁶⁰ Whether or not this is true, the two had crossed paths earlier in Spain, and were certainly well-acquainted in Paris, both living in the Hôtel Favart, and performing together on at least three occasions.⁶¹

At the very end of his life, Aguado published a transcription of Sor's *Grand Solo*, Op. 14, the final collaboration of two great guitarists. The arrangement provides an insight into the interaction of the guitar with nineteenth-century conceptions of virtuosity that emphasised spectacle and power. Aguado's arrangement outlines an attempt to participate in a virtuoso practice that utilised works as 'warhorses', seeking to demonstrate technical prowess and virtuoso showmanship.⁶² Nonetheless, Aguado approaches the guitar realising its struggle to compete in a conception of virtuosity that was modelled on piano and violin virtuoso performance. His guitar method of 1843 shows a different emphasis, one that plays up the particular strengths of the guitar rather than ceding ground to other instruments in terms of sheer power and athleticism.

The guitar is an instrument which is not as yet well known. Who would think that of all those used today, it is perhaps the most suitable for producing the effect of an orchestra in miniature?⁶³

⁶⁰ M. Soriano Fuertes, *Historia de la Música Española*, volume 4 (Madrid & Barcelona, 1859), 212-213, as referenced by Brian Jeffery in Dionisio Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume One*, ed. Brian Jeffery (Heidelberg: Chanterelle, 1994), xiii.

⁶¹ Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume One*, xiv-xvii.

⁶² Gooley notes that the designation 'warhorse', describing a 'weighty, highly virtuosic composition' does not originate in the work itself but in the performance of it - Dana Gooley, 'Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's "Konzertstück", and the Cult of Napoléon,' *19th-Century Music* 24/1 (2000), 62. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes the word was used to describe a person, usually a veteran soldier, politician or actor/performer from 1837. However, it does not note a use of the word to describe a *work* of art rather than a performer until 1947 - 'war-horse, n.,' *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <www.oed.com> (11 December 2013).

⁶³ Dionisio Aguado, *New Guitar Method* [1843], trans. Louise Bigwood, ed. Brian Jeffery (London: Tecla, 1995), 1.

Thus opens the first chapter of Dionisio Aguado's guitar method, *Nuevo Método para Guitarra*. First published in Madrid in 1843, this work represents a lifetime's commitment to the study of the guitar and the culmination of many years teaching and playing the guitar. Aguado had published two other methods for the guitar, in 1825 and 1834, but this method eclipses them in both length and refinement of ideas.⁶⁴ Right from the outset of this *magnum opus*, Aguado invokes an orchestral metaphor to cast the guitar in a positive light, seemingly to legitimise its status as an expressive instrument capable of imitation. The rhetorical question strengthens the sense that he is writing to persuade those who are, perhaps, not convinced the guitar has much worth as a solo instrument. By way of contrast, Sor's method, published in 1830, begins like many modern methods with a chapter on the construction of the guitar.⁶⁵ Admittedly, Sor's introduction establishes why he came to see the guitar as more than just an instrument for accompaniment.

One of the central claims, then, of Aguado's apologia is that the guitar has worth because of its ability to express a wide variety of sounds and colours. The orchestral metaphor reappears throughout his method as a means of supporting this contention. His second chapter is a list of the ways in which the quality of the note produced can be varied – by playing on different strings, playing bass notes with the fingernails, varying dynamics, changing the position of the hand, changing the angle of the hand, and varying the proportion of flesh to nail in each stroke.⁶⁶ Though Aguado does not invoke orchestral instruments here, he shows his aesthetic revolved, in large part, around carefully crafting the guitar's sound for expressive ends. Later in the method, Aguado devotes a whole chapter to discussing how the guitar can be used to imitate the drum, trumpet, and harp, and another section describes how the performer can produce the combined sound of the violin, viola, and bass or violoncello.⁶⁷ Aguado does acknowledge the limitations of the instrument in attempting to imitate the harp and the piano, though he does so even as he argues that the guitar's strength lies in its ability to offer a range of effects:

... 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

⁶⁴ Dionisio Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, ix-xix.

⁶⁵ Fernando Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar* [1830], trans. A. Merrick (1832), ed. Brian Jeffery (London: Tecla Editions, 1995).

⁶⁶ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 5; see also page 56 of the same.

⁶⁷ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 55-56 and 59-60.

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.⁶⁸ [emphases in original]

The orchestral metaphor seems to have been a familiar trope as it was repeated over thirty years later in a review of the Italian guitarist Marco Aurelio Zani de Ferranti:

In the hands of Ferranti, the guitar becomes an orchestra, a military band; if he plays the *Marseillaise* on the guitar he makes a revolutionary of you, if he sings a love song there is a seduced woman, if he sings the *Chant du Départ* we fly to the frontier.⁶⁹

The metaphor was also used to describe Aguado's contemporary, compatriot, and collaborator, Fernando Sor. After a concert in Paris in 1823, the *Harmonicon* wrote that he:

... charmed all the Parisian amateurs by an instrument which, says our French correspondent, might, from its appearance, have been taken for a guitar; but judging by its harmony, must have been a complete orchestra, enclosed in a small compass. He ought, continues our friend, to be called *Le Racine de la Guitare*.⁷⁰

It is striking that the orchestral metaphor is the first metaphor these reviews use. The notion of becoming an orchestra is certainly virtuosic in some sense. The result is a miniature spectacle of sorts, a community of performers reduced to one, impressive in its intimacy, or perhaps more appropriately, *despite* its intimacy. While modern audiences may not hear orchestral instruments in guitar music from this time, it is possible that nineteenth-century audiences recognised efforts to imitate those instruments.⁷¹ Whether or not this is the case, to use a metaphor that seems to greatly overstate the effect of the guitar makes sense

⁶⁸ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 1 and 10-11.

⁶⁹ Simon Wynberg, *Marco Aurelio Zani de Ferranti: A Biography* (Heidelberg: Chanterelle Verlag, 1989), 38-39.

⁷⁰ Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor: Composer and Guitarist* (Miami: Hansen Publications, 1977), 80.

⁷¹ Interestingly, the metaphor works the other way on occasions and the orchestra – the string section, in particular – is made to imitate the guitar. I am aware of two situations where this is the case: in several of Paganini's violin concertos (see Edward Neill, 'Paganini, Nicolò,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (25 November 2013)), and in Méphistophélès' *Sérénade* from Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* (see Hugh MacDonald, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87). Both composers also played the guitar.

when considered in the wider process of legitimisation that was taking place.⁷² The comparison draws on the superior cultural capital of the orchestral genre, one that was about to rediscover Beethoven's works after the 'fitful, irregular' performances of earlier years.⁷³

Aguado's approach to Sor's *Grand Solo* can be seen in this light. Uncommon in much guitar music from this time, Aguado writes explicit instructions in the score as well as rewriting much of Sor's original. His changes seem aimed at increasing the impact of the work visually and aurally in order to construct a greater sense of spectacle. His aesthetic, on the other hand, showed that guitarists could not necessarily rely on the spectacle in order to raise the guitar's status. The other significant feature of the guitar that Aguado emphasises is its ability to produce 'full, rounded, pure, and agreeable sounds'.⁷⁴ Reports show that his playing did not invite descriptions of the spectacle but rather praise of his remarkable tone.

The framework used here to examine Aguado's arrangement of Sor's *Grand Solo* is inspired by Dana Gooley's study of Liszt's approach to performing Weber's *Konzertstück*.⁷⁵ Like Liszt's changes to Weber's work, Aguado's changes to the *Grand Solo* seem calculated to emphasise Aguado's visual and aural presence as the virtuoso performer as his arrangement is in many ways more extroverted and showy than Sor's conception. However, aspects of his transcription, as well as his method and reports of his playing, show an aesthetic that leaned more towards elegance than to power or spectacle.⁷⁶

While many accounts exist that describe Liszt at the piano, there are only a couple of very brief accounts describing the nature of Aguado's playing. Metaphors of power and violence, so frequently encountered in descriptions of Liszt, are far from both the minds of those who describe the guitarist. Baltasar Saldoni (1807-1889), a Spanish composer and compiler of a dictionary of Spanish musicians, on a trip to Paris, happened to stay in a room in the Hôtel Favart next to Aguado's room. Saldoni had nothing but the highest praise for the guitarist:

⁷² Nicholas Temperley invokes the desire to legitimise the guitar as a serious classical instrument as an explanatory factor in his review of Brian Jeffery's biography of Sor – Nicholas Temperley, 'Fernando Sor: Composer and Guitarist by Brian Jeffery [Review],' *Music & Letters* 59/4 (1978), 490-492.

⁷³ James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), 257.

⁷⁴ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 1.

⁷⁵ Dana Gooley, 'Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's "Konzertstück", and the Cult of Napoléon,' *19th-Century Music* 24/1 (2000), 62-88.

⁷⁶ Aguado does not use the words 'transcription' or 'arrangement' to describe his version of the *Grand Solo*. I go on to use the term 'changes' to describe Aguado's editing of the work.

I was awakened by music that seemed celestial; and I wondered what instrument that charmed me so, such were the sweetness and softness of its sounds and harmonies, produced by the manner in which its strings were struck ... I enjoyed listening to his exercises, either from my room or his, in a way which is not easy to explain, for Sr. Aguado, as well as being the finest guitarist in Europe in his own sweet, touching and melodious style, was the most amiable, modest and charming person whom I had met ...⁷⁷

The other account is found in a review of a benefit concert for Aguado, where the reviewer praised Aguado's playing as 'elegant, pure and light of touch' and his compositions as 'interesting and original'.⁷⁸ Aguado as virtuoso also seems strangely absent for he certainly was capable of 'dazzling' displays of technical prowess, and was the 'darling of the salons and concert halls' in Paris, according to Hermann Mendel.⁷⁹ Aguado's ability to play fast scale passages was noted by Sor in his guitar method: 'I have heard several guitarists (and chiefly Mr. Aguado) who make [staccato scale passages] with surprising neatness and velocity, by employing alternately the first and second or third fingers.'⁸⁰ Aguado's compositions, such as the second rondo from his Op. 2, also show that he must have had extremely advanced technical facility as well as beautiful tone. Aguado describes in detail how to produce this kind of tone, which he calls for in his method and realises in his playing. It is here that Aguado departs from standard eighteenth and nineteenth-century guitar practice.⁸¹

The debate about whether to play with nails or with just the flesh of the fingertips in order to achieve a beautiful sound may well have existed for the entire history of the guitar (and the lute). However, playing without nails was standard practice right up until the time of Andrés Segovia (1893-1987). Segovia set about raising the status of the guitar to that of a 'serious' classical instrument and he became the definitive guitarist in terms of technique, as well as repertoire, for those who came after. As a result of this status, his strongly worded

⁷⁷ Aguado, *The Complete Works for Guitar: Volume One*, xvi.

⁷⁸ Aguado, *The Complete Works for Guitar: Volume One*, xvi.

⁷⁹ The word, 'dazzle', is used by Sor in his method in a description of Aguado's teacher, Padre Basilio – 'His master shone at a period when rapid passages alone were required of the guitar, when the only object in view was to dazzle [‘éblouir’] and astonish’ – Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 17; Hermann Mendel as quoted in Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume One*, xvi.

⁸⁰ Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 32-33.

⁸¹ Aguado's teacher, Padre Basilio, also played with fingernails.

opinion that nails were essential to explore the possibilities of varying tone on the guitar has been appropriated by modern guitarists:

[Pupils and fans of Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909)] adhered blindly to the method prescribed by the master [Tárrega] in his last years: to pluck solely with the finger pads, avoiding contact of the fingernail with the strings ... to the detriment of the full rendering of the guitar's characteristic qualities: variety of tone colour and of sound volume.⁸²

Aguado presents an anomaly in this history, advocating the use of nails on all fingers, excepting the thumb, in order to realise his particular sound aesthetic. To achieve the beautiful and varied tone he described in his method, Aguado carefully articulated how the right-hand fingers should move:

In order better to produce these effects, I prefer to play with the nails ... the resulting sound is *clean, metallic and sweet*; ... the strings are not *plucked* 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* ... and then the string is immediately *slid along* the nail.⁸³ [emphasis in original]

Many modern methods emphasise the very same motion, the purpose of it being to produce a full and warm sound.⁸⁴ 'Stroking' the string is a more apt description of the motion because the string is contacted by both the flesh and nail, and is directed along the 'ramp' of the carefully shaped fingernail, pushing *through* it rather than pulling *on* it. The sound produced is both warm from the contact with the flesh, and clear – the attack of the note sounded is short. While it is difficult to know exactly what Aguado sounded like, we can infer from his technical instructions what kind of aesthetic he held and what kind of sound he sought. Sor's claim that Aguado 'confessed ... that if he were to begin again, he would play without using the nails' is enough to provide caution about the inferences made; that said, the confident way Aguado talks in his method, towards the end of his life, about using

⁸² Andrés Segovia, *Segovia: an Autobiography of the Years 1893-1920* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 87-88, quoted in Graham Wade, *A Concise History of the Classic Guitar* (Pacific, Missouri: Mel Bay Publications, 2001), 115.

⁸³ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 10-11.

⁸⁴ See for example, Scott Tennant, *Pumping Nylon: Complete Edition* (Van Nuys, California: Alfred Music Publishing Company, n.d.), 32-38. William Kanengiser's video method demonstrates this well using larger models of the fingernail and string – William Kanengiser, *Classical Guitar Mastery* dir. Arlen Roth, Hot Licks Video B000KEHMTI (2005).

nails makes the confession recorded by Sor seem unlikely.⁸⁵ Nor should any of this imply that Sor (or other guitarists of the early nineteenth century) did not care for good tone – it was a case of different aesthetics. In fact, Sor criticised Aguado's use of nails on the grounds that it *didn't* produce good tone, exclaiming, 'Never in my life have I heard a guitarist whose playing was supportable, if he played with nails.'⁸⁶

By way of contrast, part of the spectacle that both Liszt and Paganini created often involved producing a harsh and violent sound. Liszt attacked the keyboard with such force that he was known to occasionally break piano strings or snap a hammer.⁸⁷ Likewise, according to the German violinist, Ludwig Spohr, Paganini sought 'unnatural' sounds on the violin, such as 'bassoon tones' and the 'voice of an old woman'.⁸⁸ Other 'unnatural' sounds he produced included animal noises and 'double artificial harmonics' where both notes of a normal double stop are turned into harmonics by touching the strings at certain points with the other left hand fingers.⁸⁹ The guitar virtuoso, Aguado, however, sought to produce as 'clean' and 'sweet' a sound as he could, and to provide a range of colours within that sound. As has been discussed, the guitar is not necessarily capable of achieving the same kind of effects or impact as the piano or violin, thus forcing guitarists such as Aguado to explore other means of legitimisation and virtuoso showmanship.

Sor's *Grand Solo* was published by Meissonnier in Paris around the early 1820s and a revised version was published between 1824 and 1827. An earlier version had been published by Salvador Castro de Gistau in Paris sometime between 1802 and 1814, most likely before Sor had left Spain in 1813.⁹⁰ While there is no way of knowing which publication was authoritative, several scholars have suggested the second Meissonnier version, which shows considerable development and refinement of the earlier versions, is definitive.⁹¹ However,

⁸⁵ Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 17.

⁸⁶ Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 17

⁸⁷ Alan Walker, et al, 'Liszt, Franz,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (25 November 2013).

⁸⁸ Ludwig Spohr as quoted by Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 121.

⁸⁹ Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso*, 121 and 132.

⁹⁰ Fernando Sor, *Complete Works for Guitar Solo and Guitar Duet: Volume Two*, ed. Brian Jeffery (London: Tecla Editions, 1996), vii; Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 23; Stanley Yates, 'Sor's Guitar Sonatas,' <www.stanleyyates.com/writings/sor.pdf> (12 March 2013), 20.

⁹¹ Jeffery in Sor, *Complete Works: Volume Two*, vii; Yates, 'Sor's Guitar Sonatas,' 20. To be fair, Jeffery acknowledges that we cannot be sure which version is definitive, but his very approach functions on the premise that such a 'definitive' work exists.

there are several factors that show caution is required in pronouncing the revised Meissonnier as definitive. Firstly, Sor was not in Paris for either of these publications so could not oversee the process. It is a fact of history that publishers frequently caused composers grief and many times composers had to make do with errors.⁹² Secondly, Sor had many frustrations with Meissonnier and eventually he gave up working with them altogether, as did Aguado, and began to publish works himself.⁹³ Furthermore, Brian Jeffery criticises Meissonnier's version of Op. 14, claiming it '[reduces] a fine and eloquent work to the level of an amateur plaything'.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, this chapter will take the second Meissonnier version of the mid-1820s as 'Sor's original' because Aguado wrote in the introduction to his arrangement that he based it on this version. Aguado's arrangement was published in Spain in 1849 by Benito Campo, less than six months before Aguado died from a lung infection.⁹⁵

However, it is important to note that underlying the hope of finding Sor's original and 'authentic' work are anachronistic and value-laden aesthetic premises, the most obvious being the assumption that an original work existed. That these were foreign to early nineteenth-century music making is demonstrated conclusively by a mere paragraph in Aguado's guitar method where he shows how a couple of bars from Sor's *Fantasia*, Op. 7, can be varied quite significantly in performance (Figure 2.1).⁹⁶

⁹² See, for example, several of Beethoven's letters of 1824 as he prepared for the premiere of his Ninth Symphony – 'I asked you to copy exactly what I had written. But alas! I find that the words are written out in the very way I did not want, just as if it had been done on purpose ...' and, 'Copy everything exactly as I have indicated; and use some intelligence here and there ...' – Thomas Forrest Kelly, *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 162-163, 164 and 166. See also Thomas Christensen, 'Four-Hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/2 (1999), 268.

⁹³ Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 68-69, 87, 93; Dionisio Aguado, *Complete Works: Volume One* ed. Brian Jeffery (Heidelberg: Chanterelle, 1994), xvii.

⁹⁴ Unfortunately, Jeffery does not explicitly state which version he thinks is of lesser quality – Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 69.

⁹⁵ Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume One*, xviii-xix.

⁹⁶ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 144-145.

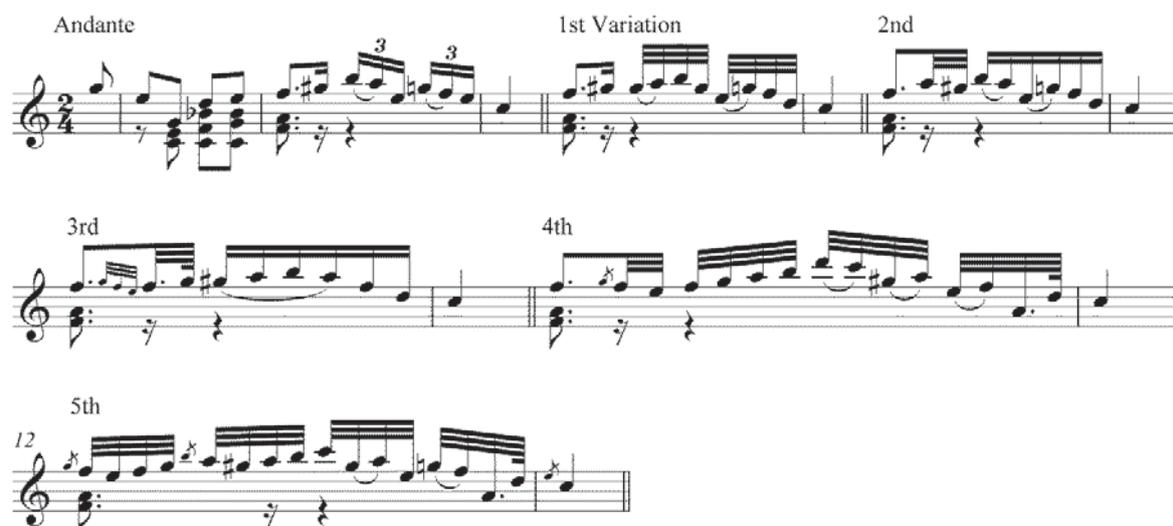


Figure 2.1. Dionisio Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, page 144-145.

While analysing these scores provides insights into the issues at hand, the very act of analysis, traditionally conceived, is based on a similar anachronistic premise to the one mentioned above – the idea that the score is equal to the ‘work’. Analysis thus reaffirms the work-as-text paradigm that has dominated musicology’s history.⁹⁷ Yet, despite its ideological challenges, analysis forms an important tool in exploring the intersection between work and performance. An argument *for* the use of analysis in this situation would begin with the observation that Aguado himself states that his version is based on the Meissonnier score.⁹⁸ As will be further demonstrated, Aguado leaves specific instructions in his arrangement and he changes many of Sor’s ideas in subtle ways, leading one to consider at least a watered down version of the work concept. The practice to which this situation points is one that didn’t see the score solely as the ‘work’ that the performer must submissively realise, but one where performers were free to ornament and embellish scores.

Transcription forms a middle ground between the idea of the ‘work’ and performance because it often documents changes that are informed by performative considerations – transcription provides a unique synthesis of text and act. As will be demonstrated, many of Aguado’s changes to Sor’s original are kinaesthetically informed, originating in the hand rather than the mind. The transcription thus offers an insight into aspects of performance

⁹⁷ See, for example, Jim Samson, ‘Analysis in Context,’ in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁹⁸ The Benito Campo 1849 manuscript is reproduced in Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume Four*, 107-118.

that other music might not. This is important considering the clues we have that suggest reading the work concept into much of early nineteenth-century performance practice is anachronistic. Jonathan Kregor notes in relation to Liszt's transcription of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* that our music histories have brought Austro-Germanic work-orientated values to examinations of music that operated only partly, if at all, under those values. He writes of accounts that 'reduce Liszt's involvement to one of routine and passive promotion ... whereby Berlioz benefits from Liszt's toils':

They overlook the fundamental importance that arrangements played in shaping Liszt's general artistic aesthetic The inherited histories of the Liszt-Berlioz relationship and the *Symphonie fantastique* have helped shape a seemingly analytic truth about Liszt's musical arrangements: Since we understand their chief role to be one of dissemination and by extension preservation, fidelity to the original work becomes its most prized feature.⁹⁹

'Transcriptions always document musical intersections,' and as Kregor details, Liszt's transcription did more than merely publicise Berlioz's work. For Liszt, it provided a challenge to extend his technique into new territory, it gave him a 'warhorse' with which to 'frame his technique', casting himself as a virtuoso spectacle, while also reconciling the worlds of the professional virtuoso and the amateur 'domestic virtuoso'.¹⁰⁰ Though there is no documentary evidence, Aguado's arrangement of Sor's *Grand Solo* could very well have functioned in similar ways, particularly as it was dedicated to a student of Aguado's. Kregor argues that Liszt's transcription of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, rather than merely reproducing Berlioz's music, 'brought together the originality of Berlioz's composition with Liszt's technical accomplishments' by 'fusing notes with gestures'.¹⁰¹ While this scenario was played out more firmly under Austro-Germanic Romantic ideals than the Sor-Aguado relationship with regard to the *Grand Solo*, it offers insight into that relationship. It is my

⁹⁹ Jonathan Kregor, 'Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription,' *The Journal of Musicology* 24/2 (2007), 198.

¹⁰⁰ Kregor, 'Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription,' 199 and 208. 'Domestic virtuoso' is a term used by Parakilas to describe predominantly middle and upper-class young women who were accomplished pianists but did not enter the public arena usually because they were not permitted to by societal or familial expectations and constraints – James Parakilas, 'A History of Lessons and Practicing,' in *Piano Roles: 300 Years of Life with the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 137. Stefaniak writes that Parakilas's term probably included male amateurs who did not seek professional music careers – Alexander Stefaniak, "'Poetic Virtuosity": Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music,' Ph.D. Diss., University of Rochester, (2012), 39.

¹⁰¹ Kregor, 'Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription,' 201.

argument that Aguado's changes to Sor's work emphasise Aguado's visual and aural presence as the virtuoso performer thus also 'fusing notes with gestures'.

Aguado's changes reflect a desire to dramatise Sor's original as well as an approach that embraced technical difficulty. For Liszt, embracing technical difficulty was really a pursuit of the impossible. The sound aesthetic this led to in the case of Liszt was one that 'reject[ed] the piano's limitations', its 'bounded materiality'. Where other pianists were accepting of the piano's materiality, never forcing its boundaries and making use of its strengths, Liszt sought 'impossible sounds', even casting 'sonorous beauty' aside. As mentioned earlier, at times this meant even breaking the piano itself. Dana Gooley argues that Liszt's rejection of the piano's materiality was another reason he avoided the criticisms of the anti-virtuosity critics who characterised the *stile brillante* figuration of pre-Lisztian pianists as 'mechanical' and 'materialistic'. The repetitive use of 'rhythmically square' figures and a lack of 'songful lyricism or sustained harmonies', combined with the often percussive effect of the writing, was the focus of the critics' consternation. Liszt's aesthetic was orchestral in this sense, rejecting pianistic boundaries and striving for a transcendent ideal.¹⁰² Liszt himself described his approach to the piano as orchestral, writing, '[The piano] embraces the range of an orchestra ... the ten fingers of a single man suffice to render the harmonies produced by the combined forces of more than 100 concerted instruments.'¹⁰³

While falling short of impossibility, many of Aguado's changes increase the difficulty of the *Grand Solo*. These changes occur from the very outset, where Aguado substitutes a turn in place of Sor's grace note pull-off in bar one (Figures 2.2a, b). The same happens in bar three, though to realise this turn requires considerable contortion of the left hand— to stretch from the G, fretted with the third finger, to the A, two frets away, with the fourth finger, requires an uncomfortable extension, and when not executed carefully, the sound is weakened. Whereas a simple pull-off would require the same extension, the performer can prepare the fingers rather than having to throw the fourth finger and hope for the best! The general perception of nineteenth-century guitars is that they were smaller, meaning frets were

¹⁰² Dana Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity,' in *Franz Liszt and His World*, ed. Christopher Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 97-99.

¹⁰³ Letter to Adolphe Pictet first published in *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* in 1838, quoted in Robert S. Winter, 'Orthodoxies, Paradoxes, and Contradictions: Performance Practices in Nineteenth-Century Piano Music,' in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.

closer together, thus making the above slurs easier. However, while the bodies of nineteenth-century guitars certainly had smaller dimensions, and the width of the neck was often smaller, their scale length (length of vibrating string) was not always considerably smaller than modern guitars. The average modern guitar has a scale length of 650 millimeters, while guitars by the important nineteenth-century luthiers René François Lacôte (1785-1855) and Louis Panormo (1784-1862) have an average scale length of around 630 millimeters – a difference of only three per cent.¹⁰⁴ There is nothing to suggest that either Sor or Aguado had particularly large hands and could navigate large stretches with more ease than most.



Figure 2.2a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, Introduction, bars 1-4.

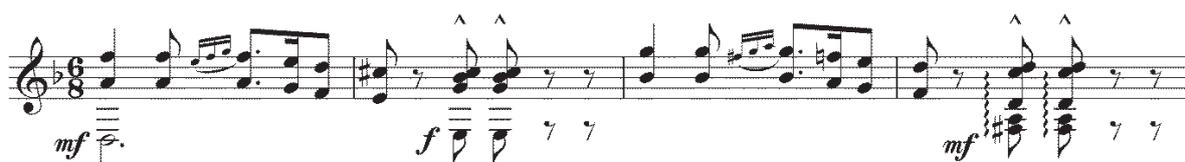


Figure 2.2b. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, Introduction, bars 1-4.

Aguado's changes, which increase the difficulty of the *Grand Solo* are found throughout, but the coda presents particular difficulty for the performer. Bars 215-222 are the equivalent of 236-239 in Sor's original – Aguado has doubled what was originally a four-bar phrase (Figures 2.4a, b). As he has done throughout the work, rather than reproducing Sor's

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, the guitar by Lacôte held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: <www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/503429>. Sor played Lacôte guitars and signed a number of them including this one. He also was well acquainted with Panormo who was in London when Sor was there. Aguado also owned a Lacôte guitar which he left to his pupil and dedicatee of the *Grand Solo* arrangement, Agustin Campo – see José L. Romanillos' article, 'Dionisio Aguado: The Man,' reproduced in Aguado, *The Complete Works: Volume One*, viii-xi; Romanillos examines Aguado's recently discovered will. Several Lacôte and Panormo guitars are listed at the following link, with dimensions at: <www.music-treasures.com/guitars.htm> (20 August 2013). See also <www.earlyromanticguitar.com/erg/components.htm> and <www.earlyromanticguitar.com/erg/builders.htm> (both accessed 21 August 2013). The later link states that Aguado's guitars were virtually the size of modern guitars. Lawrence Johnson, one of the few guitarists to have had lessons with Andrés Segovia and who has recorded Sor's complete works, amusingly remarks that modern improvements in nutrition could possibly have increased hand size by 3% – 'On "Period" Guitars and Nineteenth-Century Guitar Music,' <www.crgrecordings.com/essay2.htm> (12 December 2013)!

repeated quavers, Aguado writes arpeggiated triplet semiquavers for the same chords, excepting a differing passing note. The difficult aspect of this section is again a stretch, but it is compounded by having to lay a *barré* on the fifth fret while holding the fourth finger on the tenth fret (on the first string – a D). Even this, however, is not overly difficult – Sor’s original is reasonably comfortable. Aguado’s triplet semiquavers add the particular difficulty here, especially in the second four-bar phrase when they are not broken in each beat by a regular quaver. The performer must jump from a *barré* on the seventh fret to the *barré* on the fifth fret between these semiquavers while holding the fourth finger in place, and must immediately apply sufficient pressure so as not to buzz the note on the second string fretted by the *barré*. The performer must also swiftly place his second finger on the D in the seventh fret on the third string. Needless to say, this section requires careful practice to properly realise the notes without overly fatiguing the hand. However, for the right hand, this pattern is tactile and easily played.



Figure 2.4a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bars 236-239.

Figure 2.4b. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bars 215-222.

This semiquaver triplet arpeggio pattern is found throughout Aguado's version and, for a guitarist, it feels particularly good to play. As the action of the hand is essentially a rolled chord, and it is fast enough that the thumb and first two fingers can be planted on the strings at the beginning of each triplet, it is easy to let the reflexes take over – one has to only concentrate on being relaxed. Squaring the fingers more to the strings helps clarify the notes by brightening the tone so that each note is heard. These arpeggios provide tactile, enjoyable sections, where the notes flow easily off the fingers. While easy for the right hand to play, it sounds difficult as the notes are fast and 'punchy'. As a result, it sounds impressive to an audience who will probably not consider that the technique is actually relatively easy. As described in Chapter One, this plays to the guitar's strengths by offering the performer a chance to sound virtuosic without finding the actual execution taxing. The effect of this on the performer is a kind of distancing from the action of playing, a mindless repetition where the performer can let the fingers go. The fingers move as a unit and stay very close to the strings, again suggesting a distancing, this time, of the music from the action that produces it, the effect from its cause.

In several places in his method, Aguado emphasises that the right hand should not move: 'during these rapid movements of the left hand, the fingers of the right hand cover all the strings *without moving the hand* [emphasis in original].'¹⁰⁵ He also exhorts the player, in an octave exercise, to move only the left-hand fingers, and not the hand itself when not moving positions: '[the left-hand fingers] *alone* should move and not the hand [emphasis in original].'¹⁰⁶ It must have seemed to someone watching Aguado play that his fingers had a life of their own, moving separately from Aguado himself. This image is further reinforced in several earlier exercises where Aguado asks that the fingers themselves move independently of each other: 'the stopping finger of the left hand is the only finger to move; all the fingers should be well separated from each other.'¹⁰⁷ These exercises have a similar purpose – finger independence – to the aptly named 'spider' exercise in Scott Tennant's *Pumping Nylon* where each finger 'walks' up the fingerboard (Figure 2.5).

¹⁰⁵ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 107.

¹⁰⁶ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ Exercises 28, 30, 31 and 44 – Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 89-93.



Figure 2.5. Scott Tennant, *Pumping Nylon*, page 24.

Many of Aguado's changes and instructions actually simplify Sor's textures and ideas, leading to a more refined sound. For example, Aguado retains only the first low D of the first bar of Sor's 'Allegro', and above this bar, he writes 'not strong' ('no fuerte'; Figures 2.6a, b). Aguado arpeggiates this first note, requiring the thumb to play the two lower bass strings in a single stroke. This creates an emphasis on that note but removes it from the following three crotchets. Sor would likely have played these bass notes the same way, as some of his later arpeggio patterns require the thumb to do this also, especially considering he did not like to use the right ring finger (bars 106-111, 116-123; Figures 2.7a, b).¹⁰⁸



Figure 2.6a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bars 1-2.

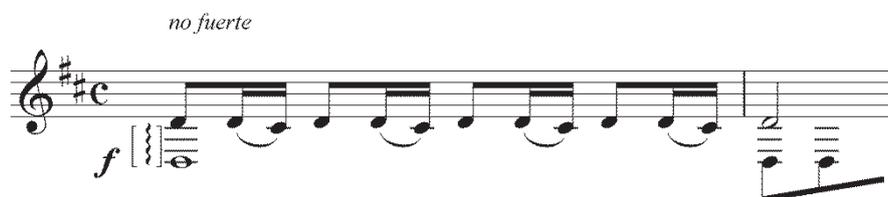


Figure 2.6b. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bars 1-2.

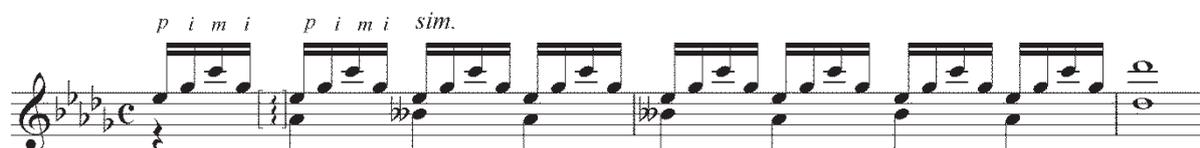


Figure 2.7a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bars 106-108.

¹⁰⁸ Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 11, 20 and 32-33.



Figure 2.7b. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bars 116-124.

Sor notes in his method that the right-hand thumb can ‘slide on two succeeding strings with such a velocity as to make them both be heard together’.¹⁰⁹ Aguado changes Sor’s arpeggio pattern to remove this emphasised thumb stroke in bars 105-122 (Figures 2.7c, d). In bars 115-122, this shifts the emphasis from the bass notes on beats two-to-four to the wash of A-dominant harmony which makes use of the notes B \flat , G, F, and G \sharp . In fact, Aguado even writes ‘feel the A and the B \flat ’ (‘hacer sentir La y Si \flat ’).



Figure 2.7c. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bars 105-107.



Figure 2.7d. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bars 115-123.

¹⁰⁹ Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 11.

Aguado was certainly capable of this sort of thumb stroke – he describes it and gives an example in his method which is exactly the same arpeggio pattern as Sor’s arpeggios in Figure 2.7a.¹¹⁰ It seems, then, that Aguado preferred rippling harmonies and nuanced figures to driving, fierce, bass notes.

Another point where Aguado completely changes the emphasis of the music by simplifying Sor’s original is in bar 71 (the equivalent of bar 70 in Sor’s original). Where Sor had a running semiquaver scale, Aguado substitutes a crotchet and three groups of quavers. Above them he writes ‘piano’ and ‘near the bridge’ (‘cerca del puente’; Figures 2.8a, b). This creates contrast and invites the listener in, making his conception more intimate than Sor’s. This is one of two tone colour instructions that Aguado gives. The other, prior to this, is the opposite – Aguado instructs the performer to place his right hand near the soundhole of the guitar (‘la derecha cerca de la tarraja’; Figure 2.9).¹¹¹ Aguado’s normal right hand position was probably somewhere behind the soundhole as shown by the first plate in his method (Figure 2.10). He also instructs the performer to place the right hand ‘about six fingers from the bridge’ which would place the hand between the bridge and the soundhole. From bar 60 then, Aguado is asking the performer to shift his or her hand further towards the fingerboard. Because the modern guitar is generally played more over the soundhole, the right hand would shift further until it was *over* the fingerboard rather than closer to it. The effect of this movement is that the tone becomes warmer and more delicate. Aguado describes this effect in his chapter on imitating other instruments and he likens it to the harp. Here then is an example of Aguado explicitly imitating an orchestral instrument.

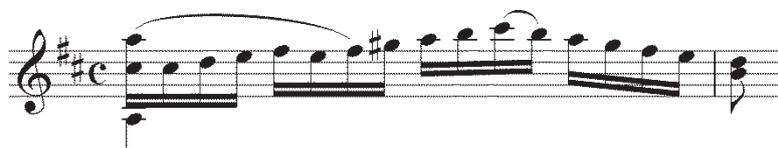


Figure 2.8a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bar 70.

¹¹⁰ Aguado, *New Guitar Method*, 58.

¹¹¹ Definition of ‘tarraja’ from *Diccionario De La Lengua Española* at <<http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=tarraja>> (17 August 2013). The word seems to be out of modern usage – my Spanish-speaking (and guitar-playing) friends had not encountered it. Louise Bigwood also translates ‘tarraja’ as ‘soundhole’ in her translation of Aguado’s guitar method – referenced in footnote 63.



Figure 2.8b. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bar 71.



Figure 2.9. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bars 59-63.



Figure 2.10. Plate 1 of Aguado's 1843 method.

In all of the above discussion of the *Grand Solo*, none of the examples apart from the last one have any real visual element – both hands are effectively still. The last example involves the right hand shifting in order to create a different tone colour; however, this is not difficult. By contrast, many of Aguado’s changes increase the difficulty of the work by forcing the left hand, particularly, to shift during fast sections. The opening of the ‘Allegro’ is a good example. In bar 18, Aguado replaces Sor’s quavers with his own semiquavers (Figures 2.11a, b). They are slurred in a way that forces the left hand to jump up the neck in what is an embellishment of the tonic. By contrast, Sor’s quavers do not require the left hand to shift up the fingerboard. An even more extreme example of this is found in the return of the opening ‘Allegro’ material. In bar 161, Sor repeats the same material as he had in the introduction (Figure 2.11a) – quavers which do not require the left hand to shift. Aguado, by way of contrast, writes semiquavers that force the performer to move further still up the fingerboard (Figure 2.12). Aguado’s changes increase the impact of the bars both aurally and visually. In other words, the spectacle is enhanced and Aguado’s technique is demonstrated in what, for Sor, was simply a transitory bar between sections rather than an opportunity for display.

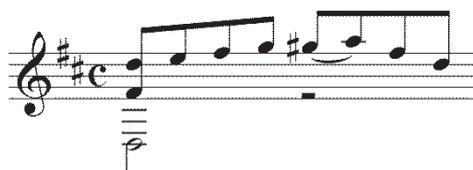


Figure 2.11a. Sor, *Grand Solo*, bar 18.



Figure 2.11b. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bar 18.

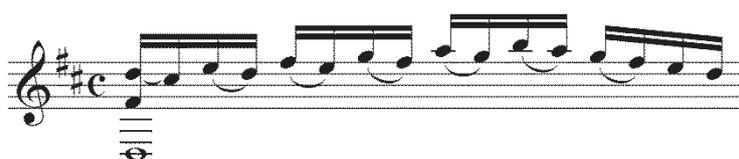


Figure 2.12. *Grand Solo*, arr. Aguado, bar 152.

Sor's 'general maxims', as he calls them, help to distinguish his approach from Aguado's here – Sor finishes his method with twelve rules that he suggests are a summary to his method.¹¹² His third maxim is 'to be sparing of the operations called barring and shifting', and his fourth maxim states that one should 'find the notes within reach ... without the continual necessity of making deviations for the purpose of seeking them'. While Sor found obvious and easy solutions to these bars, Aguado made 'deviations' in order to play up the spectacle.

While Aguado's changes show a desire to use Sor's *Grand Solo* as a 'warhorse', increasing and emphasising the virtuosic aspects of the piece, the spectacle is nowhere near as powerful or as impressive as the performances of pianists such as Liszt. Published at the end of the 1840s, Aguado's arrangement reflects the sense of performer persona that might be argued was central to Liszt's agenda. At a time when guitarists were defending their instrument from criticism, Aguado's approach to the *Grand Solo* can be seen as an attempt to participate in that virtuoso practice. Aguado sought to increase the sense of spectacle in the work while acknowledging the guitar's strengths lay in areas apart from displays of power and violence. Playing to the guitar's strengths in emphasising tone production and the variability of the guitar's sound was a way of selling the guitar to an audience that was experiencing spectacles of an ever-increasing magnitude.

¹¹² Sor, *Method for the Spanish Guitar*, 48.

Chapter Three: Mertz, Theatricality, and ‘Elevated’ Virtuosity

Efforts to raise the guitar’s status and promote it as a solo instrument in the nineteenth century took various paths. Drawing on metaphors that compared the guitar to other instruments was one aspect this programme took. This was a way audiences could connect with guitar virtuosity when more familiar frameworks struggled to provide ways of appreciating the guitar on its own terms. Guitarist-composer Johann Kaspar Mertz engaged with the spectacle in yet another way in his *Fantasie Hongroise*, Op. 65, imbuing the work with a theatricality beyond the notes themselves, seeking to create an experience larger than the guitar itself. By way of contrast, his *Bardenklänge*, Op. 13, a series of poetic miniatures, embrace the guitar’s intimacy and use it in a poetic setting. Other Romantic composers such as Schumann, Schubert, and Mendelssohn were writing extensively in such poetic cycles. This was not necessarily at the expense of virtuosity but it provided a ‘higher purpose’ in which virtuosity could be used as a means for communicating other ideas such as Romantic distance or poetic worlds.

Johann Kaspar Mertz was indeed a virtuoso of the guitar, being discovered and thrust, virtually instantaneously, into the public arena after his arrival in Vienna in 1840.¹¹³ He was born 34 years earlier in Pressburg, Hungary, and taught himself the guitar among other instruments. Sixteen years after his arrival in Vienna and his successes there, he entered a competition sponsored by the Russian amateur guitarist and enthusiast, Nikolai Makaroff, who offered two prizes for the best guitar compositions. Mertz entered the three pieces comprising Op. 65 - *Fantasie Hongroise*, *Fantasie Originale*, and *Le Gondolier*. Mertz was ill and died before he heard that his compositions had won the first prize. The set represents the culmination of nearly two decades as a recognised guitar virtuoso and composer. The first of these three pieces, *Fantasie Hongroise*, has become the most popular among all of his compositions for the guitar. No doubt this is due in large part to its relatively short length and extroverted and virtuosic quality, making it an ideal showpiece. No other work of Mertz’s contains so many extra-musical descriptive words, nor does any other work have such a variety of descriptions. The music itself, being a fantasy, has a constantly changing character and is rather unpredictable. Mertz heightens the drama already inherent in the

¹¹³ All biographical details from Philip Bone, *The Guitar and Mandolin: Biographies of Celebrated Players and Composers* (London: Schott, 1972), 233-238.

music by inserting various descriptors to increase the depth of emotion, or in some instances change the emotion entirely. Here one finds the ‘fusing of notes and gestures’ at an extra-musical level, a level where the notes take on new or larger musical meanings as a result of the gestures applied to them.¹¹⁴

The idea that the musical notation is somehow enlarged by extra-musical gesture is portrayed brilliantly by a series of twelve caricatures depicting Paganini (Figure 3.1).¹¹⁵ Each caricature depicts Paganini in a stance illustrative of the different Italian markings recorded beneath each image. Above ‘introduzione majestoso’, Paganini’s violin is pointed high in the air, in the middle of an exaggerated grand gesture, while for ‘adagio lamentoso’ he is hunched over his violin, head down. A haggard Paganini, hair flying and coat tails trailing him, represents ‘presto con furio’ and ‘variation arpeggio’ has Paganini’s bow in a blur while the violinist stands back, rigid and unflinching.

This kind of extra-musical gesture, particularly facial expression, was also present in Liszt’s performances. The American pianist Amy Fay, who studied with Liszt in the 1870s, wrote that it is ‘as interesting to see him as it is to hear him, for his face changes with every modulation of the piece, and he looks exactly as he is playing.’¹¹⁶ Another Parisian reviewer wrote that ‘Liszt is not only a pianist, he is above all an actor Everything he plays is reflected in his face.’¹¹⁷ Mertz’s instructions in the score of the *Fantasie Hongroise* seem to signify this same theatricality. These kinds of gestures might be seen as an attempt to transcend the perceived limitations of the guitar. When considered in the light of the project to legitimise the guitar, this technique compensates for the lack of spectacle and the intimacy of the guitar.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Kregor, ‘Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription,’ *The Journal of Musicology* 24/2 (2007), 201.

¹¹⁵ These are found on the front cover of Itzhak Perlman’s 1972 vinyl recording of Paganini’s 24 Caprices – USA: Angel, S-1-36860. I can find no details on the origin of the image itself.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Lawrence Kramer, ‘Franz Liszt and the Virtuoso Public Sphere: Sight and Sound in the Rise of Mass Entertainment,’ in *Musical Meaning: Towards a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 76.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 229.

¹¹⁸ Richard Long notes that interest in the guitar had already been declining for a number of years when Mertz shifted to Vienna after Giuliani had stirred up enthusiasm for the guitar when he arrived in 1806. Long cites a decrease in the guitar’s presence in advertised concerts and publishing activities as reasons for his claim – ‘Johann Mertz: *Bardenklänge*, Op. 13,’ played by Adam Holzman (Naxos 8.554556, 2002), cover notes.



Figure 3.1. Series of caricatures depicting Paganini.¹¹⁹

The work opens commandingly with tonic-to-dominant and dominant-to-tonic movements extended by two recitative-like bars. The following two bars then form a repeat of this idea though condensed and measured (Figure 3.2). The first chord of this repeat is marked ‘eroico’ which seems a little unusual for at least two reasons. First, the chord is marked *forte*. By contrast, Mertz marked numerous other chords throughout the work as *fortissimo* or even *fff*; he could conceivably have marked this ‘heroic’ chord as much louder, louder even than the *fortissimo* chord of the previous bar. Furthermore, the low bass D which immediately emphasises the root of the ‘heroic’ chord, although usually the lowest note in most guitar repertoire, is surpassed by the even lower A of the previous bar.¹²⁰ In other words, this chord does not imply heroism in and of itself, yet somehow, Mertz intended the chord to be imbued with heroism.

¹¹⁹ See footnote 115.

¹²⁰ Mertz played guitars with extended range in the bass register – usually eight and ten-stringed guitars. See introductory notes to Simon Wynberg’s edition of Op. 65 – *Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806-1856): Guitar Works, Volume V* (Heidelberg: Chanterelle Verlag, 1985/2007).

Figure 3.2. *Fantasie Hongroise*, bars 1-6.

Another section that is somewhat unclear is the first A-major section, marked ‘*adagio maestoso con entusiasmo*’ (Figure 3.3). ‘*Entusiasmo*’, from *en-theos* (meaning possessed by a god), in this context means with ‘fervour’ or ‘eagerness’.¹²¹ Enthusiasm or fervour is not an emotion that an audience would directly recognise in the music itself.

How does music sound or look heroic? How might it sound or look enthusiastic? Mertz seems to be asking for gestures and expressions rather than exclusively musical ideas – perhaps moving the right hand away from the guitar after playing the ‘heroic’ chord might convey a more heroic disposition especially if combined with an intensity of facial expression. An intense and gleeful look would no doubt convey an excitement and enthusiasm that might not otherwise come across in the opening of the A-major section. The close of its first phrase in bar 32 could be enhanced in the same way. Mertz marks the final bar *dolce* (‘sweetly’) and *slentando* (‘slowing’ or ‘lengthening’). This would be nicely complemented by dreamily closing one’s eyes before returning with vigour to the next phrase. On the other hand, the ‘*con fuoco*’ of bar 35, writ large, asks for a much fiercer and determined look while the *dolcissimo* in the very same bar calls again for a dreamy disposition.

¹²¹ Collins English Dictionary Online, <www.collinsdictionary.com> (20 May 2014).

Figure 3.3. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bars 29-39.

The purpose of Mertz's instructions seems to be this very extra-musical theatricality, conveyed through facial expressions and gestures. None of the examples described above are particularly obvious as descriptions of musical expression, rather they call for the performer to embody the music in a way that conveys emotion visually as well as aurally. In this way, Mertz plays up the spectacle, creating dimensions of emotion that the audience may not experience if the performer were to be hidden.

One final example will reinforce this point. An F-major section follows the A-major section described above (Figure 3.4). Mertz has it marked 'lugubre' which translates as 'gloomy' or 'dismal'.¹²² If anything, the change of key sounds dreamy and peaceful, especially considering the *dolce* he writes under the second chord. The *tristamente* in bar 49 is also slightly odd considering the bar only contains a perfect cadence – again, it does not sound particularly sad. Mertz repeats the A-major to F-major modulation in bars 51 and 52 – this sounds optimistic, as does the A-major to the Bb-major change in bars 48 and 54. The only 'sad' chord is the D-minor in bars 47 and 53.¹²³ Here, again, the emotion Mertz is trying to convey must come from beyond the music itself and is to be found in extra-musical gestures and expression.

¹²² Collins English-Italian Dictionary Online, <www.collinsdictionary.com> (27 November 2013).

¹²³ Admittedly, the notion that a minor chord is a 'sad' chord is rather subjective. See Nancy Kovaleff Baker, et al, 'Expression,' in *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (8 January 2014).

Figure 3.4. *Fantasie Hongroise*, bars 46-55.

As noted in Chapter One, Mertz, like the other composers considered in this exegesis, also played to the strengths of the guitar by writing tactile sections where the difficulty for the performer does not correspond to how difficult it may appear to the audience. There are moments throughout the whole piece, such as the arpeggios in bars 27-28, 43, and 114-116, where an open string gives the performer time to travel between positions mid-arpeggio (Figures 3.5a, b, c). In each of these, it is the top E string that allows the performer to shift, creating a seamless arpeggio that spans a significant section of the guitar's range and fingerboard. The chromatic octaves in bars 121-123 also sound particularly impressive but lie easily under the fingers of both hands – they require no shifting in the left hand, apart from a small stretch, and simple alternation of the thumb and index and middle fingers in the right hand (Figure 3.6). One of the patterns that feels especially good to play is found in bars 100-103. This fits nicely under the right hand when the fingers *i*, *a*, and *m* are used in that order (Figure 3.7).¹²⁴ A slur on the following note allows the fingers time to reset and

¹²⁴ Right hand fingering is indicated as follows: p = pulgar/thumb, i = indice/index, m = mayor/middle, a = anular/ring finger.

the *piano* dynamic means the fingers can stay very close to the strings because little force is needed to pluck the strings. The off-beat accents of the last two bars here are particularly fun to play, creating a real sense of enjoyment. In short, these aspects of this work create the illusion of difficulty while the performer can relax about technical aspects and focus on communicating a sense of drama and excitement both musically and gesturally.

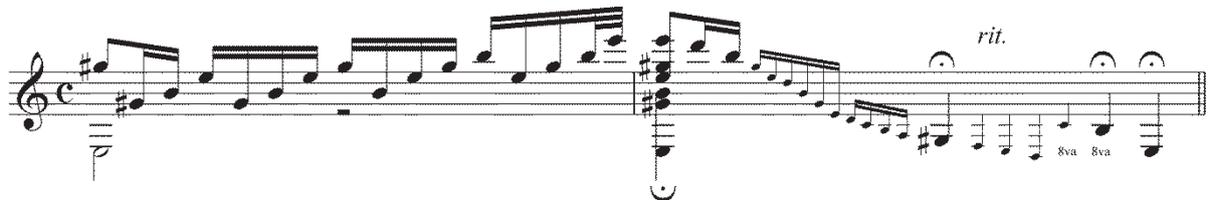


Figure 3.5a. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bars 27-28.



Figure 3.5b. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bar 43.

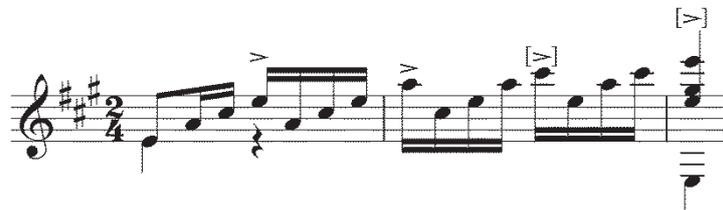


Figure 3.5c. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bars 114-116.

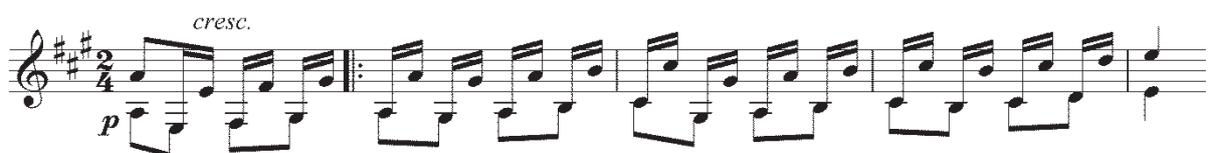


Figure 3.6. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bars 120-124.



Figure 3.7. *Fantasia Hongroise*, bars 100-103.

Whereas the *Fantasie Hongroise* seeks to ‘enlarge’ the guitar by engaging extra-musical gesture, Mertz’s *Bardenklänge* embrace the guitar’s intimacy. While giving a series of recitals in Dresden in 1842, Mertz met Miss Josephine Plantin, a touring pianist, who joined him in a concert tour of several cities. They became engaged and married later that year, settling in Vienna. Mertz became extremely ill after his wife mistakenly gave him an entire prescription’s worth of medicine in one dose, and he spent well over a year recovering, no doubt at home where his wife would have been playing the music of contemporary composers such as Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. It is, therefore, no surprise that his *Bardenklänge* interact with the poetic piano cycles of these composers. At the level of the titles of the miniatures, Mertz’s cycle draws on all these composers – ‘Fingals Höhle’, ‘Lied ohne Worte’, and ‘Gondoliera’ are likely takes on Mendelssohn’s works. ‘Sehnsucht’, ‘Kindermärchen’, and ‘Abenlied’ draw on Schumann, while ‘An die Entfernte’ references Schubert.¹²⁵ It is to Schumann’s aesthetic that I wish to now turn and draw a comparison to Mertz’s miniatures.

Schumann wrote to his wife, Clara, about his miniature piano cycle, *Kinderszenen*, saying, ‘... you will have to forget you are a virtuoso for the time being.’¹²⁶ While Schumann was not against virtuosity in and of itself, he sought to use it as a means within a larger aesthetic. That thoroughly Romantic aesthetic, based around the authority of the composer and his ‘work’, led Schumann to criticise what he saw as the emptiness of much of the postclassical virtuoso culture of his time, though Liszt and Paganini seemed to avoid his criticism.¹²⁷ Schumann saw virtuosity, when used appropriately, as being able to provide a way of experiencing the sublime, or some quasi-spiritual or transcendental experience, as well as a way of unsettling or challenging the listener. For the Romantics, this resulted in edifying the listener, combining ‘astonishment with uplift’.¹²⁸ In this way, Schumann sought to poeticise or ‘elevate’ virtuosity, ‘staging virtuoso performance as serious music’.¹²⁹ Thus, many of

¹²⁵ Richard Long, ‘Johann Mertz: Bardenklänge, Op. 13,’ played by Adam Holzman (Naxos 8.554556, 2002), cover notes.

¹²⁶ *The Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. Hannah Bryant, ed. Karl Storck

<http://archive.org/stream/lettersofroberts00schu/lettersofroberts00schu_djvu.txt> (12 July 2013).

¹²⁷ Alexander Stefaniak’s analysis and discussion of several of Schumann’s more virtuosic works from the early ‘*Abegg*’ *Variations*, Op. 1, to the later concertos in this light is extremely enlightening – ‘“Poetic Virtuosity”: Robert Schumann as a Critic and Composer of Virtuoso Instrumental Music,’ Ph.D. Diss., University of Rochester (2012).

¹²⁸ Stefaniak, “Poetic Virtuosity,” 29.

¹²⁹ Stefaniak, “Poetic Virtuosity,” 14.

Schumann's works situate virtuosic elements in larger contexts which attempt to achieve various ends. For example, Schumann transforms the standard theme and variations genre in his *'Abegg' Variations, Op. 1*, by a process of 'thematic and formal concealment and allusion', disguising the theme and complicating the harmony.¹³⁰

Schumann's use of virtuosity in the movement, 'Paganini', from his piano cycle, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, highlights another way he interacted with virtuosity, using it for other purposes (Figure 3.8). In this miniature, the performer pits his hands against each other in a metrically dissonant fashion.¹³¹ The right hand plays with regular accents on the beat (assumed rather than written out) while the left hand precedes each accent in the right hand by one semiquaver, which is made obvious by the lower stave note groupings going across the bar lines. The aural effect of this is unsettling for both the performer and the listener. Stefaniak shows that Schumann used this technique through many of his (particularly later) works as a means to unsettle the listener and thus reach for thoroughly Romantic ideals such as the sublime, as well as edifying the listener.¹³² Thus, the piece's virtuosity is used as a means to attain more abstract aesthetic states, challenging a more 'immediate' virtuosity.

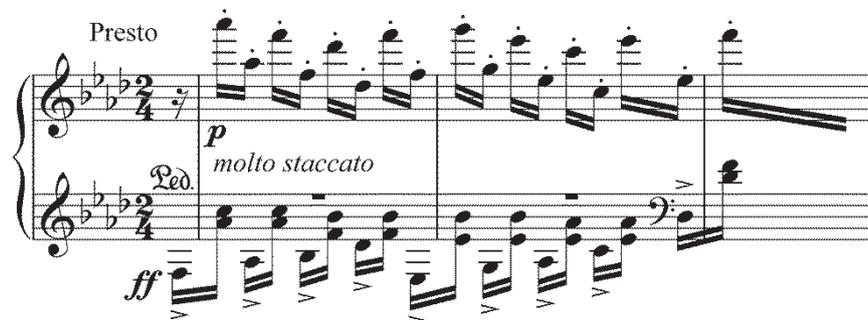


Figure 3.8. 'Paganini' from *Carnaval*, bars 1-5.

¹³⁰ Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity," 102-112.

¹³¹ I draw on Alexander Stefaniak's use of metrical dissonance in his dissertation, "Poetic Virtuosity". Stefaniak associates Schumann's use of this technique with the desire to invoke the sublime – Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity," 164-171. Stefaniak quotes Charles Rosen's description of metrical dissonance in Schumann's *Toccata, Op. 7*: 'such passages create "shock value ..."' – Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 655. Erika Reiman hints at a similar use of the technique in her discussion of 'Paganini' from Schumann's *Carnaval, Op. 9* – Erika Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 112. While there are different theories of metrical dissonance, what I call metrical dissonance might also be termed 'displacement dissonance' which is a term that Harald Krebs uses – Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-39.

¹³² Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity," 29 and 145-147.

Mertz wrote much 'immediately' virtuosic music, such as the *Fantasie Hongroise*, and many of his *Bardenklänge* are also quite difficult to play. However, their overall conception is poetic, meaning that, in a way similar to Schumann's approach to virtuosity, virtuosic elements are shifted into the background, framed with poetic titles and connotations, and subverted in other ways in service of the foregrounded poetic ends. By situating the guitar in the world of the Romantic poet, Mertz can be seen to attempt to cause the guitar to participate in this world of 'serious' music.

In many of the miniatures, the performer must 'forget he is a virtuoso', as the pieces offer no significant challenge to the player, who can focus on creating the poetic world or the effects the pieces contain. 'Sehnsucht', 'An Malvina', and 'An die Entfernte', for example, would see the performer pour his or her energies into feeling the distance of a loved one, while 'Elfenreigen' asks the performer to attempt to depict a fantasy world of dancing elves. The poetic dimension to these miniatures distances the performer from an audience because it invites the listener to close his or her eyes and imagine himself or herself in another setting or even another world. The virtuoso is disguised through poetic metaphor. The poetic dimension is foregrounded by the titles themselves while relegating the virtuoso to a secondary storytelling role. The intimacy of the guitar actually enhances the poetry in these four pieces because of their content – the distance of a loved one is a feeling that most people can identify and empathise with and yet is something private and kept close to one's heart. Likewise, using the imagination to picture a fantasy world is a private and personal affair. Because the guitar achieves delicacy and softness with ease, such depth of emotion and imagination is easily realised. The effect is similar to that of the clavichord, though not to the same extent. The clavichord was, in the eyes of eighteenth-century German writers and composers, a 'vehicle for the most intense and private personal expression'.¹³³ Its intimacy lent itself to this kind of musical communication. In the same way, the guitar's intimacy can be seen to enhance the poetic dimension to Mertz's *Bardenklänge*.

There certainly are difficult miniatures in this cycle, however. One such piece is the 'Capriccio', marked 'presto' and 'energico'. It uses the accompaniment figure that

¹³³ Edwin M. Ripin, et al, 'Clavichord,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (27 November 2013).

dominates several of the *Bardenklänge*, which, here, must be very fast and articulate (Figure 3.9). The melody on top of this is slow by comparison, mostly consisting of crotchets and minims, and carefully accented to show the melodic direction. The beginnings of the sections with the main melody are marked *dolce* and *tristamente* showing Mertz's virtuosic piece is meant to be 'sweet' and 'sad' rather than a showpiece as it is so often used nowadays. The performer's technical skill is submissive to the melody and its poetic implications.

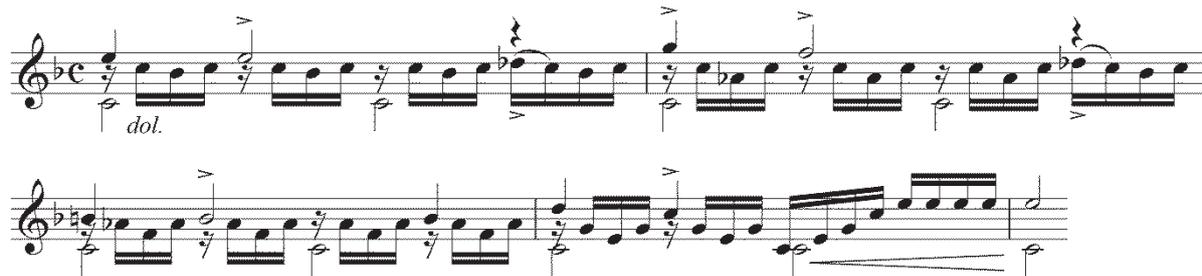


Figure 3.9. 'Capriccio', bars 5-9.

There is a sense of metrical dissonance in this piece, in a brief four bars. Bars 28 and 30 have accents on the second and fourth semiquavers of beats two and three (Figure 3.10), unbalancing the performer and listener and confounding their expectations. The difficulty for the performer here lies in accenting these semiquavers, and having to change the weighting between the fingers and thumb between bars at speed. For the listener, this subverts 'postclassical principles of transparency and accessibility' and challenges them by disturbing the regularity of the music.¹³⁴ It was Schumann's Romantic aesthetic which led him to appropriate virtuosic techniques and 'elevate' them by creating, in the case of metrical dissonance, aural difficulty for the listener, unsettling him and supposedly thus creating sublime experiences.¹³⁵



Figure 3.10. 'Capriccio', bars 28-31.

¹³⁴ Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity," 109.

¹³⁵ Stefaniak, "Poetic Virtuosity," 29 and 145-150.

A further way that Schumann ‘elevated’ virtuosity was through the invocation of a trope common in Romantic discourse – the concept of distance.¹³⁶ According to the late eighteenth-century philosopher and poet, Novalis, ‘in the distance everything becomes ... romantic.’¹³⁷ This is hinted at in ‘Capriccio’ – the opening motif returns in the final bar, this time *piano* and slowing (Figure 3.11). The music suddenly fades, its poetic object disappearing into eternity.

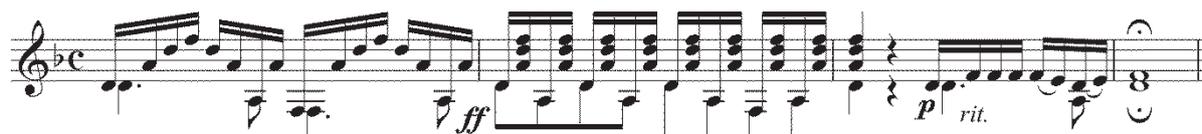


Figure 3.11. ‘Capriccio’, bars 48-51.

‘Tarantelle’ is one of the more obviously virtuosic pieces of the collection and is extroverted and bold (Figure 3.12). Its repeated notes, constant rhythm, and left hand jumps create an energy which climaxes at the very end. The harmony that underlies the piece is, somewhat counter-intuitively, rather static, never really progressing beyond tonic and dominant (A minor/major and E major) except for two brief ideas centred on G and C. Its exciting virtuosity is all that saves it from banality for its harmony has little interest. A similar issue is raised in ‘Paganini’ from Schumann’s *Carnaval*, by Erica Reimann. She argues that the movement turns out to be nothing but ‘smoke and mirrors’ for the same reason – it stands out by nature of its loud and bold virtuosity but offers little other interest due to its simple and straightforward harmonic construction.¹³⁸ Here, Schumann draws on Paganini’s virtuosity but subverts it, and marginalises Paganini in the process, choosing to show the potential ‘emptiness’ of the virtuosos of his day. Schumann’s approach questions the autonomy and the legitimacy of the virtuoso apart from a Romantically-conceived compositional aesthetic.

¹³⁶ See for example: Stefaniak, “‘Poetic Virtuosity,’” 249-250; Berthold Hoeckner, ‘Schumann and Romantic Distance,’ *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50/1 (1997), 55-132.

¹³⁷ Novalis, as quoted by Hoeckner, ‘Schumann and Romantic Distance,’ 55.

¹³⁸ Reiman, *Schumann’s Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul*, 112-114.

Presto allegramente

Figure 3.12. 'Tarantelle', bars 21-44.

Metrical dissonance also appears in 'Tarantelle', here in a more obvious way. In bars 205-216, a stumbling effect is created through the use of accents and repeated notes (Figure 3.13). Though the downbeats are accented, they have the thinnest texture, while the upbeats form the harmonically important movement between the dominant and the tonic. The awkward stumbling effect is enhanced through forcing the performer to repeatedly use the *a* finger to play each upper E – a difficult task at tempo and one which really emphasises the unsettled and edgy quality of the section. The use of metrical dissonance here strengthens the parallel between Mertz's poetic miniatures and Schumann's approach to virtuosity, namely a 'poeticising' of virtuosity.

Figure 3.13. 'Tarantelle', bars 205-217.

Being forced to repeat the *a* finger in bars 205-212 puts a cap on the tempo for the guitarist. While performances of tarantellas by Chopin (Op. 43),¹³⁹ and Thalberg (Op. 65),¹⁴⁰ frequently approach and even exceed speeds of dotted crochet = 200, Aldo Ciccolini's recording of the 'Tarantelle' from Liszt's *Venezia e Napoli* (S. 159) well exceeds this tempo.¹⁴¹ Interestingly, this work contains elements of metrical dissonance also, alternating between 6/8 and 2/4 metre. Another common feature between this work and Mertz's 'Tarantelle' is the use of repeated notes – the difference in Liszt's piece is that rather than playing each note with the same finger, a different one can be used, significantly increasing the speed with which the notes can be played. By comparison, a guitarist would struggle to play Mertz's piece at speeds exceeding dotted crochet = 150 though the final *prestissimo* bars can be played faster (dotted crochet = approximately 200) as they consist of dotted crotchets and quavers in a two-note tremolo pattern that sits comfortably under the hand (Figure 3.14). This tremolo pattern is another example of a tactile section – the right-hand pattern falls easily under the fingers and the two upper notes are plucked in the same motion.



Figure 3.14. 'Tarantelle', bars 225-252.

¹³⁹ Frédéric Chopin, *Tarantella*, Op. 43 <[http://imslp.org/wiki/Tarantella,_Op.43_\(Chopin,_Frédéric\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Tarantella,_Op.43_(Chopin,_Frédéric))> (27 November 2013).

¹⁴⁰ Sigismond Thalberg, *Tarantelle*, Op. 65 <[http://imslp.org/wiki/Tarantelle,_Op.65_\(Thalberg,_Sigismond\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Tarantelle,_Op.65_(Thalberg,_Sigismond))> (27 November 2013).

¹⁴¹ Aldo Ciccolini's performance can be found here: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWkbfcG6MQ> (27 November 2013); Franz Liszt, *Venezia e Napoli*, S. 159 <[http://imslp.org/wiki/Venezia_e_Napoli,_S.159_\(Liszt,_Franz\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Venezia_e_Napoli,_S.159_(Liszt,_Franz))> (27 November 2013).

In this piece, Mertz plays up the feverish nature of the tarantelle, which, for musicians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ‘spoke of the violent and untutored movements of those dancing the tarantella’, supposedly the maddened dance of a spider-bite victim, though some nineteenth-century writers downplayed the connection.¹⁴² He does this through forcing the performer to repeat notes with the same finger, as well as creating a stumbling effect through the use of metrical dissonance. In this way, Mertz uses virtuoso effects as a means to poetic expression, thus ‘elevating’ it.

As in the works (or the rhetoric surrounding guitar virtuosity) of the other guitarist-composers that this exegesis discusses, imitation of other instruments is also found amongst these miniatures, albeit to a lesser extent. In two of the pieces, ‘Gebeth’ and ‘Romanze (Andante)’, Mertz writes ‘Imitation del Arpa’ (‘Imitation of the harp’) next to arpeggiated chords. While Aguado’s use of the harp metaphor was to describe a particularly warm tone where the strings are plucked above the soundhole, Mertz’s use of the metaphor is more literal. The arpeggio figures are meant to sound like a harp. In ‘Gebeth’, the poetic effect appears to be religious and the suggestion of a harp enhances this through historical associations with both religious music, antiquity, and mythology (Figure 3.15).¹⁴³

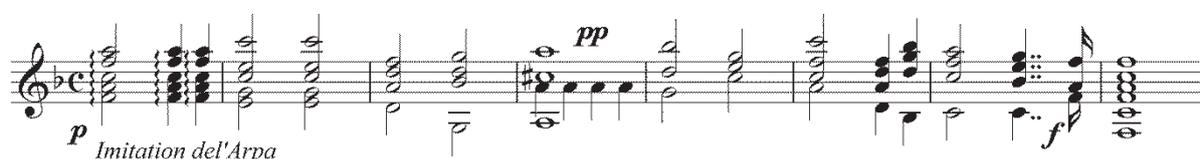


Figure 3.15. ‘Gebeth’, bars 1-8.

In ‘Romanze’, the arpeggios are measured out, though they are meant to be cadenza-like in their realisation (Figure 3.16). These chords span nearly the entire range of the guitar and create a rippling, falling motion towards each bass note.

¹⁴² Erich Schwandt, ‘Tarantella,’ in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (20 October 2013).

¹⁴³ Sue Carole DeVale, et al, ‘Harp,’ in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (28 November 2013).

Andante

Imitation del Arpa

Arpa

Harm. XII

Harm. XII

quasi Arpa

rit.

sf

Figure 3.16. 'Romanze', bars 1-14.

While Mertz may be playing on ancient associations with the harp, it is likely that he was more directly referencing the 'pseudo-bard' Ossian, the central literary reference of the *Bardenklänge*. Supposedly a third-century Gaelic bard, Ossian was in fact the pseudonym of the Scottish antiquarian and writer, James Macpherson.¹⁴⁴ His literature had a large impact on the Romantic movement and many composers, authors, and artists were inspired by his work. Mertz's invocation of a harp is probably a direct reference to the bard himself, as bards often used harps to accompany the voice; the harp was 'the Ossianic instrument *par excellence*'.¹⁴⁵ The French composer Jean-François Le Sueur (1760-1837) went as far as including twelve harps as part of the orchestra in his opera, *Ossian, ou Les Bardes*.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Mertz was participating in a longer tradition of intertextuality.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Long, 'Johann Mertz: *Bardenklänge*, Op. 13,' played by Adam Holzman (Naxos 8.554556, 2002), cover notes.

¹⁴⁵ James Porter, 'Ossian,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (28 November 2013); Jean Mongrédien, 'Ossian, ou Les bardes,' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (28 November 2013).

¹⁴⁶ Mongrédien, 'Ossian, ou Les bardes.'

As far as I am aware, the *Bardenklänge* is the only poetic cycle of its kind from the nineteenth-century for the guitar. Though other guitarist-composers wrote in popular genres such as the fantasy and the theme and variations, no other guitarist attempted to align themselves so closely with the poetic world of the Romantics. Mertz's cycle of miniatures then can be seen to have participated in the unspoken project of legitimising the guitar as a valid solo instrument – a move to participate in an aesthetic that championed 'serious' music, thus casting the guitar as a 'serious' instrument. Furthermore, such a move embraced the intimacy of the guitar, which had otherwise been perceived as a 'limitation' when it came to partake of the spectacle.

Chapter Four: Regondi and the Visual

Giulio Regondi was born in Lyons in 1822 but by the age of five had already been thrust into the public arena.¹⁴⁷ There is only one brief reference to his mother – presumably she had died when Regondi was very young – and the boy’s ‘father’ seems to have been an imposter. Regondi Snr. forced the boy to practice five hours a day and would lock him in their apartment while he was out, employing a neighbour to ensure he continued to practice.¹⁴⁸ At some point Regondi’s alleged father took the young boy and toured ‘every court in Europe’ except Madrid, before ending up in London by June of 1831.¹⁴⁹ Immediately Regondi found himself in the limelight with reviewers lauding not only his technical facility but also his maturity of expression. An article in *The Harmonicon* waxed lyrical:

Among the musical wonders of our day is Giulio Regondi, the child whose performances on the Spanish guitar are not only calculated to surprise, but to please even connoisseurs To say that he plays with accuracy and neatness is only doing him scanty justice; to correctness in both time and tune he adds a power of expression and a depth of feeling which would be admired in an adult, in him they show a precocity at once amazing and alarming; ... when he touches the string, and draws from it tones that for beauty have hardly ever been exceeded – when his eye shows what his heart feels, it is then that our admiration is at the highest, and we confess the power of youthful genius. This child is the most pleasing prodigy that our time has produced.¹⁵⁰

The author writes that his admiration is most aroused when the eye and heart are one, when the physical and emotional or spiritual are joined in unity of expression. Another reviewer expressed a similar notion when he wrote that:

We have had the opportunity, during the last week, of seeing and hearing the extraordinary child, Giulio Regondi, whose musical talent, as a performer on the guitar, has excited so much admiration in Paris. We say *seeing* as well as hearing, because we look upon his appearance to be no small part of the gratification either

¹⁴⁷ Simon Wynberg in Giulio Regondi, *Complete Concert Works for Guitar*, ed. Simon Wynberg (Monaco: Chanterelle, 2001), v.

¹⁴⁸ Regondi, *Complete Concert Works for Guitar*, v.

¹⁴⁹ Regondi, *Complete Concert Works for Guitar*, v; Philip Bone, *The Guitar and Mandolin* (London: Schott and Co. Ltd., 1954), 291-296.

¹⁵⁰ *Diary of a Dilettante: The Harmonicon* (London, August-September 1831), x, 200 as quoted in Thomas Lawrence, ‘Giulio Regondi in Ireland,’ <www.ucd.ie/pages/99/articles/lawrence.pdf> (4 March 2013). The review is also reproduced in *The Philadelphia Album and Ladies’ Literary Port Folio* 5 (January 1831), 351.

to the admirer of mere beauty, or to the eye which seeks (and seldom fails to find) in the outward organisation traces of the spirit within.¹⁵¹

Richard Hoffman, whose father had befriended Regondi when his ‘father’ abandoned him, greatly admired Regondi. He copied out some of his father’s notes which give an indication as to the presence Regondi had when performing:

The performer has much of the ‘fanatico per la musica’ in his appearance, and manifestly enthusiastic love for his art; he hangs over and hugs his little box of harmony as if it were a casket of jewels, or an only and dearly loved child. His trills and shakes seem to vibrate through the frame, and occasionally he rises on tip-toe, or flings up his instrument as he jerks out its highest notes, looking the while like one rapt and unconscious of all outward objects, in the absorbing enjoyment of the sweet sounds that flow from his magical instrument.¹⁵²

Though a description of Regondi’s performance on the concertina, an instrument similar to the accordion with buttons and a bellows on which Regondi was extremely accomplished, it shows the great delight Regondi took in his music and the presence he had on stage. The extent to which these descriptions of Regondi focus on what he looked like and did on stage – the visual aspects of performance – is striking. Herein lies a clue that strongly suggests Regondi participated in the kind of extra-musical features that Mertz wrote into his *Fantasia Hongroise*. This is supported by the *Harmonicon* review quoted above – his eye also showed what he felt in the music. It was this that elicited the most admiration.

The aesthetic experience these writers had was the result of both visual and aural factors. No doubt the boy’s youth and beauty were cause for praise, but, more than this, the way he played his instrument, made expressive bodily gestures to complement the music, and conducted himself on stage – performed in the broadest sense – lead to an acknowledgement of the physical as well as the emotional and the spiritual. It was the combination of sight and sound that produced the admiration and awe with which such virtuosos were beheld. Robert Schumann expressed this very idea when he wrote of Liszt, ‘If

¹⁵¹ *The London and Paris Observer Or, Chronicle of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts* (A. and W. Galignani's library, 1831), 496.

¹⁵² Quoted in Bone, *The Guitar and Mandolin*, 294.

[he] played behind the scenes, a great deal of the poetry of his playing would be lost.’¹⁵³ The virtuoso must be seen as well as heard. In fact, in the authors’ opinions, it is doubtful that the aesthetic experience would have been the same had Regondi not been seen. In arguing that the performer can only move his listeners by being moved himself, C. P. E. Bach, in the mid-1700s, wrote that the evidence of being moved lay in both the visual and the aural: ‘Man sieht und hört es ihm an’ (‘one sees and hears it from him’).¹⁵⁴ The audience must both hear and see the performer in order to be moved.

This is particularly important for the virtuoso, because he must be seen to triumph over technical obstacles and to navigate difficulty successfully. Ironically, a performer might conquer the difficulties of a work so successfully that an audience may have no idea how difficult a work it was – the visual aspects of the flawless performance may disguise any struggle. Indeed, this expectation pervades modern performance, at least in a slightly modified form – the performer’s goal should be to play the virtuosic parts of the music so fluently and securely that they support rather than detract from the ‘work’. In other words, there is a point where the performer’s virtuosity is subsumed, or as Dean Sutcliffe puts it, ‘[aspires] to a state of invisibility or intangibility’.¹⁵⁵ This betrays a suspicion of virtuosity, a suspicion that it will lead one astray, or that technique will efface expression. Often this has been expressed by the term ‘mere virtuosity’, implying that music which forsakes (or *supposedly* forsakes) emotional or ‘inner’ meaning is of lesser value.¹⁵⁶ Sutcliffe writes that this suspicion of virtuosity forces us to find some way of ‘deepening’ or ‘heightening’ ‘mere

¹⁵³ Robert Schumann as quoted in Christopher Gibbs, “‘Just Two Words. Enormous Success’: Liszt’s 1838 Vienna Concerts,” in *Franz Liszt and His World*, eds. Christopher Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 199; see also Robert Schumann and Konrad Wolff (ed.), *Robert Schumann: On Music and Musicians*, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1969), 156.

¹⁵⁴ C. P. E. Bach as quoted by Tom Beghin, “‘Delivery, Delivery, Delivery!’: Crowning the Rhetorical Process of Haydn’s Keyboard Sonatas,” in *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric*, eds. Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 155-156.

¹⁵⁵ W. Dean Sutcliffe, “‘Una genuina música de tecla,’” in *The Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 280.

¹⁵⁶ Sutcliffe, “‘Una genuina música de tecla,’” 279; see also Gillen D’Arcy Wood’s exploration of what she calls ‘virtuosophobia’ in her book, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

passagework' so that we can avoid a 'sort of moral low ground, like a heathen in need of conversion'.¹⁵⁷

The virtuoso must face the seemingly impossible, face the risk of failure, of dropping notes, and must be seen to conquer, otherwise the performance loses its nature as *spectacle*. This is somewhat paradoxical in Romantic thought as audiences grew silent and even shut their eyes in order to experience the inner, transcending, and spiritual effects of the music by way of the sublime or the poetic.¹⁵⁸ An audience is a pre-requisite for virtuosity, for what is a spectacle if there are no spectators? Furthermore, the virtuoso performer must be more than simply heard because, in many ways, the spectacle lies in the physical act of producing the sounds. The audience responds to what they hear *and see*, marvelling at the sounds produced by the amazing movements of the performer. The irony for the performer is that the virtuosity often lies in making something difficult look easy, which, as just mentioned, may mean the audience entirely misjudges the difficulties the performer faces.

From my perspective as a performer, the task of making Regondi's *Introduction and Caprice*, Op. 23, 'look easy' is a difficult one. Regondi's *Introduction and Caprice* is most likely one of his last works given its opus number and, being published more than 30 years after he arrived in England, it reflects several decades of refinement in his technique and the culmination of his performative aesthetic. Its compositional maturity also attests to its probable later date. There is only one brief reference to Regondi performing it himself. The author of a review in the *Harmonicon*, impressed by Regondi's virtuosity, noted that 'none

¹⁵⁷ Sutcliffe, "'Una genuina música de tecla,'" 280; I performed the *Introduction and Caprice* in a small lunchtime concert soon after I had progressed to the stage of being able to play the work in its entirety. Needless to say, there was plenty of room for improving accuracy, speed, and more importantly, refining musical ideas. Afterwards, I heard much to my consternation, that the concert had been reviewed! However, a largely positive review of the concert appeared soon after despite the author having some misgivings. Her concern was that the virtuoso 'effects' were 'uppermost in the player's mind' leaving the larger-scale shape of the piece 'almost forgotten'. My reviewer felt that I had somehow become entirely concerned with the mechanics of performance such that I was in danger of becoming cold and unfeeling (Frances Robinson, 'Brief but rewarding guitar recital at Wesley Church,' *Middle-C Classical Music Reviews*, <<http://middle-c.org/2013/08/7489/>> (10 August 2013)). Though disagreeing with her criticism due to the subtleties of the formal structure, her comments struck me as somewhat odd and brought to mind a larger point that emerges regarding virtuosity. It was expected, probably implicitly, by the reviewer, that the virtuosic elements of the music should support rather than dominate the harmonic landscape: that 'showiness' should never come at the expense of musical expression.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, the oft-quoted account of Liszt performing Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* in the dark – Hector Berlioz, 'A Few Words About the Trios and Sonatas of Beethoven,' in *The Art of Music and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Csicsery-Ronay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c.1994), 39-40. See also James Johnson, *Listening in Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 261-262, but also 228-236 and 257-280.

can hear Signor Regondi ... without being sensible of his marvellous executive power and his thoroughly refined taste'.¹⁵⁹ The same issue of *The Musical World* offered the work for sale, alongside several of Regondi's original compositions. The *Introduction and Caprice* is a veritable *tour de force*, requiring an advanced technique and great stamina, as well as a keen and mature expression. While it is a more popular work of Regondi's, it has not been a work that guitarists have flocked to, perhaps because its rewards – the sheer pleasure of mastering its notes – come at the end of a long and difficult relationship with the piece.

There are several sections in the work with sustained semiquavers. These textures, trills aside, are pianistic, require a very methodological approach and span a significant portion of the guitar's range. One such section from bar 89 begins in the first position (the first finger is assigned to notes in the first fret). A G-major arpeggio takes the left hand right to the fifteenth fret. The approach to this high G is slurred with a *glissando* line, one of many in the piece (Figure 4.1). Some guitarists emphasise this by not plucking the high G at all but sliding forcefully to it which sounds the note anyway. While this actually makes the shift easier, decreasing the difficulty for the performer, it increases the drama and sense of spectacle by emphasising the motion of shifting and by making a feature of the shift itself. This is complemented by the dramatic slide that is heard and also seen: the visual and aural combine, emphasising the performer's virtuosity.

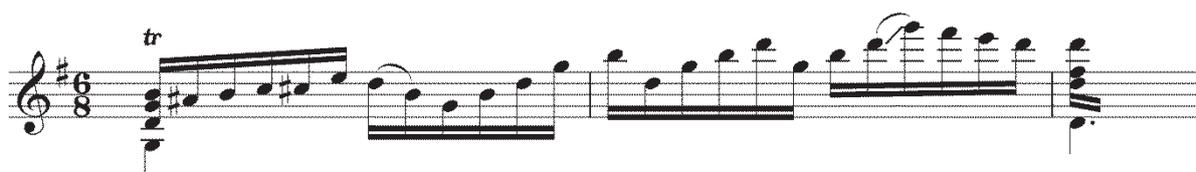


Figure 4.1. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 89-91.

This kind of slide, or similar, is used throughout the *Introduction and Caprice*. The effect each time is to emphasise the action of shifting – that is, the visual shift of the left hand. For example, the top note of the arpeggios in bars 26-28 and 31 is not only arrived at in this way, but the note where the slide begins is plucked a second time before the shift, enhancing the effect even more (Figures 4.2a, b).

¹⁵⁹ *The Musical World* 42 (2 July 1864), 429.



Figure 4.2a. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 25-28.

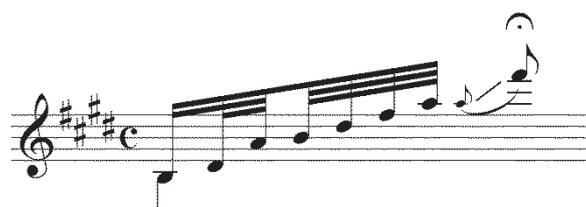


Figure 4.2b. *Introduction and Caprice*, bar 31.

This use of portamento significantly enhances the work's sense of lyricism. During the late eighteenth century, the effect came into regular usage, particularly among stringed instruments and was intended to emulate the voice; portamento was already established as a vocal technique from the early seventeenth century.¹⁶⁰

Another difficulty in these pianistic textures is creating the illusion of a sustained melody while realising arpeggiated accompaniment figures. One section where this is quite simple begins in bar 105. The guitarist changes chord twice in every bar with the melodic note on top, and these chords shift gradually up the fingerboard as the music heads towards a climax. The fourth finger leads the hand for most of the phrase, providing stability, meaning the melody is easily realised and simple to shape as it is a straight crescendo (Figure 4.3).

¹⁶⁰ Ellen T. Harris, 'Portamento,' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (26 November 2013); Robin Stowell, 'Portamento (ii),' in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (26 November 2013).

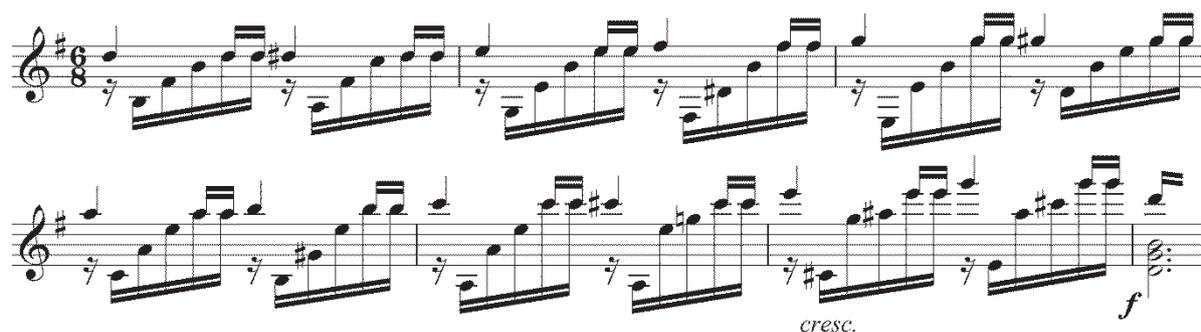


Figure 4.3. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 105-111.

A very similar arpeggio pattern occurs in the final moments of the piece: an upward arpeggio with the same rhythmic idea in the melody (a crotchet preceded by two semiquavers). However, this time the melody leaps around rather than growing steadily by steps (Figure 4.4a). Apart from the difficulty of playing the arpeggios at speed, the performer faces the challenge of linking melodic notes that are separated or creating the illusion that they are linked by carefully crafting their dynamic level relative to each other. In an earlier equivalent of the section, the higher melodic notes could be joined by sliding to them as they were found on the same string and there was time to slide to them without interrupting the flow of the music (Figure 4.4b). In this final section, however, there is less time to slide up to the note on the same string and come back without interrupting the continuous semiquaver motion. The performer can still create the illusion of joining the D# and the high C# in bar 198 by sliding his third finger up part of the second string before the fourth finger finds the C# on the first string. While the notes are not connected by the portamento, they sound as if they are because of the partial slide.

Figure 4.4a. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 192-208.

Figure 4.4b. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 156-176.

This section also looks awkward to an audience as the performer is forced to stretch his or her fourth finger considerably in several places in anticipation of the next note. In bar 199, the fourth finger must reach to the fifth fret while the first, second, and third fingers are needed in the first and second frets (Figure 4.5a). This stretch is eased by the fact that not all the notes are required at the same time – they just need to be prepared. The stretch is even larger in bar 205 where the first finger holds a half-barré on the second fret while the fourth finger must stretch to the ninth fret in anticipation of the high C# – the notes must be made to sound connected (Figure 4.5b). A final example of an awkward stretch is in bar 86 where the fourth finger must sustain a B in the seventh fret while the first, second, and third fingers hold down notes in the second, third, and fifth frets (Figure 4.5c). These stretches are one sign to an audience of the idiomatic difficulty for the performer inherent in the work – one can both see and hear the difficulty.

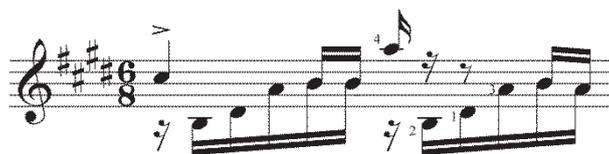


Figure 4.5a. *Introduction and Caprice*, bar 199.

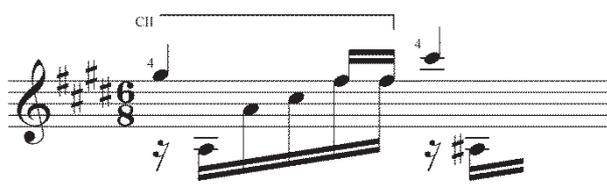


Figure 4.5b. *Introduction and Caprice*, bar 205.

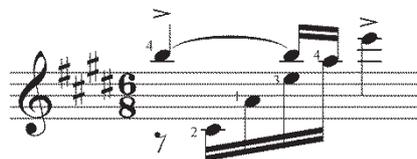


Figure 4.5c. *Introduction and Caprice*, bar 86.

While many aspects of the work are vocal or pianistic, it is possible to hear other instruments in some of the other textures in this work. For example, the diminished-seventh arpeggios in bar 31 have a harp-like quality to them as the performer drags his index finger across the descending arpeggio to create an accelerating rippling effect (Figure 4.6).

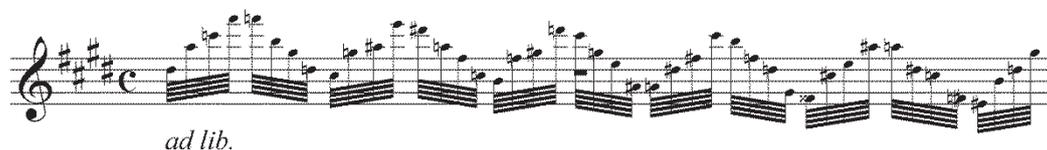


Figure 4.6. *Introduction and Caprice*, bar 31.

Another difficulty, which appears to be the result of a pianistic influence, is a series of trills around a bass pedal-note (Figure 4.7). Following a dramatic climax to a cadence in G major, Regondi transitions back to the opening material of the caprice in E minor. The performer is forced to jump quickly and somewhat awkwardly between a dominant pedal and trills which move down the fingerboard, leaping ten frets in one place. The repetitive and mechanical quality of this section invites the audience to watch carefully to see if the performer will miss any of the trills. The performer who successfully plays these notes will gain the admiration of the audience through what the audience hears (no fumbled or ‘buzzy’ notes) and sees (large shifts combined with piston-like repetition of the left hand). Though the performer may aspire to what Sutcliffe calls a ‘state of invisibility’, shying away from virtuosic display for its own sake, there is an obvious spectacle to be witnessed here.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ The Polish guitarist Marek Pasiieczny encouraged me in a masterclass to play up the work’s spectacle qualities by playing natural notes instead of the harmonics in bars 34 and 129, which would require playing the highest note (B) on the guitar and the lowest B thus forcing the left hand to travel the length of the fingerboard – bar 34:

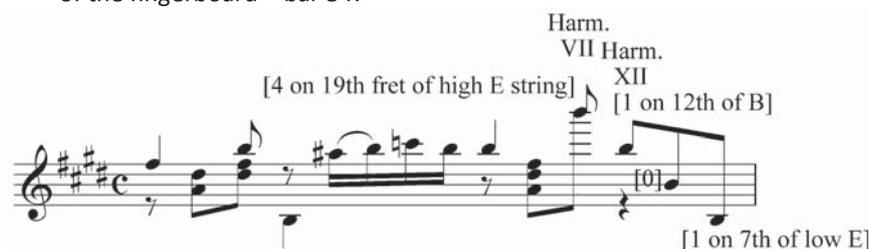




Figure 4.7. *Introduction and Caprice*, bars 123-130.

Nineteenth-century audiences, seemingly both obsessed and repulsed by the spectacle, searched for a way to comprehend guitar virtuosity. In 1841, a Viennese journal published a review of a performance by Regondi, at the time in his late teens. Using language that played on these very issues, the author wrote that Regondi's performance was so convincing that one must *look* at him to realise he is not playing another instrument. Where the Romantic imagination might have carried one to another setting entirely, one's sight firmly grounds the aesthetic experience yet makes it all the more remarkable because the illusion is so powerful. The review proclaimed Regondi's superiority using the language of sight:

As a virtuoso he is *more conspicuous* in his mastery of the guitar than was Mauro Giuliani, Legnani, Guglielmi, and others Regondi is the very Paganini of the guitar, under his hand the guitar becomes quite another instrument than we have hitherto known it. He imitates by turn the violin, harp, mandolin and even the piano so naturally that you must look at him to convince yourself of the illusion ...¹⁶²

Whether the author deliberately meant to employ a word more associated with being *seen* rather than being heard is up for debate, but he goes on to claim that it is Regondi's *hand* which transforms the instrument into other instruments. Interestingly, this is the feature of his playing which invites comparison with Paganini. The visual aspects of Paganini's performances were extremely important to his reception then, and, now, to his enduring status as one of the greatest virtuosos the world has seen.

¹⁶² Quoted in Alexander Bellow, *Illustrated History of the Guitar* (New York: Colombo Publications, c.1970), 162 – an unknown journal that Bellow describes only as an 1841 issue of a 'Viennese musical journal'.

The *London and Paris Observer* review, quoted earlier, also went on to compare the boy Regondi with the great Paganini, invoking phrenological similarities,¹⁶³ yet again emphasising the importance of seeing him play:

While playing, his beautiful face assumes the intentness, thought, and sensibility, of a man; and it is impossible not to see as well as hear that he feels what he plays. Though we are no great phrenologists, we could not help being struck with a remarkable coincidence in the peculiarity which marks the forehead of this child and that of Paganini. In both, the upper part of the forehead projects to a most singular degree over the under. In Paganini, seen from the stalls with the full glare of the stage-lamps below him, the part immediately above the eyebrows appears a perfect cavity, over which project on each side large prominences. In little Regondi, allowing for 'the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood' ... the smooth and rounded forms, and the white and even skin, precisely the same organic structure of this part of the skull is visible.¹⁶⁴

As described in Chapter One, Paganini's performances conjured up particular images and metaphors which the guitar would struggle to emulate. The Viennese reviewer's comparison between Regondi and Paganini is thus somewhat unexpected – the guitar is characterised by subtlety whereas the violin deals in large movements, in grand gestures. The reviewer does, however, draw a distinction: Regondi transforms the guitar, not into a militaristic weapon of dominance, but into another instrument. Under Paganini's hand, the bow becomes a sword; under Regondi's hand, the guitar becomes a violin, a harp, a mandolin, and 'even a piano'. Because the guitar had not been an instrument that was readily associated with virtuosity, nineteenth-century audiences had no real framework for guitar virtuosity and no way of describing its impact without recourse to other, more familiar, frameworks. The other-instrument metaphor seems to have been one of these frameworks. The Viennese reviewer legitimises Regondi's supremacy by underlining his ability to transform the guitar into another instrument.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Physiognomy and phrenology are ancient sciences (now discredited) which drew links between a person's physical (especially facial) characteristics and character or personality.

¹⁶⁴ *The London and Paris Observer Or, Chronicle of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts* (1831), 496.

¹⁶⁵ The rhetoric of imitation and transformation was also occasionally used negatively. Fernando Sor, for example, was reprimanded by the critic, F. J. Fétis, for 'changing [the guitar's] nature, and often making it sound like a mandolin, by his persistence in playing with a sharp sound' – *Revue Musicale* 3 (1828), 302-304, quoted in Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 104.

The *London and Paris Observer* review, quoted twice now, also mentions Regondi's abilities in the context of the guitar's perceived limitations:

The performance of this little creature is astonishing enough in a merely mechanical point of view. He brings out of a somewhat barren and thankless instrument, tones which, for force, distinctness, and sweetness, we have never heard surpassed, nor indeed, we might say, equalled.¹⁶⁶

It seems clear, then, that describing the guitar as another instrument can be associated, at least in part, with the desire to elevate its status – a status which grew increasingly fragile as Regondi aged. The guitar had struggled in this regard for quite some time, however.

Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829) was one of the first guitar virtuosos to gain a name for himself. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, he came to be hailed as the greatest guitarist of his generation and his works were widely known and disseminated.¹⁶⁷ By 1808, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* had proclaimed him as 'the greatest guitarist who has ever lived', yet struggled to understand what was so interesting about the guitar:

... isn't it almost unbelievably amateurish to devote such great talent, as Giuliani has done, to this perennially weak-volumed instrument? Or [for the audience] to take so lively an interest in the virtuoso and his art as to regard his work so highly? I, for one, could not avoid thinking, while listening, what Music would have gained if this talent, this incredible diligence and perseverance in conquering the greatest difficulties, had been applied to an instrument more rewarding even to the musician himself.¹⁶⁸

In 1814, another reviewer in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* opined on the 'true' nature of the guitar which 'everyone knows', writing:

The [Grand Concerto for guitar by Giuliani], taken on its own, was not bad, but not suited to the character of the guitar. It was much too weighty and pretentious The guitar, as everyone knows, is soft by its nature – an instrument suited only to pleasant [musical] treatment. A composition for it must conform to this requirement This pot-pourri [by Giuliani], or whatever you call the thing, is,

¹⁶⁶ *The London and Paris Observer Or, Chronicle of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts* (1831), 496.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Heck, *Mauro Giuliani: Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer* (Columbus, Ohio: Editions Orphée, Inc., 1995), back cover.

¹⁶⁸ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 10 (May 1808), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 39-40.

even while suited to the instrument's nature, a kind of *bon-bon* for ladies and fashionable folk, as are all such adaptations [*Amphibien*].¹⁶⁹

Thomas Heck, with regard to this review, writes that the author's dismissal of the later work as 'amphibious' was typical of critical attitudes at the time towards guitarists.¹⁷⁰ The guitar struggled to be recognised as capable of something more than an accompaniment instrument. Take, for example, a review of a trio for guitar, violin and cello by Giuliani published in 1813. The reviewer praises the composer's handling of the parts, 'their players kept busy, in their natural spheres (the guitar mostly arpeggiating and filling in ...)'.¹⁷¹ Virtuosos, especially Giuliani, were recognised and praised, however, and Giuliani, at least, seemed to do quite well teaching, publishing compositions, and performing in the service of generous patrons.¹⁷² By 1823, a trope began to appear in reviews of Giuliani's performances that was to return in several eulogies, namely the notion that the guitar became some other instrument in Giuliani's hands:

[Giuliani], in turn, whose great fame has already been acknowledged for a long time in this city [Rome], as elsewhere, was able, as always, to transform the lowly guitar at the touch of his magic fingers into as many instruments as he wished, to express the various affections.¹⁷³

Several other reviews and eulogies expressed similar notions:

His style of playing truly sweetens and changes the character of such an instrument ...¹⁷⁴

This most skillful artist made the guitar undergo a sort of transformation; he knows how to draw from it sounds of such suavity as to arouse in the listener the most agreeable emotions.¹⁷⁵

The guitar was transformed in his hands into an instrument similar to the harp, sweetly soothing men's hearts.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 16 (March 1814), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Heck refers to several reviews he has already quoted as evidence for this claim – Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 59-60.

¹⁷¹ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 15 (January 1813), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 53.

¹⁷² See Heck's comprehensive biography, *Mauro Giuliani: Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer* (Columbus, Ohio: Editions Orphée, Inc., 1995).

¹⁷³ *Diario di Roma* 28 (9 April 1823), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 112.

¹⁷⁴ *Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie* (26 October 1826), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 122.

¹⁷⁵ *Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie* (30 November 1826), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 123.

That unrivalled performer brought tones as pure, as thrilling, and almost as sustained as the violin itself – but, of course, we do not insist that because this wonderful man produced these *sostenuto* sounds, that it is a characteristic of the instrument itself – this only proves the triumph of true genius over great difficulty.¹⁷⁷

The final eulogy is careful to remind its readers that the guitar's true nature was, in fact, not what Giuliani could make it sound like, rather, the incredible sounds were a product of Giuliani's virtuosity.

One further example stands out because it draws on a completely different 'instrument' – the voice. Regondi, too, judging by his compositions, could make the guitar sing. The author of the eulogy, yet again, finds it necessary to muse about the difference between what the guitar was expected to sound like (its 'true nature') and how Giuliani supposedly made it sound:

[Giuliani's tone] was invested with a character, not only sustained and penetrating, yet of so earnest and pathetic a description, as to make it appear in reality the natural characteristic of the instrument. In a word, he made the instrument sing. It may be easily supposed that with this singular faculty of giving expression to melody, Giuliani gave to the guitar a character which, it was thought before, was totally alien to its nature.¹⁷⁸

Regondi himself was described continually in this way – as able to transform the guitar into something that it was not. A telling review in *Le Figaro* highlights the use of the rhetoric of transformation in order to praise the abilities of the young Regondi, as well as elevate the status of the instrument:

Never before, perhaps, has the guitar been played with greater grace. Under the fingers of young Jules, the instrument seems to answer easily the kind of questions which usually remain more or less unanswered. Until now, the neck of the guitar was only too similar to the deaf-mute's arm which the Abbé Sicard might manipulate so as to produce intelligible sounds from the afflicted arm. Today, it is

¹⁷⁶ *Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie* (14 May 1829), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 133.

¹⁷⁷ *Giulianiad* 1/1 (1833), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 134.

¹⁷⁸ *Giulianiad* 1/1 (1833), quoted in Heck, *Mauro Giuliani*, 134-135.

like a rather large keyboard touched by skillful fingers bringing a harvest of rich harmony and gracious melody.¹⁷⁹

It seems as though nineteenth-century audiences, at least in the case of Mauro Giuliani and Giulio Regondi, struggled to frame guitar virtuosity on its own terms due to the subtlety and intimacy of the guitar as well as its previous status as an accompanimental instrument. They therefore turned to the rhetoric of imitation, or transformation to understand the guitar. While Regondi may not have appreciated the reviewer comparing his instrument to a 'deaf-mute's arm', the reviewer's sentiment is positive, claiming Regondi could 'answer the guitar's questions', that his virtuosity was transformative.

¹⁷⁹ *Le Figaro* (1 May 1830), 3, quoted by Wynberg in Regondi, *Complete Works for Guitar*, v.

Conclusion

The guitar was never quite at ease within the environment fostered by the spectacle of nineteenth-century virtuosity. The guitar struggled, in the face of hard reviews and a cool reception, to carve its own territory as a 'serious' solo instrument – especially as a virtuosic instrument. However, the nineteenth-century guitar certainly had its performers to equal the skill of a Paganini. Regondi, for one, was compared to the violinist several times, invoking visual gesture and superiority of technique. Others, such as Huerta, sought to style themselves after the virtuoso, but the comparison is not comfortably made when the discrepancy between the spectacle Paganini created and the nature of guitar performance is considered.¹⁸⁰

The intimacy of the guitar in performance – its inability to create a spectacle like that of the piano or violin, was a significant factor in its continuing struggle to find status and legitimacy.¹⁸¹ Writers, especially early on in the nineteenth century as well as in the late eighteenth century, frequently dismissed the guitar or expressed consternation at the notion of the guitar as a legitimate solo instrument, outside of its more familiar contexts in the home and as an accompanying instrument.

Nevertheless, guitarist-composers throughout the nineteenth century worked hard to promote the guitar's worth as a solo instrument. Aguado presented the guitar on its merits – its beauty and variability of tone – using orchestral metaphors. Mertz sought to align the guitar with an explicitly Romantic compositional aesthetic in his *Bardenklänge*, Op. 13. These approaches did not necessarily overtly attempt to defend the guitar from its critics but rather sought to use the guitar's intimacy in its favour. Another technique that guitarist-composers such as Mertz and Regondi used to increase the impact of the guitar in society that witnessed spectacles of ever-increasing magnitude was the use of extra-musical

¹⁸⁰ The coldness Huerta encountered from English audiences highlights this disjunction – Stewart Button, *The Guitar in England, 1800-1924* (New York, London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 59-60.

¹⁸¹ Graham Wade, *A Concise History of the Classic Guitar* (Pacific, Missouri: Mel Bay Publications, 2001), 86-88. While the guitar declined in popularity in the 1850s, Wynberg cautions that this 'should not imply that there were no touring guitarists or that amateurs were still playing the instrument and buying music for it' but that 'the guitar moved to the periphery of general music-making'. He even suggests that only in the last 40 years has the guitar found a 'sometimes tenuous musical legitimacy' and 'genuine respectability and popularity' – Simon Wynberg, *Marco Aurelio Zani de Ferranti: A Biography, 1801-1878* (Heidelberg: Chanterelle, 1989), 43.

gesture. This kind of gesture was written into Mertz's *Fantasie Hongroise*, Op. 65, and Regondi was described in ways that emphasised the visual aspects of his performances. Furthermore, the rhetoric of transformation and imitation was either used by or about each of these guitarist-composers. This was not only a way to add to the stature of the guitar virtuoso by association with genres and instruments that had greater cultural capital, but also a way that audiences (or reviewers) could make sense of guitar virtuosity when metaphors of violence and power did not directly translate from the piano or the violin.

Studies of virtuosity in the nineteenth century have focused on instruments more readily perceived as virtuosic, such as the piano and the violin. I have here proposed some alternative perspectives in the case of the guitar. The notion of an intimate virtuosity both requires us to nuance our understanding of what was an extraordinary and complex phenomenon, and encourages musicians to explore fresh approaches to methodologies of performance.

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