

The Source of Luigi Sagrini's "Thème de Racio Calupo"

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IN MY RECENT *Soundboard Scholar* article,¹ I briefly discussed Luigi Sagrini's opus 4, a set of variations on a theme of "Racio Calupo," dedicated to Luigi Legnani. Sagrini began publishing in 1824 at age fifteen, with his opus 4 published in 1825, the year Legnani was in Paris. "Racio Calupo" is not a recognizable song, opera or composer, so what is it? And why would Sagrini dedicate a work to Legnani yet base it on an unknown composer or composition? I will outline a possible solution.

The title page of the work reads as follows:

GRANDES VARIATIONS / pour / Guitare, / SUR UN THÈME DE RACIO
CALUPO / Dédiées / à Mr. L. Legnani / par / L. SAGRINI / Opera: 4

The original announcement of its publication in *Journal général d'annonce de musique, estampes, livres nouveaux, etc.*, November 11, 1825, lists it only as "Op. 4. *Grandes variations pour guitare seule*," with no mention of the theme (1).

— SAGRINI. (Luigi) *Deux mélanges* pour deux guitares, en deux livres. 1er. livre, 4 fr. 50 c. — 2^e. dito, 4 fr. 50 c.
— Id. Op. 4. *Grandes variations* pour guitare seule. — 4 fr. 50 c.
— Id. Op. 5. *Cinq divertissemens* pour guitare seule. — 4 fr. 50 c.
A Paris, chez H. Lemoine, r. de l'Echelle-St.-Honoré. — 9.

The 1827 *Catalogue des ouvrages composant le fonds de musique de Henry Lemoine* repeats a similar shortened title, again without mentioning the theme: "Grandes variations" (2).

SAGRINI. Op. 4. *Grandes variations*. 4 50
— Op. 5. *Cinq divertissemens* pour la
guitare accordée en mi... 4 50

¹ Robert Coldwell, "Luigi Legnani's Missing Opus 9," *Soundboard Scholar* 8 (2022), doi.org/10.56902/SBS.2022.8.10.

The 1861 *Catalogue de Henry Lemoine* adds an interesting variation on the name: “Variations sur un thème de Bacio-Galupo.” First to note is the surprising fact that Lemoine would still be selling copies of this work thirty-six years after its publication. Perhaps it was not very popular and they were left with unsold copies for decades. After much research, only one copy has been located. At first it seemed that “Bacio-Galupo” might be a spelling correction from the original title page, but no references to composers or music with this spelling were found (3).

3

SAGRINI (L.). Op. 4. Variations sur un thème de	
Bacio-Galupo.	4 50
— Op. 5. 5 divertissements pour la guitare	
accordée en <i>mi majeur</i>.	4 50

I discussed the name with Nicoletta Confalone, and we decided that no sense could be made of it as an Italian song title, even if it had been misspelled. Nicoletta suggested the possibility of it being a misspelling of Bacigalupo, a common family name in Genoa. A few musicians with this name are known, among them Giuseppe Bacigalupo (1827–1912) and Nicolò Bacigalupo (1837–1904). Even though they could not have written the theme, one of their ancestors might have.

Two newspaper announcements were found stating that music by a Bacigalupo was available in Lausanne and Lyon in 1821. Sagrini was performing in Lausanne in 1821 and Lyon in 1823 (4, 5).

4

9. Musique, à très-bon compte, récemment arrivée d'Italie, pour chant, piano, violon, violoncelle, flûte et guitare, de Mayer, Cimarosa, Paisello, Bacigalupo, Steibelt, Mozart et Rossini, chez Félix Tessaro, marchand d'estampes, rue de Bourg, n°. 39; le dit est toujours bien assorti en estampes, vues et cartes routières de la Suisse, ainsi que cartes géographiques de tous les pays d'Europe; crayons, couleurs, et dessins modernes pour broderie.

Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, October 2, 1821.

5

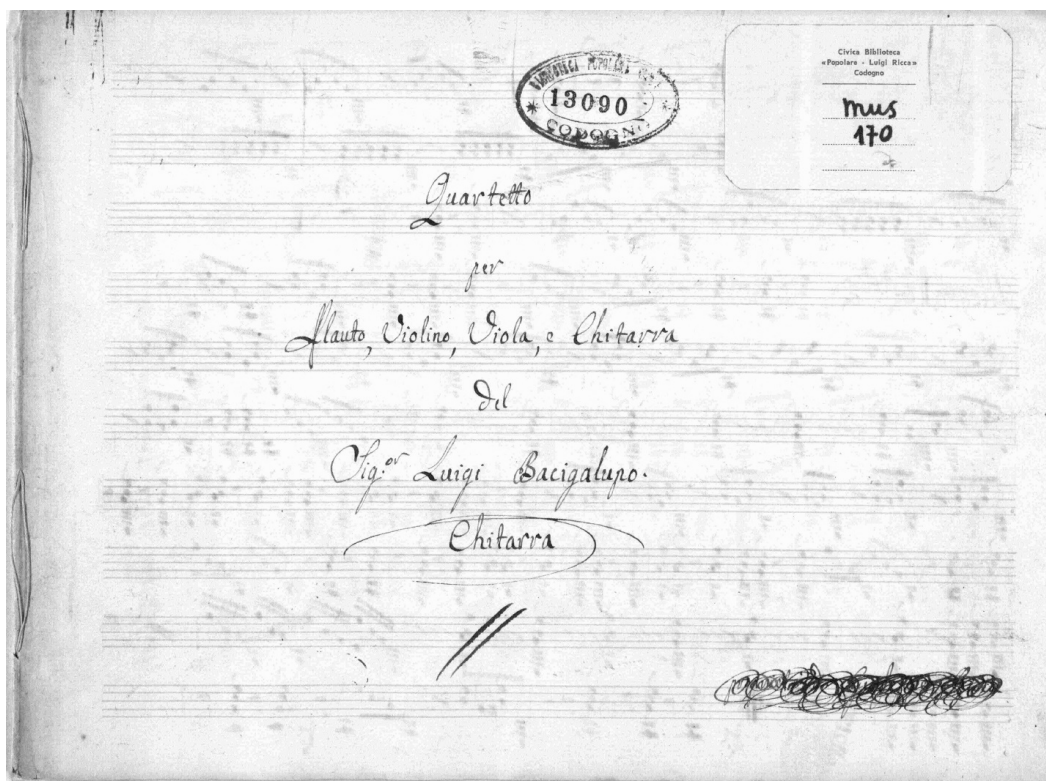
Musique italienne à vendre au rabais de la moitié du prix, savoir: duo pour violon et alto, par Mayer; scène et rondo pour le chant, par Cimarosa; quatuor pour violon, alto, flûte et guitare, par Bacigalupo; trio pour piano, violon et violoncelle, par Mozart; fantaisie pour piano, par Rossini: s'adresser à M^{me}. Lioger et Comp^{te}, marchands papetiers, rue de la Barre, n.º 1.

Le moniteur judiciaire de Lyon, November 28, 1821.

With this information in mind, I located a manuscript quartet with the same instrumentation by one Luigi Bacigalupo. It appears to have been copied by Giuseppe Ricca and is located in the Biblioteca civica “Popolare—Luigi Ricca” in Codogno,

Italy.² Nothing is known about Luigi Bacigalupo, and the edition announced in the newspapers has not been located. Indeed, very little information about Giuseppe Ricca is known. The dates 1819 and 1825 are written on some of his manuscripts in the library, and his only known published work can be dated to 1825 (Ricordi, plate 2291). This places the publication of Bacigalupo's Quartet within Ricca's active years, making it possible that the manuscript could have been copied from the published edition. The handwritten title on the guitar part (6) reads:

Quartetto / per / Flauto, Violino, Viola, e Chitarra / del / Sig[n]or Luigi
Bacigalupo.



6

The theme in the Bacigalupo work, while not identical, is very similar to what Sagrini used. It is a very long work, with Adagio and Allegro introductory sections taking up one third of the work before the theme. This is followed by four variations, in each of which a different instrument takes the melody. The guitar part of the second variation offers the best comparison to Sagrini's version of the theme (7).

² A double DVD of the digitized collection is available from Atelier Chitarristico Laudense, atelierchitarristicolaudense.it/publicazioni.html.



A likely explanation is that Sagrini obtained the published version of the Bacigalupo work while performing in Lausanne or Lyon prior to his arrival in Paris in 1824, and since that time had been working on a transcription. The music in this case may not have had any connection to Legnani, and the dedication was either honoring Legnani as a mentor or simply taking advantage of his name for promotional purposes. The former makes more sense, perhaps, considering that Legnani dedicated two of his editions to Sagrini during the same time period. Sagrini certainly should have known the correct spelling of the composer, so the mistake on the title page was likely the fault of the publisher or engraver. Assuming that it was the initial print run that was still being sold in 1861, there would have been no financial incentive to update the title page. Unfortunately, researching the source of the theme has not provided any new information on the relationship between Legnani and Sagrini.

An engraving of the Bacigalupo Quartet and a facsimile of Sagrini's opus 4 are presented with this letter.³



³ These engravings may be found on the article's abstract page, digitalcommons.du.edu/sbs/vol9/iss1/10/, under the heading "Additional Files."—Ed.

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