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FERNANDO SOR

**Variations on “O cara armonia” from
Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*
Opus 9**

for solo guitar

**from the New Complete Works for Guitar
of Sor, edited by Brian Jeffery**

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OPUS 9. VARIATIONS ON “O CARA ARMONIA” FROM MOZART’S *THE MAGIC FLUTE*.

One of Sor’s most famous works, this set of variations seems to have been inspired by the first London performance of Mozart’s *Magic Flute* in May 1819. The theme which Sor used comes towards the end of Act I, and the original German words are “Das klinget so herrlich”, which in Italian is variously translated as “O dolce concento”, “O dolce armonia”, and “O cara armonia”. It is this last one which is named on the title-page of the English edition of the work, and it is also that used in, for example, the vocal score *Il Flauto Magico* published by Birchall in about 1813.

The two principal editions published during Sor’s lifetime are different from each other. The first edition, namely the London one of 1821 which is the basis for the present edition, has an introduction, theme, five variations, and coda, and the fourth bar of the theme begins with the characteristic F double sharp. But at about the same time - no later than 1822 - the French publisher Meissonnier brought out an edition which is shortened, simplified, and less interesting; one may guess that it was an attempt to reduce this fine work to the level of amateurs in order to sell more copies. The first and most difficult variation is omitted, the others placed in a different order, the coda is omitted, and the F double sharp is changed into an anodyne A. The ending is so abrupt and unmusical that one cannot help but think that this version cannot have had Sor’s approval. It has not been thought necessary to give this Meissonnier version in this edition.

At the same time as Sor came to live in Paris, in 1826, another Meissonnier edition appeared, with the note on the title-page “Nouvelle Edition augmentée par l’Auteur”. That it is a new edition is true only in the sense that it is a new Meissonnier edition; the implication that it is an entirely new edition by Sor is false, for on examination it turns out to be identical, note for note and in the same position on the page, with the original London edition. Did Sor, dissatisfied with the truncated edition that Meissonnier had previously brought out, insist to him that the full and proper version be published, when he returned to Paris from Russia?

Sor himself performed the work in public, for the London edition says “As performed by the Author, at the Nobilities’ Concerts”, and the second Meissonnier edition “Exécutées par l’Auteur au Concert donné à l’Ecole Royale de Musique” (for more details, see my book *Fernando Sor, Composer and Guitarist*). All three editions bear the same dedication, to his brother Carlos Sor or Sors, who lived in Paris and was also a guitarist and composer. (For some recent discoveries about Carlos Sor, see *La Guitarra en Cataluña* by Josep Maria Mangado, published in 1998 by Tecla).

This edition comes from the *New Complete Works for Guitar* of Sor, Volume 1, which I published in 1997 with Tecla Editions. For details of the various early editions of this work, please see the bibliography in my book *Fernando Sor, Composer and Guitarist* published by Tecla (www.tecla.com). For more details about this new edition, and more on Sor, see the Hebe’s Web site (www.hebesweb.com).

Introduction: the rhythm at bars 10, 12, etc., may well be simply triplets, the dotted rhythm being only a notational convention. For a discussion of this kind of situation, see the *New Grove Dictionary of Music* (Grove 6), Notation, III, 4 (iii), pp. 381-387, and cf. op. 1 no. 5 above.

Bar 91: the double sharp is editorial.

Bar 117, first note: the first edition (London, R.H.I.) has no fingering on this D, and it is likely that it is simply to be played at the twelfth fret so that it may be held for its full value. However, in the Meissonnier edition the first note bears the indication “12e touche” (“twelfth fret”), which could be interpreted (though not conclusively) as meaning that the note in question is to be played as a harmonic at the twelfth fret. Because of the reading of the first edition, and because of the absence of any evidence that Sor had any connection with the Meissonnier edition, it is suggested that the note be played in the normal way (not as a harmonic).

I would like to thank Darren O’Neill for making detailed comments on the proofs of this edition at an early stage.

BRIAN JEFFERY

VARIATIONS ON “O CARA ARMONIA” FROM MOZART’S *THE MAGIC FLUTE*

Dedicated to his brother, Carlos Sors

OPUS 9

INTRODUCTION

Andante largo

dolce

5

10

13

16

19

22

harm. nat. harm. nat. harm. nat. harm. nat. harm. nat. harm. nat.

THEME

Andante moderato

The musical score for the Theme is written for guitar in treble clef, key of D major (three sharps), and 2/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8. The third staff contains measures 9 through 12. The fourth staff contains measures 13 through 16. The fifth staff contains measures 17 through 20. The sixth staff contains measures 21 through 24. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes various rests and accidentals. The tempo is marked 'Andante moderato'.

VARIATION 1

The musical score for Variation 1 is written for guitar in treble clef, key of D major (three sharps), and 2/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains measures 25 through 26. The second staff contains measures 27 through 29. The third staff contains measures 30 through 32. The fourth staff contains measures 33 through 36. The variation features more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and includes various rests and accidentals. The tempo remains 'Andante moderato'.

35

38

VARIATION 2

Mineur 41

45

49

53

VARIATION 3

57

61

65

69

VARIATION 4

Più mosso

Musical score for Variation 4, measures 73-85. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo marking is **Più mosso**. The score consists of five staves of music. Measures 73-75 show a sequence of eighth notes with triplets and a quintuplet. Measures 76-78 continue the pattern with triplets and quintuplets. Measures 79-81 feature a repeat sign and triplets. Measures 82-84 show further triplet patterns. Measure 85 ends with a repeat sign and a triplet.

VARIATION 5

Più mosso

Musical score for Variation 5, measures 89-98. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo marking is **Più mosso**. The score consists of four staves of music. Measures 89-91 show a sequence of eighth notes with triplets. Measures 92-94 continue the pattern with triplets and eighth notes. Measures 95-97 feature a repeat sign and triplet patterns. Measure 98 ends with a triplet.

101

104

106

109

112

115

118

121

Coda