

FROM THE SOUNDBOARD ARCHIVE

*Athénaïs Paulian's  
Airs and Variations, op. 1*

The Guitarist's Album

MATANYA OPHEE (1991)

TWO SUBJECTS ARE CURRENTLY IN THE FOREFRONT: the celebration of the two-hundred-year anniversary of Mozart's death, and recycling. My column this time deals with both. Mozart never wrote for the guitar. Themes from operas by Mozart, however, were fertile ground for many guitarists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. No need, I hope, to mention the variations on "Das klinget so herrlich" from the *Magic Flute*, the theme used by Fernando Sor in his famous opus 9, of which, at last count, there were more than a hundred recordings. The number of performances in recent years does not seem to abate, even with incessant exhortations by several writers that it is time to lay this one item of rent-a-program to rest. In the spring issue of 1982 of this magazine, I published in this column another version of the same tune, in pretty much the same melodic and harmonic treatment applied by Sor to the Mozart theme. This was the *Rondo Allegro*, published by François Molino in the several editions of his method. In the preface to that column, I gave examples of other treatments of the theme, notably, the one by the Parisian guitarist Athénaïs Paulian. The musical quotation I presented at the time from Paulian's opus 1 was much reduced in size, and one needed a good magnifying glass to read it. Allow me then, in celebration of Mozart, to recycle the Paulian work in its entirety.

The work consists of themes that were popular in the early nineteenth century. They are: the same theme of "Das klinget so herrlich" from *The Magic Flute*; a theme by the French violinist Jacques-Pierre-Joseph Rode (1774–1830), a friend of Boccherini, Boieldieu, and Beethoven; and two popular Italian tunes of the time: "Sul margine d'un rio" and "La biondina." These themes were used by many guitarists of the time, including Giuliani, Gernlein, Carulli, et al. The particular grouping of these four themes as used by Paulian reflects their use by one of the reigning sopranos of the time, the Italian Angelica Catalani (1780–1849), known for her ability to perform vocal variations on given themes. The title page of the work reads as follows:

Airs et Variations / chantés par Madame Catalani / arrangés pour/ Guitare seule / et dédiés à son frère / par / ATHENAIS PAULIAN. / Op:1. Prix 1 Fr. 50 cs. / Bonn chez N. Simrock. / Propriété de l'éditeur. / [Pl. no.] 2529

A copy of this work is in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, under call number x4821. The work can be dated as circa 1829. It belongs in the same grouping of plate numbers given by Simrock in that year to the several compositions of François de Fossa.

The identity of Athénaïs Paulian is not established. Apparently, she and her brother Eugène, to whom this work is dedicated, were part of the in-group of guitarists belonging to the Sor-Aguado circle in Paris. Sor dedicated to her his opus 33, *Trois pièces de société*; Aguado dedicated to her his opus 3, *Huit petites pièces*; and her brother, Eugène Paulian, dedicated his own opus 2, variations on “Gentil housard,” to Sophie Vautrin, who was later to marry François de Fossa. Undoubtedly, these people knew each other well.

One is tempted to read “Paulian” as a typical surname of Armenian extraction. This is, of course, pure speculation. The similarity to Armenian surnames may be entirely coincidental. Unfortunately, the number of published pieces by the siblings Paulian is quite limited. Hence, they have not earned the attention of scholars who deal with early nineteenth-century guitarists and with women guitarists of the time in particular.

It is hard to determine if the virtuosity required to perform these pieces is indicative of Mlle Paulian’s own command of the guitar or of her craftsmanship in portraying the vocal talents of Madame Catalani.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, the work is well on a par and perhaps even superior in many ways to Mauro Giuliani’s own treatment of this group.<sup>2</sup> Some performance suggestions:

- a Both the staccato sign given as a dot and the *martelé* given as wedge, preceding or following a left-hand slur, indicate simply that these notes are to be played *detaché* by the right-hand fingers. They do not indicate staccato in the sense that is generally understood today.
- b Note the obvious misprint in the fingering of the first arpeggio on page 5, line 7.
- c Good judgement should be applied to the execution of appoggiaturas. The symbology used, a grace note with one or two flags, is used indiscriminately to indicate both long and short appoggiaturas. What matters in music of this period is not the graphic shape of the symbol, but the musical context in which it is found.



1 Excuse me, but I am unable to conceive of *craftswomanship* as a word in the English language.  
2 See Heck catalogue, WoO G-3 and G-4, published by Ricordi, Milan, no. 132095, edited by Germano Cavazzoli. [For the catalogue mentioned, see Thomas F. Heck, *Mauro Giuliani: A Life for the Guitar*, GFA Refereed Monographs 2 (Austin: Guitar Foundation of America, 2013), Kindle. Giuliani’s WoO G-3 and G-4 consist of arrangements of numbers from Rossini’s *Semiramide*.—Ed.]

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Airs et Variations

*chantés par Madame Catalani*

arrangés pour

Guitare seule

*et dédiés à son frère*

par

ATHENAIS PAULIAN.

Op. 1.

Prix 1 Fr. 50 C.

*Se vend chez M. Simrock.*

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9599.

Andante maestoso.

N° 1

Tema di Mozart.

The main theme is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked 'Andante maestoso'. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Var: 1.

The first variation is written in G major and 3/4 time, consisting of seven staves of music. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The variation features more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and triplets. The notation includes various ornaments and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Guitare .

3.

Var: 2.

Musical score for Variation 2. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef guitar melody in D major, starting with a forte dynamic and featuring various articulations like accents and slurs. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in the same key and time signature, starting with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and providing a harmonic foundation with chords and moving bass lines.

Var: 3.

Musical score for Variation 3. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef guitar melody in D major, characterized by a continuous sixteenth-note pattern. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in the same key and time signature, also featuring a sixteenth-note pattern in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line. The score includes various dynamics such as mezzo-forte (mf) and piano (p), and includes articulation marks like accents and slurs.

ad libitum

Andante.

Nº 2  
Tema di Rode.

Var: 1.





6.

Guitare.

Nº 3

Andante

Tema.

Sul Margine  
d'un rio.

First system of musical notation for the main theme, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The melody is written on a single staff, while the accompaniment is shown as chords on a guitar-style staff below.

Second system of musical notation for the main theme, continuing the melody and accompaniment from the first system.

Third system of musical notation for the main theme, including a triplet of eighth notes in the melody.

Fourth system of musical notation for the main theme, concluding the first part of the piece.

Var: 1.

First system of musical notation for the first variation, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is more rhythmic than the main theme.

Second system of musical notation for the first variation, featuring a complex rhythmic pattern.

Third system of musical notation for the first variation, continuing the rhythmic development.

Fourth system of musical notation for the first variation, including a trill in the melody.

Fifth system of musical notation for the first variation, concluding the variation.

Minore un poco più Adagio

Var: 2.

First system of musical notation for the second variation, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature. The dynamics are marked 'mf'.

Second system of musical notation for the second variation, concluding the piece.

1 | *mf*

The first system of musical notation for guitar, consisting of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with various rhythmic values and articulation marks. The bottom staff contains a bass line with chords and rhythmic accompaniment. A first ending bracket is present in the top staff, and the dynamic marking *mf* is indicated.

Più mosso

Var: 3.

The second system of musical notation, labeled "Var: 3.", begins with the tempo instruction "Più mosso". This system and the following staves feature a highly rhythmic and technically demanding piece of music. The notation is primarily in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of multiple staves of music, including a main melodic line and several accompaniment staves. The music is characterized by frequent sixteenth-note patterns, slurs, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the bottom staff.

Andantino .

Nº 4

Tema.

La Biondina.

Var: 1.

Var: 2.

The musical score consists of ten staves of music. The first staff is marked with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 6/8 time signature. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the first staff. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Fingering numbers '7' and '3' are written below the notes. The piece concludes with a *fine* marking at the end of the tenth staff.