

New Information on Sor and Gil Blas

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IN MY ARTICLE for the first issue of *Soundboard Scholar*, “Fernando Sor on the Move in the Early 1820s,”¹ I devoted some space to Sor’s contribution to the five-act operatic drama *Gil Blas*, which was premiered in London on August 15, 1822, with music by Sor and a certain Matthew Moss. Only the overture and six songs—two of them by Sor—survive, but I raised the possibility that Sor could nevertheless have played a more significant role. New information shows that this was not the case.

In an extended review of the play, published the day after the premiere in the London newspaper *The Sun* (not to be confused with the present-day tabloid UK newspaper of the same name), it is clearly stated that Sor indeed wrote only two songs for *Gil Blas*. *The Sun* was added to the digital British Newspaper Archive only after I wrote my article. The relevant passages read as follows (see **figure 1**):

ENGLISH OPERA HOUSE.—A new Opera, under the title of “*Gil Blas*, at 17, 25, 52,” and, of course, derived from that admirable French Novel which, with *Don Quixotte* and *Tom Jones*, do honour to the countries that produced them, and will last as long as the respective languages in which they were written, as well as in translations into all others of the civilized world, was brought forward at this Theatre last night. . . .

. . . The music is chiefly composed by a Mr. Moss. We never heard of his name before, but as it is in general pleasing he will probably raise it into notice. Two of the songs were composed by Mr. F. SOR, who being himself a Spaniard and an admirable performer on the Spanish guitar, has founded them upon the musical taste of his country.²

Oslo, 23 November 2022

1 *Soundboard Scholar*, no. 1 (2015), 16–25. Now available online at <https://doi.org/10.56902/SBS.2015.1.7>.

2 *The Sun*, Friday, August 16, 1822.



THE THEATRE.
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&c. The music is chiefly composed by a Mr. Moss. We never heard of his name before, but as it is in general pleasing he will probably raise it into notice. Two of the songs were composed by Mr. F. Sor, who being himself a Spaniard and an admirable performer on the Spanish guitar, has founded them upon the musical taste of his country. Of the acting in general we cannot speak too highly. Miss K... was really the...

Figure 1 The masthead and two snippets from *The Sun*, published the day after the premiere of *Gil Blas* at the English Opera House (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).



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