

A NEWLY DISCOVERED LETTER OF 1827 BY FERNANDO SOR¹

By Erik Stenstadvold

Since 1994, when the second edition of Brian Jeffery's standard biography of Fernando Sor was published, various studies have added to our knowledge and understanding of the guitarist and composer.² Now a hitherto unknown letter, written by Sor in Saint Petersburg, has come to light which makes a significant addition to the array of documents pertaining to his life and work. Dated 1 April 1827, this remarkably long letter provides new insight into the publishing and personal relationship between Sor, his Paris publisher Meissonnier, and various intermediaries; it also mentions some unknown Sor works, including a book of drafts at Málaga, and some pieces mistakenly published under Sor's name. Finally, it reveals his attitude toward the engraving by M. N. Bates of his portrait after Goubeau—the only sure pictorial record of Sor we have—and his great affection for Paris.

Note on the text: Sor writes a passable French, though his spellings (e.g. applaudir, defunct) sometimes depart from the current literate norm. His spellings have been retained in the transcription. Sor generally knew when a French word should carry an accent, but he almost invariably writes something indeterminate between a dot and an acute. All the accents Sor marked have been brought into line with modern usage, but none has been supplied where he omits an accent, and those that he adds unnecessarily have been retained.

—Christopher Page

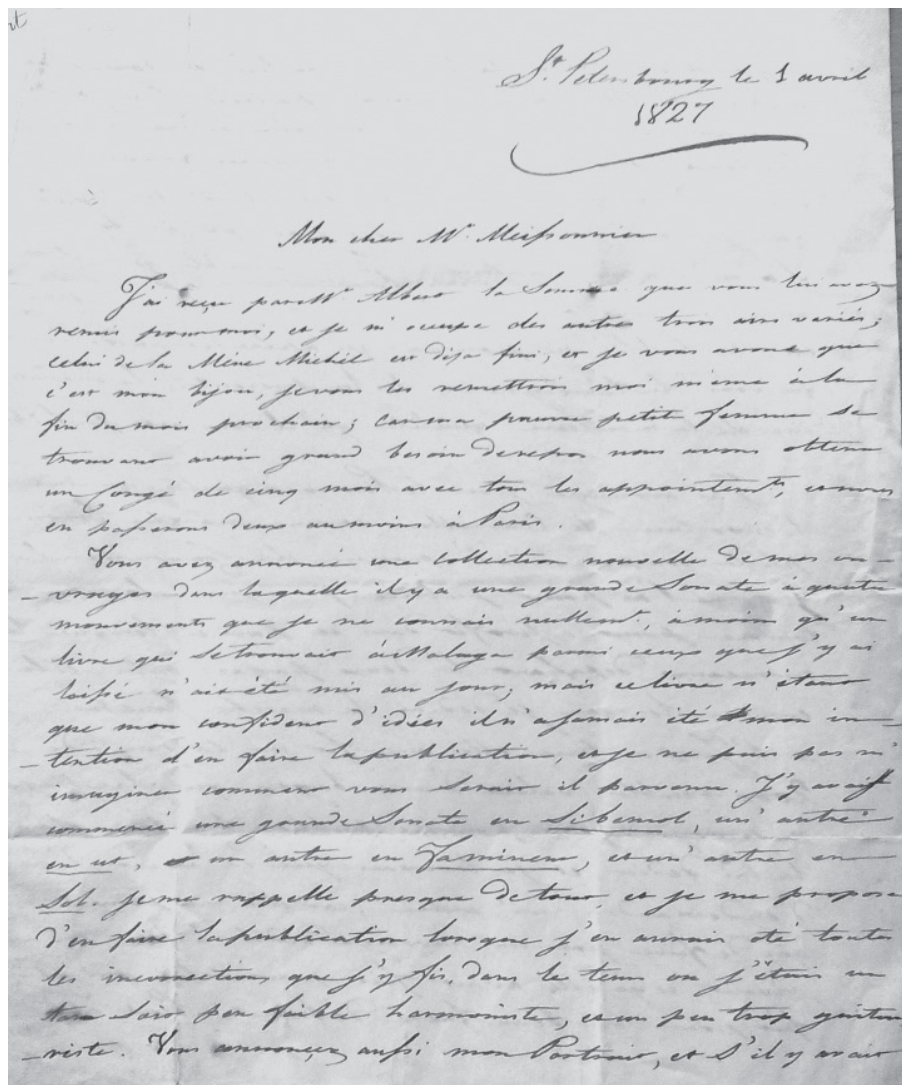


Figure 1: Sor autograph letter of 1 April 1827, p. 1.

¹ The author is grateful to the various people who have made this study possible: first and foremost to the owner of the Sor letter, Mr. Norbert Fischer, who generously provided images of it and gave permission to publish them; furthermore to Andreas Stevens, who first announced the letter's existence at the 6th Lake Konstanz Guitar Research Meeting (March 2017) and later put me in contact with the owner; and to Luis Briso de Montiano for valuable suggestions. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Wolf Moser who, although himself planning an article on this important document, munificently had no objections to sharing it. Finally, my thanks go to Christopher Page who prepared the edition of the French text of the letter and the English translation, and whose many comments throughout my work on this article have been most encouraging.

² Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor, Composer and Guitarist*, Second Edition (London: Tecla Editions, 1994). More recent studies include the many essays in Luis Gáser, ed., *Estudios sobre Fernando Sor – Sor Studies* (Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2003); Kenneth Hartdegen, "Fernando Sor's Theory of Harmony Applied to the Guitar: History, Bibliography and Context," PhD diss. (University of Auckland, 2011); Brian Jeffery, "Sor in trouble with the Spanish Inquisition, 1803 to 1806," *Soundboard* 38, no. 3 (2012): 15–19; Christopher Page, "New light on the London years of Fernando Sor, 1815–1822," *Early Music* 41, no. 4 (2013): 557–69; Erik Stenstadvold, "Fernando Sor on the Move in the Early 1820s," *Soundboard Scholar* 1 (2015): 16–25; Josep María Mangado Artigas, "Fernando Sor (1778-1839): Documenti inediti – Riflessioni e ipotesi, I-V," *Il Fronimo* 172–176 (Oct. 2015–Oct. 2016).

moyen d'en retarder la livraison, au lieu de donner au public la copie d'un mauvais portrait (ce que suppose que ce ne peut être que celui défini par Goubeau et estropié par un mauvais graveur Anglais.) ou au moins celle d'un excellent portrait que je vous prêterai, et rectifiée par quelque science d'après nature. Il me semble que si vous annoncez tout simplement la chose telle qu'elle est, le public ne pourra qu'applaudir au cas que vous lui témoignerez de lui présenter la marchandise de la meilleure qualité qu'il vous est possible.

J'ai arrangé pour le Sicco à quatre mains l'ouverture de Cendrillon et une marche triomphale composée à l'époque du gouvernement. Je ne l'ai point publiée parce que cela ne tourne point à profit dans ce pays et lorsque les morceaux dépassent les deux pages: outre cela, comme lorsque je dédica la marche funèbre à l'impératrice elle me fit un cadeau de 2000 roubles, (valeur d'une bague que Sartaposte m'envoya) je ne pouvais publier l'autre sans lui la dédicier, et je trouvais que ça avait l'air d'endormir un autre; car elle ne pouvait me que de faire pour un ouvrage dédié à son mari vivant ce qu'elle avait fait pour celui qui était fait pour son beau-frère défunt. Peut être

Figure 2: Sor autograph letter of 1 April 1827, p. 2.

en deux ouvrages vous conviendront

J'en fais une fête de plaisir & de voir mes
anciens amis dont vous faites partie. Présenter
je vous prie mes salutations amicales à Mad^e.
Mispoune et à M^r. votre frère ainsi qu'à
M^r. et Mad^e. Miné. Recevez tout bien des
choses aimables de la part de ma femme
et croyez à l'attachement. Sincère de
Votre très dévoué

J. Sor

P. S.

J'ai toujours oublié de vous dire que parmi tous les
lambours que l'on vous présentera sachez que
vous aimez ce qui étoit de moi, ou vous a présen-
té la partie de guitare d'un duo de guitare et
flûte ou Violon, comme Sonate; et c'est ainsi que
vous l'avez publiée; aussi il y a des endroits
qui ne signifient rien du tout tant de l'autre
partie; ou vous a donc aussi deux mémoires
qui ne sont pas de moi mais d'un tel M^r.
Mercader de la ville Cervera en Catalogne.

Figure 3: Sor autograph letter of 1 April 1827, p. 3.

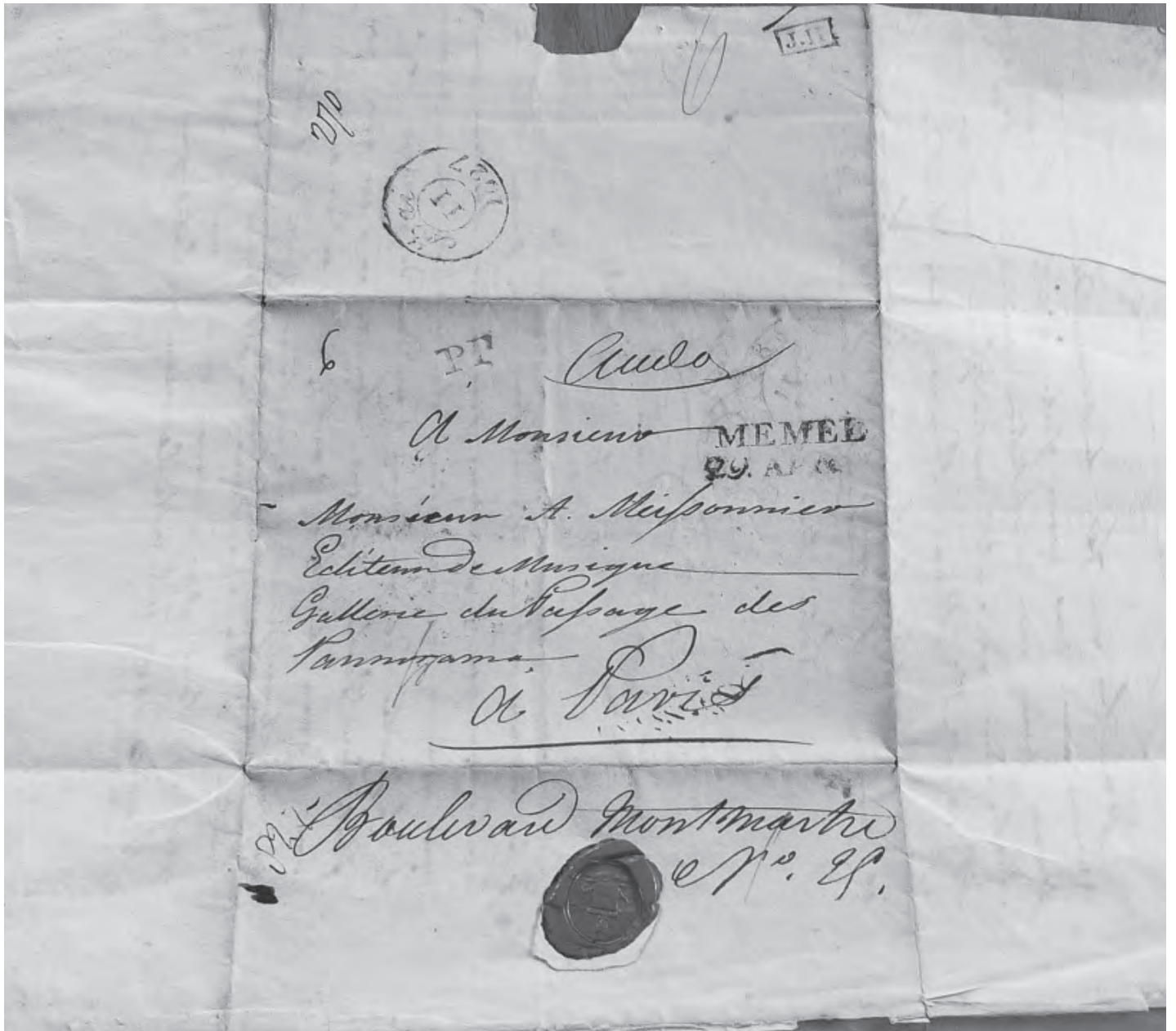


Figure 4: Sor autograph letter of 1 April 1827, exterior showing addressee, postal stamps, and the customary wax seal.

A NEWLY DISCOVERED LETTER: (cont.)

TRANSCRIPTION

St. Petersburg le 1 avril 1827

Mon cher Mr. Meissonnier

J'ai reçu par Mr. Albert la somme que vous lui avez remis pour moi, et je m'occupe des autres trois airs variés ; celui de la Mère Michél est déjà fini, et je vous avoue que c'est mon bijou, je vous les remettrai moi même à la fin du mois prochain; car ma pauvre petite femme se trouvant avoir grand besoin de repos nous avons obtenu un congé de cinq mois avec tous les appointements, et nous en passerons deux au moins à Paris.

Vous avez annoncé une collection nouvelle de mes ouvrages dans laquelle il y a une grande sonate à quatre mouvements que je ne connais nullement, à moins qu'un livre qui se trouvait à Málaga parmi ceux que j'y ai laissé n'ait été mis au jour ; mais ce livre n'étant que mon confident d'idées il n'a jamais été mon intention d'en faire la publication, et je ne puis pas m'imaginer comment vous serait il parvenu. J'y avait commencé une grande sonate en si bemol, un' autre en ut, un['] autre en fa mineur, et un' autre en sol. Je me rappelle presque de tout, et je me propose d'en faire la publication lorsque j'en aurais oté toutes les incorrections que j'y fis, dans le tems ou j'étais un tant soit peu faible harmoniste, et un peu trop guitariste. Vous annoncez aussi mon portrait, et s'il y avait [p. 2] moyen d'en retarder la livraison, au lieu de donner au public la copie d'un mauvais portrait (car je suppose que ce ne peut être que celui dessiné par Goubeau et estropié par un mauvais graveur Anglais) on aurait celle d'un excellent portrait que je vous préferais, et rectifié par quelque séance d'après nature. Il me semble que si vous annoncez tout simplement la chose telle qu'elle est, le public ne pourra qu'applaudir au désir que vous lui témoignerez de lui présenter la marchandise de la meilleure qualité qu'il vous est possible.

J'ai arrangé pour le piano à quatre mains l'ouverture de Cendrillon et une marche triomphale composée à l'époque du Couronnement. Je ne l'ai point publiée parceque cela ne tourne point à profit dans ce pais ci lorsque les morceaux dépassent les deux pages : outre cela, comme lorsque je dédiais la marche funèbre à l'Imperatrice, elle me fit un cadeau de 2000 roubles (valeur d'une bague que Sa Majesté m'envoya), je ne pouvais publier l'autre sans la lui dédier, et je trouvais que ça avait l'air d'en demander un' autre ; car elle ne pouvait moins que de faire pour un ouvrage dédié à son mari vivant ce qu'elle avait fait pour celui qui était fait pour son beau frere défunct. Peut être [p. 3] ces deux ouvrages vous conviendront.

Je me fais une fête du plaisir de voir mes anciens amis dont vous faites partie. Présentes je vous prie mes salutations amicales à Made. Meissonnier et à Mr. votre frere ainsi qu'à

Mr. et Made. Miné. Recevez tous bien des choses aimables de la part de ma femme et croyez à l'attachement sincère de
Votre très dévoué
F. Sor

P.S.

J'ai toujours oublié de vous dire que parmi tous les lambeaux que l'on vous présentait sachant que vous aimiez ce qui était de moi, on vous a présenté la partie de guitare d'un duo de guitare et flûte ou violon, comme sonate ; et c'est ainsi que vous l'avez publiée ; aussi il y a des endroits qui ne signifient rien du tout faute de l'autre partie ; on vous a donné aussi deux ménuets qui ne sont pas de moi mais d'un tel Mr. Mercader de la ville Cervera en Catalogne.

TRANSLATION, followed by comments corresponding to the embedded tags.

<C01> Saint Petersburg, 1 April 1827 <C02>

My dear Monsieur Meissonnier,

<C03> I have received by Monsieur Albert the sum that you gave him for me, and I am busy with the other three airs with variations; I have already finished [the variations on] *Mère Michel* and I promise you that it is my jewel; I will give them to you myself at the end of next month; <C04> my poor little wife finds herself in great need of rest so we have obtained five months of paid leave and will pass at least two of them in Paris.

<C05> You have announced a new collection of my works <C06> in which there is a grand sonata, in four movements, of which I know nothing unless a book which is at Málaga, among those I left there, has been brought to light. Since this book is only my private record of ideas I never had any intention to publish it and I cannot imagine how it came into your hands. I had started there a grand sonata in B-flat, another in C and another in F minor and another in G. I remember virtually everything and I propose to publish them when I have removed all the faults that I made there in the time when I was rather too little of a harmonist and a little too much of a guitarist. <C07> You also announce my portrait, and if there is a way to delay the delivery, instead of giving the public a copy of a bad portrait (for I suppose it cannot be other than the one drawn by Goubeau and ruined by a bad English engraver) one might have a copy of an excellent portrait that I will lend you, corrected after the original in a sitting. It seems to me that if you just announce the thing as it is, the public could only applaud the desire you show them to present them with the best quality merchandise that it is possible for you to do.

<C08> I have arranged for four-hand piano the overture from *Cendrillon* and a triumphal march composed at the time of the Coronation. I have certainly not published it because in this country there is no profit whatsoever to be got from a piece that exceeds two pages. What is more, when I dedicated the funeral march to the Empress, since she gave me a present of 2000 roubles (the value of a ring that her majesty sent me), I could not publish the other [i.e. the triumphal march] without dedicating it to her, and I found that would make it appear as if I were asking for another [present], for she could not do less for a work dedicated to her living husband than she had done for one that was made for her deceased brother-in-law. Perhaps these two works will suit you?

<C09> I rejoice to think I will see my old friends of whom you are one. Please give my friendly greetings to Madame Meissonnier and to your brother, also to Monsieur and Madame Miné. Please accept warm greetings on behalf of my wife and trust the sincere friendship of your very devoted

F. Sor.

P.S. <C10>

I have forgotten to tell you that, among the scraps that you have been given by those who know that you like what I compose, you have been given the guitar part of a duo for guitar and flute or violin, as a sonata, and that is how you have published it; there are places which are absolutely meaningless without the other part; you have also been given two minuets which are not of my composing but are rather <C11> the work of a Monsieur Mercader from the town of Cervera in Catalonia.

COMMENTS

<C01> Although dated St. Petersburg 1 April 1827, the letter has two postal stamps (**Figure 4**) showing that it took a full month to reach the addressee; one stamp reads “MEMEL 29. APR...” (Memel was the old name of the Lithuanian coastal town Klaipėda), the other appears to be “*Mai* II 1827,” which may be the date of the letter’s arrival in Paris.

<C02> It has previously been assumed that Sor returned to Paris in late 1826 or early 1827,³ but the letter shows that he remained somewhat longer in Russia and that he and his wife expected to be back in Paris before the end of May.

<C03> The Monsieur Albert mentioned here is the French dancer-choreographer François Décombe-Albert, whom Sor would have known from London. They cooperated in the production of the ballet *Cendrillon* in 1822, for which Sor composed the music and which Albert choreographed in addition to dancing a leading role. The sum must have been payment for some compositions which Sor had sent to Meissonnier, in all likelihood opp. 24–29, for which a subscription with the title *Six nouveaux morceaux* was advertised in the *Revue Musicale* of February 1827. (It is also possible, but less likely, that the money included advance payment for the “three airs with variations.”) Most probably Monsieur Albert had brought the money in person, but he could have arranged the delivery through an intermediary, perhaps a French dancer going to Russia.

The text indicates that Sor must have promised Meissonnier three new sets of airs with variations, one of which was already finished, the *Mère Michel* (better known as “C’est la mère Michel”), which was published in 1828 as Sor’s op. 30, with the title 7e. *Fantaisie et Variations Brillantes*.⁴ Of the two other sets we know nothing (they were not published by Meissonnier) unless perhaps they were op. 40, *Fantaisie sur un air favori Ecossais*, and op. 54, *Morceau de Concert*, which Sor published later in cooperation with Pacini.

<C04> “My poor little wife” (*ma pauvre petite femme*) was the young ballerina Félicité Hullin, whom Sor probably married in Paris before heading east with her in 1823. The text implies that they were planning to return to Paris together for a couple of months in 1827. In Russia, Félicité most likely had been engaged with a regular salary at what would have been the Bolshoi Petrovsky Theatre in Moscow.⁵ Perhaps Sor was also employed there; his reference to *their* receiving “five months of paid leave” suggests that they were highly valued and that both were expected to return in the fall. But they were destined to break up their relationship; see below.

<C05> “You have announced a new collection of my works in which there is a grand sonata, in four movements...” The “new collection” most certainly refers to the *Six nouveaux Morceaux de guitare*, opp. 24–29, a subscription for which was advertised in the *Revue Musicale* in February 1827⁶ and in the *Journal général d’Annonces* on 7 March 1827, i.e., a month or two before Sor’s letter

³ Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 82.

⁴ Advertised in *Revue Musicale* (1828): 120.

⁵ An article in a journal called *Guitare et Musique* in 1958, which was based on the research by the Russian guitar historian V. P. Mashkevich, claimed that she was engaged at the Moscow ballet at an annual salary of 17,000 rubles (Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 75).

⁶ Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 82.

A NEWLY DISCOVERED LETTER: (cont.)

was written.⁷ The advertisements list the individual works, including “a grand sonata, composed of four movements” (*une grande Sonate composée de quatre morceaux*);⁸ this is almost verbatim the same as Sor wrote. The advertisement also stated that “This Collection will be adorned by a portrait of the composer” (*Cette Collection doit être ornée du portrait de l’auteur*), a portrait of which Sor has a less-than-favorable opinion (see comment <C07>).

<C06> “... of which I know nothing,” Sor clearly had no idea what sonata Meissonnier was publicizing. In hazarding a guess at what it may have been, he reveals the existence of a book of drafts or sketches left at Málaga. During the turmoil of the final years of the Peninsular War, in 1810 and 1811, Sor was in Málaga (where, of all things, he managed a factory making playing cards).⁹ Subsequently he moved to Jerez and finally to Valencia before fleeing to France in 1813. Sor tells us that the sketchbook contained draft versions of four grand sonatas (implying that they were multi-movement works), two in the unfriendly keys of B-flat and F minor, and two in C and G. At the time of writing the letter, he realized that these pieces would need revision, for they were composed at a time when he “was rather too little a harmonist and a little too much a guitarist.” This is a finely turned phrase expressing Sor’s fundamental belief that his art as a guitarist was now distinctive for being founded upon a secure knowledge of harmony, counterpoint and the ability to compose “a good bass.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, no copies of these sonatas, either in their early states or revised, have been found; it is quite likely that Sor never revised them. Upon returning to Paris he may have realized that there was no longer a market (if ever there were) for such guitar music.¹¹ The fact that Sor did not acknowledge the sonata, op. 25, may have implications worth considering. It seems unlikely that it indeed was one of the Malaga sonatas; the style, particularly of the two first movements, is quite different from that of other known works from his Spanish period, including the sonata, op. 22 (which, although first published in 1825, had been composed in Spain two decades earlier).¹² The music

of op. 25 bears nevertheless the unmistakable hallmark of Sor; perhaps Meissonnier (or someone else?) put together movements from different sources, thereby constructing a grand, four-movement sonata.¹³ This may explain the unusual—and one may argue, weak—formal structure of the sonata, with just a minuet as the final movement.

<C07> Two versions of a portrait of Sor are known;¹⁴ one is an engraving made in London by M. N. Bates after a drawing or painting by Goubau(d), the other is a lithograph by Engelmann and Bordes in Paris, showing the same image of Sor with a guitar. The letter indicates that the Paris lithograph was new and made after the English engraving, at Meissonnier’s request. Sor was far from happy with the portrait “ruined by a bad English engraver,” and appealed to Meissonnier not to republish it, but to wait for another portrait the guitarist would lend him when back in Paris. Meissonnier did not honor this request; the lithograph was already on the market,¹⁵ and nothing more is known about the new portrait that Sor described. Sor’s verdict on M. N. Bate (the engraver) is perhaps unduly harsh, and may conceal a story that cannot now be reconstructed. This artist was responsible for some very capable engravings of paintings by the noted Regency artist, Adam Buck.

<C08> The triumphal march for the Coronation of the Tsar is not known to survive, unless it was an arrangement of the “Tempo di Marcia” from the first act of Sor’s ballet *Hercule et Omphale*, which, according to the title-page annotations of the autograph score, was performed for the first time in Moscow in 1826 for the coronation celebrations of Tsar Nicholas I. The four-hand piano arrangement of the overture from *Cendrillon* is also unknown, whereas a piano score of the ballet music, including the overture, survives; it was allegedly arranged by Sor himself and published in London in 1822.¹⁶ Meissonnier did not act on Sor’s proposal to publish the two arrangements.

The Funeral March was composed for the funeral of Tsar Alexander in March 1826. No copy of the original score for military band has survived, but there are versions

⁷ I am obliged to Luis Briso de Montiano for this suggestion; I had initially assumed that Sor was referring to the *Collection complète des œuvres de Sor*, opp. 1–23, which had first been advertised in the *Journal général d’Annonces* on 28 October 1825 and then again on 6 December 1826.

⁸ The complete list reads: “12 new Etudes [op. 29]; three sets of variations on well-known Airs [opp. 26–28]; a grand Sonata, composed of four movements [op. 25]; and finally eight small pieces [op. 24].”

⁹ Josep M. Mangado, “Fernando Sor (1778–1839): documenti inediti, riflessioni e ipotesi (parte prima),” *il Fronimo* 172 (Oct 2015): 45–54.

¹⁰ Sor, *Méthode pour la guitare* (Paris, 1830), 3.

¹¹ A letter from Napoléon Coste to the Swedish amateur guitarist A. H. Hallberg, written in Paris on 21 December 1876, gives us a glimpse of the situation: “I must tell you, dear Monsieur, that in Sor’s final years he had his scores engraved at his own expense, because the publishers no longer wished to buy his works or to give him a reasonable price.” *Il faut vous dire, cher Monsieur, que dans les dernières années*

de l’existence de Sor il faisait... graver sa musique à ses frais, parce que les éditeurs ne voulaient plus acheter ses œuvres, ou ne voulaient pas lui en donner un prix raisonnable. Napoléon Coste, *späte Briefe 1867–1882*, published by Ingrid and Werner Holzschuh (Hamburg: Privately published, 2014), Letter Ha2.

¹² For a discussion of Sor’s sonatas, see Stanley Yates, “Sor’s guitar sonatas: Form and style,” in *Estudios sobre Fernando Sor – Sor Studies*, ed. Luis Gásser (Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2003), 447–92.

¹³ The two first movements, the *Andante Largo* and *Allegro non troppo*, are so closely linked that they most probably were conceived as a unity.

¹⁴ Both versions are reproduced on facing pages in Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 44–45.

¹⁵ An advertisement in *Journal général d’Annonces* on 7 February 1827 shows that Meissonnier sold the portrait for two francs.

¹⁶ Advertised in the *Morning Post* on 2 July 1822; that is relatively soon after the premiere at the King’s Theatre on 26 March, and while Sor was still in London.

both for solo piano and four-hand piano.¹⁷ In the letter Sor confirms what previously was known only from secondary sources: that Tsarina Alexandra, Nicholas' wife, bestowed a very valuable ring upon him for his services.¹⁸

<C09> Meissonnier's brother was the publisher Joseph Meissonnier, also called Meissonnier *jeune*. Monsieur Miné probably refers to the organist and composer Adolphe Miné (1797–1854).

<C10> The postscript again shows that Meissonnier received music attributed to Sor from various questionable sources. It is, however, impossible to determine what publication Sor has in mind when he claims that Meissonnier had published, as a solo piece, the guitar part of an unknown duo for guitar and flute or violin ("sonate" here probably means just a solo piece without necessarily implying sonata form). The publication would have had to be before op. 24 but after op. 16—a work which had been published in early 1823,¹⁹ that is, during Sor's seven- or eight-month sojourn in Paris before departing for Russia.²⁰ However, none of the works in question has a texture suggesting a missing melody part. Perhaps a possible candidate is one of the three brief pieces from the *Divertissement*, op. 23, which Meissonnier, perhaps on Sor's request, replaced in a later issue of the publication, even though all three, a *Valse*, a *Minuetto*, and an *Allemande*, appear to be quite complete as they stand.²¹

<C11> It is impossible to establish the identity of these two minuets by Mercader. Other "Sor" minuets may also be spurious; according to Jeffery, a printed copy of op. 11, *Deux Thèmes variés et Douze Minuets*, contains a manuscript note to the minuet no. 3, possibly in José de Lira's hand, stating that Francisco María de Sabater claimed to have composed this piece in 1803.²² It is quite possible that the majority if not all of the Spanish-style minuets published by Meissonnier under Sor's name, and which doubtless are early compositions (if by Sor), were acquired from persons other than Sor himself—probably as manuscript copies originating in Spain. In the introduction to his method Sor writes: "Several of these pieces [composed in Spain] would have never been exposed to the public, had I been consulted; but some persons who had copies (most of them incorrect) communicated them to the editor (publisher), who, doing far too much honor to my talents, seized with

pleasure everything that bore my name."²³ Sor's method was published two years after he ended his cooperation with Meissonnier, and the description of the unnamed, over-reaching Parisian *éditeur* (publisher) in this passage fits well with what the letter tells us of Meissonnier's business practices.

* * *

From our perspective it may seem devious for a trusted publisher to engage in such activities. Yet Sor does not show much indignation. The notion of intellectual property rights, which only gained the force of law with the Berne Convention of 1886, was little developed at this time. Copyright legislation in France and England secured the rights of the composer or publisher of a *published* musical work only if it had been correctly registered. The Meissonnier-Sor case was not unique; Joel Sachs has shown that Boosey in London continued to issue pirated editions of Hummel's earlier works after he became the composer's authorized English publisher from 1819 on, apparently without objections from Hummel.²⁴

There are other works by Sor deriving from his Spanish period which Meissonnier probably also acquired indirectly. They include the *Thème varié*, op. 3, the *Grand solo*, op. 14, and *Sonate*, op. 15; perhaps they also encompass the two variation sets included in op. 11. Op. 23 seems also not to have originated with the composer himself. Although they may all be by Sor, the music survives in versions he did not necessarily review or deem satisfactory.

Félicité Hullin and Sor

Although no marriage certificate is known, it is generally assumed that Sor and Félicité Hullin were married, despite their huge age difference. This is corroborated by Sor calling her "my little wife" (*ma petite femme*) both in this letter and in another addressed to Monsieur Albert;²⁵ in the latter she is also mentioned by name. Furthermore, in contemporary Russian sources and later ballet literature, she is regularly named "Hullin-Sor." The present letter implies that in early 1827 they still had a functioning relationship, and that they were planning a journey back to Paris together for a brief sojourn. There is no indication that Sor intended to leave Russia for good, yet we know that he never returned, whereas Félicité, after

17 Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 81; Richard M. Long, "Fernando Sor's Funeral March for Tsar Alexander I," in Gasser, *Sor Studies*, 63–72.

18 See discussion in Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 81.

19 The *Cinquième Fantaisie*, op. 16, was advertised in *Le Miroir des spectacles* on 25 February 1823.

20 For details on this previously little-known Paris period, see Stenstadvoll, "Fernando Sor on the Move."

21 The waltz and minuet had previously been published by Castro de Gistau, also as solo pieces.

22 Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, p. 25. Sabater is also mentioned briefly twice in Josep María Mangado Artigas, *La Guitarra en Cataluña 1769–1939* (London: Tecla Editions, 1998), 11–12.

23 *Sor's Method for the Spanish Guitar*, translated by A. Merrick (London, 1832), 6. Original French text: *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.* (Sor, *Méthode*, 4.)

24 As Hummel had lost the opportunity for English copyright of those early works, he had no complaints about this activity; on the contrary, in a letter of 1824, he wrote that he had never found reason to be dissatisfied with Boosey. (Joel Sachs, "Authentic English and French Editions of J.N. Hummel," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 25 (Summer 1972): 207.)

25 Reproduced in Jeffery, *Fernando Sor*, 79–80.

A NEWLY DISCOVERED LETTER: (cont.)

some months, went back and remained in Russia the rest of her professional life. (She is credited with a profound influence on the Moscow ballet tradition.) So they must have separated. What is more, in the detailed Sor article in Ledhuy's *Encyclopédie Pittoresque* of 1835, considered to be partly autobiographical, there is no mention of her whatsoever, although Sor's journey to Russia and the success he had there with his ballets are amply covered. This cannot be a mere oversight; it rather demonstrates that he no longer wanted to be associated with her in any way.

There is further evidence of this. The Bibliothèque de l'Opera in Paris holds the autograph scores of two Sor ballets: *Alphonse et Léonore ou l'Amant Peintre* and *Hercule et Omphale*. They stem from his Moscow period; *Alphonse et Léonore* has a title-page note, also in Sor's hand, that it was performed there in 1824, while *Hercule et Omphale* has a similar note that it was first performed for the coronation of Tsar Nicholas in 1826. (Sor must have brought the scores with him back to Paris or had them sent when he decided to remain in France.) The title pages of both scores name Mademoiselle Hullin as the choreographer of the ballet, and she is listed among the dancers who performed in the various numbers. It is conspicuous that she is always called "Mademoiselle," which is odd indeed if she was married to Sor. But a closer look reveals that her name has been altered throughout. In **Figure 5** one can clearly see an erasure overwritten by "Mademoiselle," although here and in most other places we can only guess what had been obliterated.



Figure 5

However, in the list of dancers for *Alphonse et Léonore* there is one occasion where the erasure is not overwritten. Here we can discern her original name, "Sor-Hullin," relatively clearly, even in the reproduction shown in **Figure 6**. From this it is possible to establish that, in the other cases, her name was probably originally written as "Made. Sor-Hullin" and that Sor, in order to fill the empty space left by the erasure of "Sor-," wrote "Mademoiselle" out in full instead of using the common abbreviation "Mlle."



Figure 6

A severe split or rupture must have occurred in the Sor-Hullin relationship, probably during those summer months of 1827 before Félicité returned to Russia—a split so distressing that Sor later did all he could to literally blot her name out of his life. Thanks to the new information provided in the letter of 1 April 1827, we now can infer a little more about the timing of the breakup and the circumstances surrounding it.

