

Fernando Sor — Second Sonata for Guitar (op. 15b)

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Allegro moderato [$\text{♩} = \text{c.}132\text{-}138$]

The musical notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The next measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The third measure features a quarter rest, a quarter note E5, and a quarter note F5, with a dynamic marking of [f] below the staff. The fourth measure is a full measure chord consisting of G4, B4, and D5, with a dynamic marking of [fn) above the staff. The fifth measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4, with a dynamic marking of [p] above the staff. The sixth measure is a full measure chord consisting of G4, B4, and D5, with a dynamic marking of [p] above the staff. The seventh measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. The eighth measure is a full measure chord consisting of G4, B4, and D5. The ninth measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. The tenth measure is a full measure chord consisting of G4, B4, and D5. The eleventh measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. The twelfth measure is a full measure chord consisting of G4, B4, and D5.

- I. Text
- I. Meissonnier corrected version
- III. Alternative realizations
- IV. Castro version

Fernando Sor - Second Sonata for Guitar (op. 15b)

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This article (and online edition) is based largely on discussion contained in my extended essay dealing with all of Sor's sonatas— "Sor's Guitar Sonatas: Form and Style" — written for the *Sor Studies* project, a forthcoming, multi-volume collection of scholarly articles, edited by Luis Gasser, to be published by the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales a the Universidad Complutense, Madrid.

Introduction

Though Fernando Sor is widely recognized as the principal guitar composer of the classic-romantic period, his catalogue is relatively modest in terms of large-scale works for the guitar - a result, at least partly, of the considerable energies he expended on vocal music and the grander genres of opera and ballet combined, no doubt, with the demands of his publishers for *marketable* items of guitar music. Consequently, Sor's output of sonatas— the principal *compositional* genre for instrumentalists of the time — was sporadic and totaled only four named works (along with a fantasia in sonata form). Nevertheless, these works, which span Sor's compositional career, are ambitious compositions which allow us a glimpse of their composer at two very different stages of his development.

The op. 15 sonata— a single-movement work falling at the beginning of Sor's career, and his most modest effort in the genre — is a lively, attractive work, and one from which springs, with a little digging on the part of the interpreter, the excitement of the Italian opera overture.

In this article, I discuss the early publications of Sor's second sonata, and their implications for a modern edition; Sor's compositional and stylistic models; a conjectural date of composition; and performance and interpretation for the modern guitarist.

Early Publications

Although multiple editions of this work published during Sor's lifetime survive, two essentially distinct versions emerge: a presumably early version published as "Sonata seconda" by the Spanish expatriot Salvador Castro de Gistau in Paris between c. 1802 and 1814;¹ and a revised version, first published by Antoine Meissonnier as "Sonate" at sometime between c.1816 and 1821,² also in Paris. A transitional version (apparently unknown to modern scholars) also survives; it appeared in a "Collection de Morceaux Choisis des Meilleurs Autuers Espagnoles et Italiens pour Guitarre ou Lyre, Rédigée par un Espagnol" as "Sonata di Sor," in Paris sometime between c.1814 and 1821 (publisher unknown).

Since we know nothing of Sor's involvement with Castro, nor do we know anything about the authority of his editions of Sor's music. Early guitar works of Sor's circulated in Spain in a variety of manuscript copies, some of which have survived to the present day but none of which appear to be autographs (one such manuscript of the work, titled "Allegro," is presently archived at the monastery in Montserrat). The work could therefore quite easily have been published without Sor's involvement (especially since Sor was still in Spain when the Castro edition appeared, in Paris).

We can be more confident of the authority of the revised version published by Meissonnier, since the composer, no longer in Spain, provided this publisher with numerous works, both old and newly composed. Nevertheless, the first appearance of the Meissonnier revised version contained many errors and the piece was reissued during the same period (c.1816-1821) and with the same plate number (110) in a corrected version. Although the first page of each are identical, the remaining pages were re-engraved and corrected. Sor presumably played a role in these corrections, and this second Meissonnier version may be regarded as the most reliable source. This same corrected edition was published again by Meissonnier, in partnership with Heugal, from the same plates, sometime after c.1839.

A further edition published during Sor's lifetime appeared in Germany, issued by Simrock around 1825 (plate no. 2310); it is in this edition we first encounter the erroneous designation of the work as "op. 15"— which in turn has led to the work being cataloged as "opus 15b" by modern scholars. Unfortunately, the Simrock edition was derived from the first, error-ridden version of Meissonnier, though the German editors did attempt to correct some of the more obvious errors.

The work was also likely published in Spain in a relatively early version which hasn't survived: in October and November of 1806 the *Gazetta de Barcelona* advertised for sale in Madrid a "Gran Sinfonia" and "una sonata," both for solo guitar by Sor.³ The "Gran Sinfonia" would appear to be Sor's *Sonata prima* (as it was called in the Castro edition), also known as *Gran Solo*,

op. 14 (as published by Meissonnier): a manuscript copy of the piece titled "Gran Sinfonia" is housed at the monastery in Montserrat. It is therefore reasonable to guess that the "Sonata seconda" (Sonata, op. 15) and the work advertised as "una sonata" are one and the same. Additionally, it seems unlikely that a further sonata by Sor existed, since Meissonnier assigned the majority of the first 20 opus numbers to Sor's backcatalogue before concentrating on newly composed works (when the back-catalogue had presumably been exhausted). Surely, neither Sor nor his Parisian publisher would have left a major earlier work unpublished.

The surviving sources of the work, along with their principal differences, are as follows:

Manuscript: Monastery of Montserrat. Titled "Allegro"— an apparently early version of the piece in an unknown hand.

Source A: Castro (Paris, c.1802-14) (plate no. 47)

"Sonata seconda pour la guitare, composée par Fernando Sor," in Salvador Castro's periodical *Journal de Musique Etrangère pour la Guitare ou* ("Journal of Foreign Music for the Guitar or Lyre"). Judging by the plate number (47), Castro may have published this work before he published the Sonata prima (plate no. 50). This version contains several extra measures not found in any later versions, along with numerous small differences in the detail of chord voicing, ornamentation, and notated texture (of which it is the most polyphonically complete representation of all sources).

Source B: Anon (Paris, c.1814-18) (plate no. 81)

"Collection de Morceaux Choisis des Meilleurs Autuers Espagnoles et Italiens pur Guitarre ou Lyre, Rédigée par un Espagnol," as "Sonata di Sor," published between c.1814 and 1821 (publisher unknown). This version is marked "Allegretto," like the Castro version, has the same coda, and contains several pitch differences otherwise found only in the Castro version. It does not have the extra material of Castro, nor the same ornaments or beaming, and has much in common with the presumably later Meissonnier versions. It is significantly close to these versions as to suggest that Sor may have supplied the manuscript himself. Certainly, the revisions present are more of a compositional nature than of an editorial one.

Source C: Meissonnier (Paris, c.1816-21) (plate no. 110)

Although Sor almost certainly provided the manuscript for this edition, numerous errors found their way into print, including the omission of the final coda. It is interesting to note that the notation of this version (and all subsequent ones) is actually less polyphonic than the Castro version. The tempo now appears as "Allegro moderato," as it does in all subsequent versions.

Source D: Meissonnier (Paris, c. 1816-21) (plate no. 110, but with pages 23 newly engraved)

This version corrects virtually all of the errors found in source C, and reinstates the coda (though a slightly different one than that given in Castro or source B).

Source E: Meissonnier-Heugal (Paris, after 1839) (plate no. H. & C. 110)

An exact reprinting of the corrected Meissonnier version, source D, from the same plates.

Source F: Simrock (Bonn and Cologne: c.1824-5) (plate no. 2310)

Based on the first Meissonnier version (Meissonnier sold many of Sor's pieces to this publisher), with an editorial attempt to correct a few of the more obvious errors.

A New Modern edition

Two versions of the piece are presented here: the presumably early Castro (source A) edition and the corrected Meissonnier version (source D). The latter, however, may be regarded as the more definitive version of the piece, since it can only have been informed by a corrected manuscript provided by the composer. It is not recommended that players mix together in performance passages from what are essentially two quite different versions of the piece. Some of the notational clarity of the Castro edition has been applied to the Meissonnier edition (and indicated) however, principally in the separation and realization of durations and rests in the lower voice (otherwise these are often indeterminate, sharing a stem with an inner voice -- see the development section, for example). Small differences (principally with Source B), which might appropriately inform a modern performance of the piece are provided as footnotes to both versions. Though none of the early editions contains a single dynamic indication, a few obvious markings have been supplied editorially (see **Interpretation and Performance**, below).

Style and Composition

Sor's op. 15 sonata is a single movement work modeled after the Italian opera overture of the 1780s and 90s. The style was most widely represented at the time by such figures as Spontini, Paisiello and, above all, Cimarosa— composers whose music

Sor almost certainly heard during his involvement with the Barcelona opera house (in 1797, the nineteen year old Sor had his opera *Telemaco* produced there). In common with Sor's early style, the stylistic features of the Italian overture (at the time termed "sinfonia") is characterized by very direct, nondevelopmental forms in which sections are defined by clear points of arrival (rather than seamlessly connected). The opening typically consists of a short head motive followed by an immediate launch into a lively first theme consisting of parallel thirds (in the violins) supported by a repeated note bass; compare the opening measures of both Sor's *Sonata prima* and *Sonata seconda* (opp 14 and 15b):

Both follow an identical scheme of a short assertive opening "head motive," followed by parallel "string" thirds over repeated-note bass (*trommelbass*), followed by dialog texture.

Phrase groupings in the Italian overture style, in common with Sor's style in the early sonatas, are symmetrical and periodic with literal repetition of phrases and periods as the principal means of developing sections. Transitions are highly rhythmic, and are usually built on one or more commonly used motives. In Sor's op. 15 sonata, we find prominent use of two such operative motives. The first is a figure ubiquitous to the overture since its earliest days (Pergolesi's overture to *Guglielmo*, Naples, 1731, for example, is based almost entirely upon it):

Sor uses this figure at each transition, in both codas, and to announce the "development" section.

The second figure is somewhat hidden in, for Sor, uncharacteristically imprecise notation:

This motif is one of the most used clichés of the Italian opera overture, from the early overtures of such Neapolitan composers as Lampugnani to those of Paisiello and Cimarosa, and beyond. The figure is also found in many symphonies of the time, including some of Boccherini's, and is a particular feature of Pleyel's style, appearing with great frequency in his transitions (it is also used often by Mozart, though not by Haydn). (The relevance of all this will become clear in due course) The figure is notated unambiguously in both Sor's *Sonata prima* (*Gran solo*, op. 14) and *Grand sonata*, op. 22, by the way.

A further feature of the overture first transition (i.e., the rhythmic passage that "loosens" the tonic key and moves to the secondary theme area) is that it doesn't actually modulate but proceeds on static harmony - dominant becomes tonic (rare in the high-classical symphony and other highly-developed sonata forms); the new dominant is reached, but is not reinforced by its own dominant. The relatively weak arrival at the secondary area allows for the extension of the secondary theme group: the first theme of the secondary key-area is followed with a more emphatic second transition that does now create a well marked arrival on the new dominant; this is especially the plan used by Cimarosa in his longer overtures, and is employed by Sor in all three early sonatas (opp. 14, 15b and 22).

In the Cimarosa overture style this transition is followed by a second thematic statement in the new key, usually defined rhythmically rather than melodically. In the *Sonata seconda*, this second theme is similarly defined by its rhythmic level and texture, as is confirmed when the material is restated in the recapitulation with only vague pitch resemblance:

Theme B2

60

3

153

glissez

The development section of the Italian overture typically begins with a striking, "gratuitous" modulation, functioning as an area of contrasting tonality rather than as a place to develop previously heard material. Compare the opening development keys in Sor's early sonatas: in op. 14 the dominant A major moves to a startling D \flat -major; in op. 15b we move from G major to the very odd B \flat -major; and in op. 22 we move from G major to E \flat -ma (actually a standard "operatic" modulation to the dominant-Neapolitan key).

Sor's early sonatas are not without their peculiarities—features that suggest an ambitious and intuitive young composer not yet fully in control of his forms. In op. 15, the theme that follows the first thematic period re-enters on the tonic (at m.22) before moving off again to the dominant, having the curious effect of neither closing the first theme nor moving away from it. The core development key—the lowered-seventh—is very unusual. This tonality is entirely unrelated to the large-scale harmonic structure of the movement, not functioning (in the customary manner) as a dominant to the relative major of the tonic-minor, nor as any kind of Neapolitan dominant (i.e., bII to V or V / V). Sor does not resolve this tonality (as, for example, bII of V / V / V in the large scale tonic), but instead moves to the supertonic (the large-scale tonic minor) and a tonic-minor prolongation of the large-scale dominant.

On a more positive note, Sor's early sonatas contain distinct motivic relationships between the various structural areas of the form, as well as a very strong preference for repeated-note themes. Although melodic repeated-note motives are hardly unique to Sor, his apparent method of associating them, probably intuitively absorbed from the Italian overture, is a quite individual characteristic of his early sonata style.

Like the first sonata, an anticipatory retransition "leads in" to the recapitulation with motives adopted from the forthcoming (first) theme itself:

m. 8

110

m. 5

A

First theme motive (b) appears prominently in the secondary theme area of the exposition (mm.37 and 45) and the recapitulation (mm.142 and 150):

Theme A

2

(b)

Theme B2 (exposition)

36

b)

Theme B2 (recapitulation)

141

b)

The core development episode appears to be built on a low-voice presentation of the opening motive of the piece (in the later editions this is somewhat hidden in the uncharacteristically imprecise notational texture):

The image shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Theme A' and contains a melodic line starting with a first finger fingering (1) on a quarter note. The middle staff is labeled 'DEVELOPMENT Castro' and starts at measure 93, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'Meissonnier' and starts at measure 85, showing a similar rhythmic pattern. Brackets and dashed lines connect the development passages back to the original theme's notes.

And a second development episode relates to the second theme of the dominant area:

The image shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Theme B2' and starts at measure 53, featuring a melodic line with eighth notes. The middle staff is labeled 'DEVELOPMENT (with restemming)' and starts at measure 98, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'ALL EDITIONS' and shows the same rhythmic pattern as the development staff. Brackets and dashed lines connect the development passages back to the original theme's notes.

We have already mentioned Sor's prominent use of overture motives at the structural points of this work.

When might Sor have composed this piece? Since publication dates establish only an upper limit for the date of composition, in the absence of dated autograph manuscripts, letters, or other compelling evidence, the precise dating of the piece remains a matter of conjecture. All we know for certain, is that it must have been written before 1814—the earliest verifiable date of publication. But the work was surely composed much earlier than that. The likelihood of earlier publication in Spain, as advertised in the *Gazetta de Barcelona*, would place the work before 1806, while the stylistic details outlined above would indicate that the work *could* easily have been composed during the time of Sor's assimilation of the Italian opera overture style — that is, during his Barcelona period of around 1796–1800 (as mentioned above, Sor's opera in the Italian style, *Telemaco*, was produced in 1797). There is one further bit of information, provided by Sor himself to Ledhuy and Bertini, compilers of the *Encyclopedie Pittoresque de la Musique* (Paris, 1835). In the extended and detailed article on Sor it is mentioned that Sor did not dare to compose an overture in the style of Haydn for *Telemaco* in 1797, but that he has begun a study of string quartets by Haydn and Pleyel before leaving Madrid. That is, before 1800. While clear elements of Austro-French style are found in Sor's op. 22 sonata (particularly those of the Italianate Viennese composer Pleyel), no such traits are present in the first two sonatas. In other words, if Sor composed the first two sonatas *after* his study of Haydn and Pleyel, neither work shows any signs of it. It is therefore plausible to place the two sonatas before 1800, written at the latest by a student composer in his very early twenties.

Interpretation and Performance

Without hearing Sor play, and without detailed evidence relating to his performance style, it obviously is impossible to state anything certain about the way he intended his music to be performed. Taking Sor's *oeuvre* as a whole, however, in addition to certain comments found in his *Method*, it is clear that Sor did not perform with a brilliant virtuosity. His playing must surely have been light, graceful, and tasteful. One imagines a refined phrasing supported by a beautiful sound, rather than speed supported by volume (virtuosity in the modern sense). With this in mind, and considering both the timbre and scale

length of Sor's guitars, I enjoy playing Sor's music, on a modern guitar, with a capo at the first fret (an instant forte piano). This can be quite revealing, and is certainly likely to inform an interpretation, even if a player intends to perform the piece without the use of a capo.

Sor rarely provided dynamics markings in his pieces; the op. 15 sonata contains none at all. While we can only guess at the reason, it is obvious that this music is not intended to be played *mezzo-forte* throughout! (Sor probably felt that dynamics appropriate to the style were obvious). In the op. 15 sonata, dynamics implied by the form and style are fairly obvious, and have been supplied editorially in my online edition. Dynamics resulting from natural phrasing are the prerogative of the performer.

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END NOTES

¹ For information relating to the dating of the various publications of Sor's music I have relied upon Brian Jeffery *Sor* (1994), and research provided by Erik Stenstadvoll (Norwegian State Academy of Music). See Erik Stenstadvoll, "A Bibliographical Study of Antoine Meissonnier's Periodicals for Voice and Guitar, 1811-27." *Notes*, vol. 58 no. 1.

² This dating, which conflicts with that of 1817-22 given in Jeffery (1994), is based upon information provided by Erik Stenstadvoll (op. cit.), whose research into Meissonnier suggests that the publisher occupied the address Rue Montmartre No. 182 (the address indicated on the publication) from May 1815 until, at the latest, April 1821.

³ The "Gran Sinfonia" was advertised on November 1, "una sonata" on October 4. Mangado *La Guitarra en Cataluña, 1769-1939*, 288.

Fernanando SOR
(1778-1839)

Sonate, Op. 15b (Meissonnier)

Paris, ca. 1816-21

[enhanced notation]

Edited by Stanley Yates

Allegro moderato [$\text{♩} = \text{c.}132\text{-}138$]

The musical score is presented in a single system with a treble clef and common time. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff (measures 1-3) features a melody with a forte dynamic marking [f] and a fortissimo marking [ff]. The second staff (measures 4-7) continues the melody with a fortissimo marking [ff]. The third staff (measures 8-11) includes a first ending bracket and a fortissimo marking [ff]. The fourth staff (measures 12-15) contains a first ending bracket and a fortissimo marking [f]. The fifth staff (measures 16-18) features a first ending bracket and a fortissimo marking [f]. The sixth staff (measures 19-21) includes a first ending bracket and a fortissimo marking [f]. The seventh staff (measures 22-25) contains a first ending bracket and a fortissimo marking [f]. The eighth staff (measures 26) concludes the system with a fortissimo marking [f]. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

mm1-2. All: chords are voiced differently in the recap, at mm 114-5.

mm. **Castro**: all grace notes are slashed; other sources are inconsistent. Slashed graces almost certainly are intended.

mm7-8. See "Alternative Readings."

SOR – Sonate, op. 15b

m37: B has same notation as m45;
Castro has:

m43. Castro:

m47. Castro:

m52. Castro repeats a version of mm48-51 here.

m57. Castro has F here.

m58. Castro and B have A# here.

m60. **Castro** (m64), **B** and **C**: m64. **Castro** (m68):

m70. **Castro** has four extra measures inserted here (Castro measure numbers now eight ahead of those given here).

m82. **Castro** (m90) continues the sequence with F in the lower voice.
m85. See "Alternative Readings."

m86-96. Throughout this section the durations of the lower voice have been derived from the **Castro** edition. In all other sources these values are indeterminate.

SOR – Sonate, op. 15b

87 VIII⁶

90

93 V⁶ VIII⁶ fn) 3

96 VI⁶ VII⁶ fn) 4 1 4 0

99 -4 0 2 2 2 3 4 1

102 4 4 4 3 2 1 -1

105 III 3 fn) 1 4 2 3 3

108 [p] fn) 2 (h) 4 1

111 III⁶ fn) 1 2 3

m95. **Castro** and **B** have D in the lower voice here.

mm98-108. **All:** original notation is single-line.

m105. B-natural is the correct pitch here, as given in **Castro** and **B**. Misread as b-flat in C and E; mis-"corrected" in D and F as a natural placed on the following note (d).

m110-3. The rests in the upper part appear in m111 of **D** only.

m114-5. These chords are voiced differently the first time around, at mm1-2.

115

119

123

127

131

134

137

141

144

m115:

m120-1. See "Alternative Readings."

mm134 & 135. Upper parts rests from Castro.

mm142 & 150. Castro (m150 & 158):

m144. Castro (m162):

SOR – Sonate, op. 15b

m150. See footnote for m142.

m154. Source C:

m161-66. Castro (mm169-74) and source B provide a charming version of this passage. See "alternative Readings."

mm168 & 170. Castro (176) and B:

mm171-4. See "Alternative Readings."

mm175-6. See "Alternative Readings."

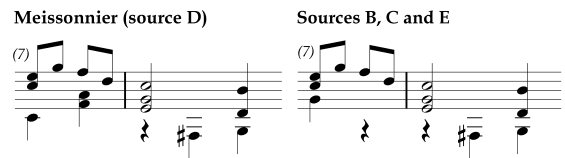
ALTERNATIVE READINGS

mm. 7-8 and 120-1

Mm. 120-1 appear in almost identical form in all sources:



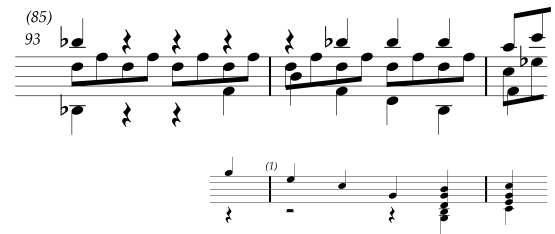
However, at the first appearance of the passage, in the exposition at mm. 7-8, all sources with the exception of Castro give divergent readings (both with the other versions and with the passage as it appears at mm. 120-1):



In Castro (mm. 7-8 and 128-9), the passage appears identically both times (with the harmony as given for mm. 120-1 above). Players may wish to choose between the two versions given in the corrected Meissonnier version, at mm. 7 and 120.

mm. 85-6

The Meissonnier versions may be in error in these measures, which form the first episode of the development section. As given in Castro (m. 93) and source B (and later in Meissonnier, at m. 89), this passage contains a prominent reference to the opening figure of the piece:



mm. 160-6

Castro (mm. 168-174) and source B provide a charming version of this passage, the upper parts continuing in thirds:



mm. 171-4

The notation of the codetta at mm. 171-4 is ambiguous in the corrected Meissonnier version,

where the dotting and alignment of voice-parts do not coincide:



The obvious conclusion is that some of the inner voice-parts are simply missing dots, as suggested

by sources B and C, both of which appear as follows:



However, the more carefully notated Castro version suggests the alignment is at fault in the

corrected Meissonnier version (also see the discussion of mm. 175-6, below):



mm. 175-6

The final codetta (measures 175-6), which was omitted entirely in the first Meissonnier edition

(source C), suffers similarly from an apparent mis-alignment of voice parts:



Both Castro and sources B are divergent for this passage:

Castro (mm. 188-90):



Source B (mm. 175-7):



Fernando SOR
(1778-1839)

Sonata seconda, [Op. 15b]

(after Castro) Paris, ca. 1802-14
Edited by Stanley Yates

[original notation]

Allegretto ♩ = c.132-138

SOR – *Sonata seconda*, [op.15b]

SOR – Sonata seconda, [op.15b]

mm79 & 81. In all other sources the 16th-notes are grouped beneath a slur.

SOR – Sonata seconda, [op.15b]

