

## An Uncatalogued Piece by Fernando Sor?<sup>1</sup>

By Ricardo Aleixo

This paper discusses a page of music manuscript, shelf no. MD-C-90 (4), preserved in a royal monastery situated in Madrid: the Convent of the Descalzas Reales.<sup>2</sup> It contains three works for guitar, including two attributed to the Catalan composer and guitarist Fernando Sor (1778-1839).<sup>3</sup> The first, entitled *Minué de Sors*, is known as Sor's Op. 23, No. 6, while the second short composition, *Alemanda desors* [sic], is not yet officially attributed to Sor. While recent research has revealed that Salvador Castro de Gistau (ca. 1770-?), a publisher originally from Madrid, issued this same piece in his Op. 6 with the title *Allegretto*, the version found in the manuscript of the Convent of the Descalzas Reales provides a new perspective on this work, potentially by Fernando Sor.<sup>4</sup> The third piece is a minuet (*Minué*) in a simple binary structure of two eight-bar phrases. Unlike the other two pieces, it appears without attribution.

### Description of the manuscript MD-C-90 (4)

The catalog of the Royal Library of Madrid describes the manuscript in question simply with these words: *Minué: 6<sup>a</sup> en Fa; Alemanda; Minué de Sors*. The document is also referenced in the database of the bibliography of National Heritage (IBIS), which records the holdings of the Royal Library and that of the Royal Trustees (Real Biblioteca y Patronatos Reales): the Abbey of Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas (Burgos), the Royal Monastery of the Incarnation (Madrid), the Royal Convent of Tordesillas, and the Convent of the Descalzas Reales (Madrid).<sup>5</sup> The document studied in this article is the *only manuscript source of guitar music* attributed to Fernando Sor in this vast database.

In landscape format, the score measures 29.3 x 21.5 cm. Its 'text box' is 25.8 x 18.6 cm. Musical notation can be found on both sides of the single page. On the *recto* are the *Minué de Sors* and the *Alemanda desors*, while on the *verso* is another minuet, along with a fragment (two eight-bar phrases) of unidentified keyboard music in triple time, in a different hand. There are no visible watermarks. The property stamp ("Descalzas Reales. Clarisas"), on the upper right corner of the *recto* side, is followed by these marginal notations in pencil: "CA - 28 / E - 4 (2); Num. Asiento 845; CAJA 90/4." (See **Figures 1 and 2**).<sup>6</sup>

The first three compositions in the the manuscript, with no title page, are for guitar *solo*. The fourth, added later and in another hand, is clearly for a keyboard instrument, being written in two grand staves. By consulting several manuscripts kindly provided by Sister Mary Almudena, responsible for the archive of the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, it was possible to identify the handwriting of the last piece as that of Francis Xavier Gibert (1779-1848), the Convent's Chapel Master (Maestro de Capilla) until his death in Madrid on February 27, 1848.<sup>7</sup> The information provided by Sister Mary supports the idea that the manuscript belongs to the archive of scores collected by the Convent's Chapel Masters. In addition, the fact that it is not a recent acquisition allows us to conclude that Gibert was in possession of the document. Therefore, it could be from the first half of the nineteenth century.

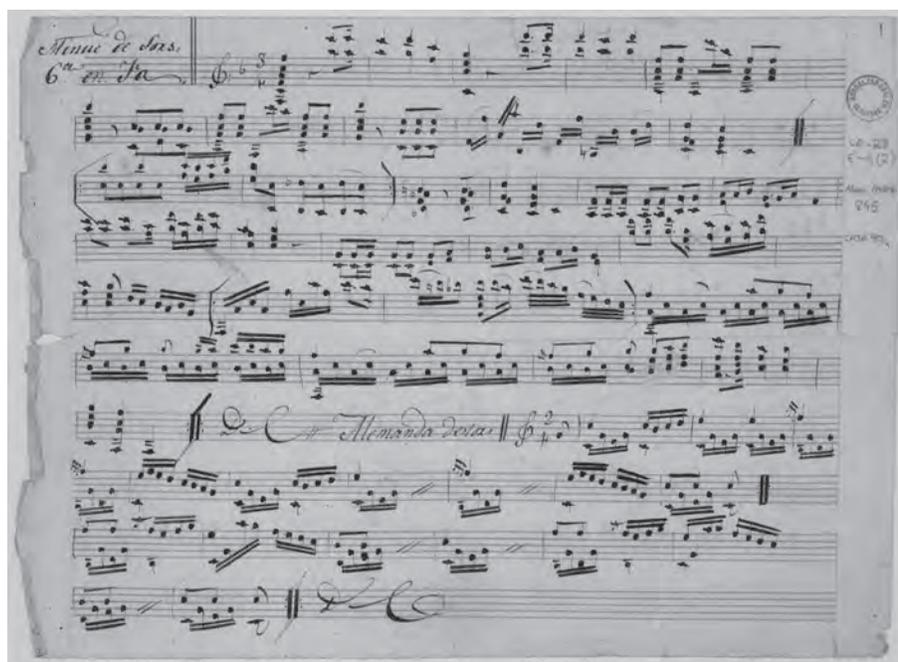


Figure 1: *Minué de Sors* and *Alemanda desors*, MD-C-90 (4) *recto*. © National Heritage (Spain).

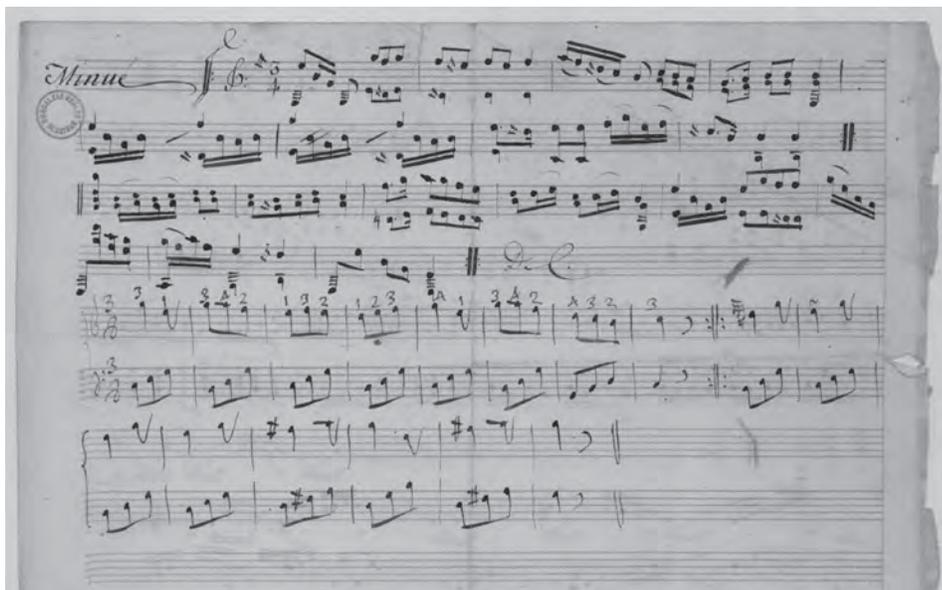


Figure 2: Anonymous *Minué* and a keyboard piece, MD-C-90 (4), verso. © National Heritage (Spain).

Additionally, it is quite likely that Francis Xavier Gibert had some relationship with guitars, because another work by him from the same period contains two “boleras” for voice and guitar.<sup>8</sup> Both compositions are under the simple heading of “voleras,” and their lyrics begin with “Pepa asked me if I love her ...” and “A sensitive heart ...”<sup>9</sup>

The handwriting of the pieces for guitar—the same for all three—has an appearance that is not very compatible with what one expects from a copyist. Nor does it seem to be the work of an amateur, since the G-clefs are well drawn and the note heads are fairly consistent. This is surely the calligraphy belonging to a musician with some writing experience. Moreover, the absence of a title page or price suggests that it is a personal copy, not a manuscript created for sale within the flourishing copyist’s market.

### The music of the manuscript MD-C-90 (4)

The first piece of the manuscript, *Minué de Sors*, is known as his Op. 23, No. 6 (Figure 3).

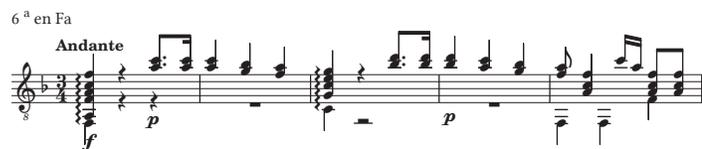


Figure 3: Excerpt from *Andante* Op. 23, No. 6.

The French composer Jean Antoine Meissonier (1783-1857) published two versions of this opus. The first one dates back to 1825; the second could have been issued in 1826 under the supervision of Sor after his return to Paris from Moscow.<sup>10</sup> The second version has significant changes from the first; one of them is precisely the incorporation of the *Andante*—the very piece copied in the manuscript of the Convent of the Descalzas Reales with the title *Minué de Sors*.<sup>11</sup>

A comparison of the manuscript version with the printed version, as found in the second edition of Op. 23, shows several differences. (Refer to Figures 4 and 5.) Some of them are quite obvious, as in the case of measure 9:

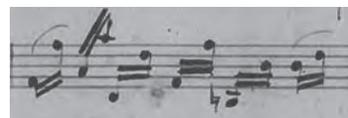


Figure 4: Measure 9 ms. MD-C-90 (4)



Figure 5: Measure 9 op. 23, No. 6.

Similarly, there are clear differences between the two versions in other measures. These variants as well as the ones in the previous example show that the copy archived in the Convent’s Library is considerably more complex. (Refer to Figures 6 and 7.)



Figure 6: Measures 22 and 23, ms. MD-C-90 (4).



Figure 7: Measures 24 and 25, Op. 23, No. 6.

## An Uncataloged Piece by Fernando Sor (cont.)

However, the most interesting part of the manuscript is the second short piece, the *Alemanda desors*, a work that is not in the catalog of the composer. Although it is questionable to assign the authorship of this piece to Sor based solely on a copyist's manuscript attribution, the same music with very minor variants appeared in a print published by Salvador Castro de Gistau in Paris between ca. 1803 and 1805. The work is one of several contained in this edition, preceded by the initials "F. S.," but without a specific title—only an indication of tempo, as seen in **Figure 8**, below.<sup>12</sup>

In regard to the attribution of the piece in the manuscript, there is little doubt that the initials "F.S." in the Castro de Gistau print indicate the authorship of Fernando Sor. In fact, the publisher from Madrid uses these initials on other occasions that can be directly connected to Sor, as is the case with some *seguidillas* in his earliest opuses.<sup>13</sup> In his doctoral dissertation, Kenneth Hartdegen lists the many works that Castro de Gistau attributed to "F. S." To the aforementioned *Seguidilla* and to the *Allegretto* we must add another short piece of only sixteen measures, published by Castro on page 5 of his Op. 8, *Plusieurs Petites Pieces Pour la Guitare*, entitled *Cont.<sup>ce</sup> [contredance] Angloise*, since it is headed with the same initials.<sup>14</sup>

The *Alemanda desors* and the *Allegretto* published by Castro are in C-major and both use a simple melody over an Alberti bass—an accompaniment technique Sor used on various occasions. However, although the two versions are very similar, one can see several differences between them, such as minor melodic variants and some failures of the manuscript version to maintain the Alberti bass pattern. Furthermore, the structure of the piece with two sections of 9 + 8 measures, does not match with the structure of 8 + 8 measures found in Castro de Gistau's print. Besides, the two final measures of the first section of the print version have very little in common with the last three measures of the manuscript (**Figures 9 and 10**).



Figure 9: Measures 7 and 8, Castro, Op. 6



Figure 10: Measures 7, 8 and 9 ms. MD-C-90 (4).

According to the cataloguing by Jeffery, only two pieces of Sor were published with the name *alemandas* (*allemandes*): the *Alemanda* Op. 23, No. 5, and the *Alemanda* Op. 36 (*Trois Pièces de Société*). Both pieces are stylistically very different from the *Alemanda desors*, and in the case of the *Alemanda* Op. 36, there are structural differences as well. The *Alemanda* Op. 23 appears only in the first edition of that opus by Meissonnier, as previously mentioned. It dates from 1825. (**Figure 11**)

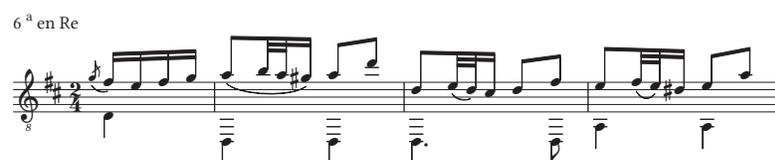


Figure 11: Excerpt from the *Allemande*, Op. 23, No. 5.

This consists of a short melody with simple accompanying notes, having a binary structure of 8 + 8 measures and a two-voice texture, maintained throughout the composition.

The *Alemanda* Op. 36 was published in 1828. It is a more complex piece from the structural standpoint and exhibits a more successful use of the capabilities of the guitar (**Figure 12**).<sup>15</sup>

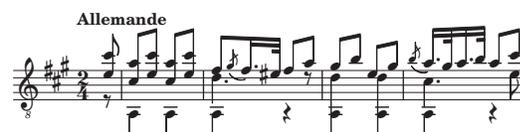


Figure 12: Excerpt from *Allemande* in *Trois Pièces de Société*, Op. 36.

As can be seen, with the exception of the 2/4 meter, which is common in all three pieces, and the simple textures and binary structure shared with the *Alemanda* from Op. 23, the *Alemanda desors* has few similarities with the two known and cataloged *Alemandas*.



Figure 8: *Allegretto* by "F. S."

Fernando Sor wrote some pieces similar to the manuscript *alemanda* found in the Convent's archive, but they are not presented as *alemandas*. This is the case with the *Thema* of the *Air Varié*, without opus number, which Castro published in 1809.<sup>16</sup> The theme that precedes the variations has a binary structure of 8 + 8 measures, much in the style of *Alemanda desors*. Consequently, it also resembles the style of the *Allegretto* of Castro's Op. 6 (Figure 13).

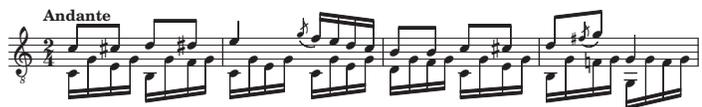


Figure 13: Excerpt from the *Thema* of the *Air Varié* by Fernando Sor.

Likewise, the *Leçon 17* of the *Vingt quatre leçons progressives pour la guitare*, and even more clearly, *Exercice 13* of the *Vingt Quatre exercices très faciles et soigneusement doigtés*, both pieces published in 1828, while being more extensive pieces, are also based on a simple melody and an Alberti bass (Figure 14).<sup>17</sup>



Figure 14: Excerpt from *Exercice 13*, Op. 35.

But the piece that has the closest similarity to the second of the small pieces in the manuscript is the theme from the *Variations for guitar* (*Variaciones para guitarra*) found in the Historical Public Library in Madrid (Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid), Figure 15.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 15: Theme from *Variaciones para guitarra*, Mus 722-24 [IV].

The authorship of these variations was unknown until Kenneth Sparr brought to our attention the *Etudes et Variations Espagnoles Par Sor*, a work that had been published in the *Journal de Guitare ou Lyre* of Pierre-Jean Porro.<sup>19</sup> Although Porro's version shows some differences with the manuscript in the Historical Public Library in Madrid (the variations appear in a different order, and Porro added a seventh and final variation), according to Sparr, it is very likely that the *Variaciones para guitarra* is an original work by Fernando Sor.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding these variants and modifications, it should be mentioned that Fernando Sor showed his concern about the publication of some of his works having come to light prematurely and without his supervision. The following words reveal that his popularity led to the spread of various apocryphal and careless versions of his works:

While accompanying arias from Italian operas, often I discovered small melodic ritornellos in one or another instrument. When I tried to adapt them to the guitar, I realized that the fingering I used for the harmony was essentially what I needed for the melody, and that the latter should be almost entirely dependent on the former. This success having satisfied my desires completely, I proceeded to compose some pieces, in truth not very carefully worked out, but which helped prepare the way for me that circumstances required me to follow. These were pieces that I simply had to study seriously to rectify my way of writing music, when I became a *professeur*. Many of these pieces would never have been exposed to the public if I had been consulted, but some people who had copies of them (mostly incorrect) made deals with a publisher, who, overestimating my talent, gladly took over whatever bore my name.<sup>21</sup>

Even if Sor were not referring here to some of the pieces presented in this article, nor even pointing out that some of these versions were more or less complicated, it is clear that our composer's popularity led to the diffusion of many apocryphal and poorly edited works.

## Conclusions

The manuscript MD-C-90 (4) from the library of the monastery of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid appears to contain alternate versions of two pieces for solo guitar by Fernando Sor. In the first, we find some musical elements pointing to a certain simplification of the printed version (*Andante*), published by Meissonier around the year 1826. However, the opposite occurs in the second piece, because the absence of some groups of notes forming the Alberti bass in the *Alemanda desors* means that the printed version, published by Castro de Gistau, is slightly more complex.

In the case of the *Alemanda desors*, this work dates from the first half of the nineteenth century, or even the last years of the eighteenth century. It was published as an *Allegretto* in Op. 6 of Castro Gistau, appearing initially between ca. 1803 and 1805. The simple style and character of the work, based on an Alberti bass accompanying a very simple melody, is found in other pieces by Fernando Sor as well. Furthermore, its classification as an *alemanda* in the manuscript version is surprising, because the piece has few similarities with the two cataloged *alemandas* by the Catalan composer. Rather, it resembles some didactic pieces of the composer and recalls the theme of the *Variaciones para guitarra* found in the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal of Madrid.

Thanks to Dr. Rita Martin of Radford University for her English translation of this Spanish article.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 An early version of this article appeared as “Un pezzo non catalogato di Fernando Sor,” in Italian, in *il Fronimo* no. 163 (July 2013), 50-56. I would like to express my gratitude to Luis Briso de Montiano for helping me at the time of writing this article and to Erik Stenstadvold, who provided me with important information. I would also like to thank Ana García Sanz, curator of the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, and Sister Mary Almudena, archivist of that institution, for their kindness in facilitating my gathering information on this manuscript.
- 2 Literally translated, this is the Monastery of the Barefoot Royals. The name refers to the custom of the Colettine branch of the Order of St. Clare being barefoot while within the cloister. Persons interested in viewing this manuscript must access it through the catalog of the Real Biblioteca de Madrid.
- 3 As a primary reference for this article I have used *Fernando Sor: The New Complete Works for Guitar*, ed. Brian Jeffery (London: Tecla Editions, 2004).
- 4 Originally from Madrid, Salvador Castro de Gistau was a Spanish guitarist, publisher, and composer who was very well known in Paris in the beginning of nineteenth century. His work as a publisher and composer includes the *Journal de Musique Étrangère pour la Guitare ou Lyre*, a periodical publication in which Castro de Gistau emphasized Spanish pieces, including several of his own works for guitar solo and Spanish songs for voice and guitar. He also published music for guitar written by other authors such as Fernando Sor, Pablo Huertos, Isidro de Laporta, Federico Moretti, Carlos Sors and Manuel Soto. See Javier Suárez-Pajares, “Castro de Gistau, Salvador,” *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999), Vol. 3, 407-409.
- 5 Patrimonio Nacional, Real Biblioteca, and Patronatos Reales.
- 6 I wish to thank the Royal Library for authorizing the publication of this manuscript.
- 7 Ana Cazorra i Basté, “Gibert, Francisco Javier,” *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999), Vol. 5, 595.
- 8 The manuscript is preserved in the Convent of the Descalzas Reales Archive: E-Mdr, sign.: MUS/MD/C/90 (5).
- 9 “Me preguntó mi Pepa si la quería...” y “Un corazón sensible...”
- 10 Brian Jeffery, “Notes on the pieces,” in *Fernando Sor: The New Complete Works for Guitar* (London: Tecla Editions, 2004), Vol. 3, p. xi.
- 11 For more information see the edition by Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, Vol. 3, pp. x-xi.
- 12 *Plusieurs Petites Pièces A Deux Parties pour être Exécutées Sur Une Guitare Seule ... Par Castro... Oeuvre 6*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (FPn), sign.: Vm9 3528. I thank Luis Briso de Montiano for connecting the *Alemanda desors* with the piece found in Castro’s edition. I am grateful to him and to Erik Stenstadvold for providing me with a copy of that edition. I would also like to acknowledge the kindness of the Bibliothèque National, France, in authorizing the publication of the *Allegretto* by “F. S.”
- 13 The *seguidilla* “Sin voluntad me tienes” (“You got me without wanting to”) was published in a work called Op. 1 by Castro de Gistau (*Six Seguidilles ou Chansons Nationales Espagnoles avec ... Accompagnement de Guitare ...*) and in his Op. 2 (*Six Seguidilles ou Chansons Nationales Espagnoles avec ... Accompagnement de Piano*), in both cases under the initials “F. S.” The same music, but with different words, is found in a Spanish manuscript of the early nineteenth century (GB-Lbl Egerton 3289, ff. 107v-108), and was published by Brian Jeffery as “De amor en las prisiones” in his collection of *seguidillas* by Fernando Sor (London: Tecla Editions, 1976), 28. This information was kindly provided by Luis Briso de Montiano.
- 14 Kenneth Angus Hartdegen, “Fernando Sor’s Theory of Harmony Applied to the Guitar: History, Bibliography and Context” (Doctoral dissertation: the University of Auckland, 2011), 517.
- 15 Jeffery, “Notes ...,” Vol. 5, p. viii.
- 16 Information kindly provided by Luis Briso de Montiano.
- 17 Jeffery, “Notes ...,” Vol. 4, p. viii; Vol. 5, p. viii.
- 18 E-Mm, sign.: Mus 722-24 [IV]. I would like to thank the Historical Public Library in Madrid for allowing me to publish a piece from this source. The collection of guitar music in this library, which includes this manuscript, was described and cataloged by Luis Briso de Montiano in *Un fondo desconocido de música para guitarra* (Madrid: Opera Tres, 1995). The *Variaciones para guitarra* are discussed on page 155.
- 19 The *Etudes et Variations Espagnoles Par Sors* were published by Kenneth Sparr in the article “Due pezzi sconosciuti di Fernando Sor,” *il Fronimo*, No. 144 (October 2008), 28-38.
- 20 Sparr, “Due pezzi,” 29.
- 21 Fernando Sor, *Méthode Pour La Guitare, Par Ferdinand Sor* (Paris: L’Auteur, Rue de Marivaux, No. 5, 1830), 4. “En accompagnant des airs d’opéras italiens, je rencontrais souvent de petites reprises chantantes dans quelque instrument; en cherchant à les rendre sur la guitare, je trouvais que le doigté que j’employais pour l’harmonie était la base de celui qu’il me fallait pour la mélodie, et que ce dernier devait être presque entièrement dépendant du premier. Le succès ayant complètement répondu à mes désirs, je fis quelques morceaux, très peu réfléchis à la vérité, mais qui m’ont préparé la route que les circonstances m’ont obligé de suivre, et que je n’ai eu qu’à examiner sévèrement pour rectifier ma manière d’écrire dès que je suis devenu professeur. Plusieurs de ces morceaux n’auraient jamais été exposés au public si l’on m’eût consulté; mais des personnes qui en avaient des copies (la plupart incorrectes) en firent affaire avec l’éditeur, qui, faisant beaucoup trop d’honneur à mon talent, s’emparait avec plaisir de tout ce qui portait mon nom.”