

## The Modern Classical Guitar and the French Revolution

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What was it about the French Revolution that accelerated the rise of the classical or six-string Spanish guitar towards the concert instrument and sophisticated accompaniment to the voice that it is today? The years of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras changed the way Europeans played and thought about the guitar, and these changes, while subtle, laid the foundations of the modern instrument. Until now musicologists have found it difficult to account for why the instrument became widely popular when it did in the early nineteenth century. Very few make significant mention of the French Revolution or the fanning out across Europe of its refugees, or even of the armies of the revolutionary period that transported guitars and guitar music to the far reaches of Europe with royalist and Republican soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Émigré instrument makers, like Sebastian Érard, set up businesses in European cities other than Paris as a direct result of the Revolution and the Paris market drying-up, and these businesses endured, later selling guitars and other musical instruments as well as harps throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Other émigrés, deprived of their

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for the gap between the literatures of history and music on this issue is set out well by Stephen Rumph. “The political historian will expect a ‘thick’ context in contemporary writings or other forms of concrete representation. The musician, meanwhile, will demand a due engagement with the notes in the score.” *Beethoven after Napoleon*, 5. See also Gildea and Simonin, *Writing Contemporary History*, 58. The literature directly concerning the guitar in this period as opposed to chamber music is small. Tyler and Sparks, *The Guitar and its Music*, focuses on the instrument and its scores but is silent on the emigration. Tyler, *The Early Guitar: A History and a Handbook* are the major works in English. There is much more work on the seventeenth century instrument: Page, *The Guitar in Stuart England* and *The Guitar in Tudor England*; Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, and *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914* provides invaluable context as does work on salon culture in the eighteenth century such as Lilti, *Le monde des salons*.

<sup>2</sup> See Adelson, et al., *The History of the Erard Piano and Harp*. Examples of Erard harps can be seen in the Musée de la Musique at La Villette in Paris.

larger instruments, accelerated the spread of guitar culture across Europe by multiplying the number of refugee teachers advertising in the local and émigré press and creating a new fashion for the French-style instrument. Many members of the dis-established French aristocracy had owned and played guitars prior to their emigration, and thus found themselves ready-made teachers of the instrument, as well as of dance. Outside France musical soirées recaptured the merriment of the ancien régime, and provided émigrés with moments of escape from the grimmer realities of their exile and poverty.<sup>3</sup>

The guitar was capable of expressing not only the sentimentalism of the late eighteenth century, but the romanticism of the Napoleonic era and the nineteenth century. Emigration with its nostalgia, privileging of memory and melancholy played a pivotal role, and it also directed the émigrés towards cheaper and adaptable musical options better-suited to their itinerant circumstances and limited financial means. Gender boundaries quickly collapsed between players in émigré circles, and women émigrés like Madame de Flahaut and Madame de Genlis played the instrument and wrote about it in novels that also travelled around the Atlantic world. Sources relating to the guitar have to be pieced together from scattered archives and mentions of the instrument in letters, novels, newspapers, memoirs, and music scores that were often more common for the period after 1815 than before. While in the early nineteenth century only two individual émigrés would reach celebrated composer status that would endure and inscribe their compositions in the repertoire of the contemporary instrument (Antoine L'Hoyer and François de Fossa), a wider body of ordinary émigré guitarists, lay and ecclesiastic, were the reason that the guitar came out of the period 1789-1815 with a much greater share of European appreciation and popularity than it had ever previously enjoyed.<sup>4</sup>

The role of the guitar at court had been established since the reign of Louis XIV who played the instrument himself. In fact, it came to the French court with his mother Anne of Austria, the Spanish Infanta, when she married Louis XIII, and it is not known who was the teacher who was engaged to teach Louis XIV to play the instrument, but it is known that Mazarin engaged a tutor for him.<sup>5</sup> While neither Louis XV nor Louis XVI played the instrument, members of their immediate family did. Most notably, Madame Adélaïde, and Marie Clotilde, the younger sister of Louis XVI, can be seen playing a five-string guitar in the portrait by François Hubert Drouais, with her sister Elisabeth playing the harp in a matching portrait. The aristocratic connection with the guitar as a mark of accomplishment in France had existed throughout the eighteenth century illustrated by references like this one in the *Memoirs of the Count of Grammont*:

The count of Aran had a particular aptitude for all sorts of exercises: great player of tennis and of the guitar, and a galant with quite some success.<sup>6</sup>

And Montesquieu associated the guitar with the indolence of the nobility.

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<sup>3</sup> Méneville, *Souvenirs d'Emigration 1791-1797*, 172.

<sup>4</sup> Sources for this are provided by correspondence and novels that described life in exile and from the local advertisements in French newspapers like the *Courier de Londres*. See Reboul, *French Emigration to Great Britain*, 117-119.

<sup>5</sup> Tyler and Sparks, *The Guitar and its Music*, 107.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, *Mémoires du comte de Grammont*, 1: 144. "Le comte d'Aran avoit une adresse singulière dans toutes sortes d'exercices: grand joueur de paume et de guitare, & galant avec assez de succès."

For you must know, that, when a man possesses some special merit in Spain, as, for example, when he can add to the qualities which I have already described, that of owning a long sword, or that of having learnt from his father to strum a jangling guitar, he works no more: his honour is concerned in the repose of his limbs.<sup>7</sup>

By the Revolution the guitar had become more unisex, and compared with the mid-century, it was a significantly better instrument, although it still had five strings.<sup>8</sup> The difference was that it had five single courses instead of the old double courses tuned to an octave for the fourth and fifth strings, and in unison for the first three. It also had a particular context in Britain, where the vast majority of the émigré population went, because the English guitar had been adapted from the European model in the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> This instrument had metal strings, and a different tuning and sound to the guitar of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century that came from France.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Boruwlaski, describes playing the guitar of the Duchess of Marlborough at Blenheim Palace, and he also played for the Dumfries family in Edinburgh where he wrote; “I had the pleasure of attracting the attention of everybody, and I interested them even more by playing the guitar”.<sup>11</sup>

It was not fashionable for women to play the violin, and that too might have contributed to the popularity of the guitar that had no similar gender imperative and bias to be overcome. It was an instrument that could easily be balanced on a hooped skirt, so it was well-suited to ladies. And it was beautiful, having the curves and form often compared to the female figure. One novelist described her character as being “a perfect wood nymph,” she would “sit on the old oak, and play a soft air on my guitar”.<sup>12</sup> Beauty, nature, love and the exotic were all closely associated with the playing of the guitar by women in the novels of the period, and it was particularly suited to playing in the open air. But even more so than the harp, the guitar was also suited to cramped spaces. The guitar could cross Europe without taking up much space or looking suspicious in one’s luggage, and it could fit into rooms that could not accommodate a large instrument. Many émigrés wrote of how they were forced to take smaller rooms than they were used to, as well as much less elegant cutlery, porcelain and food. As ancien régime music was closely linked to the church and ceremonial music, this sense of nostalgia and deprivation was also often religious in its inspiration. Perseverance, fortitude and tolerance were all tools of the émigrés as their fortunes dwindled away.

Madame de Genlis wrote of the compatibility of the harp and guitar, and for practice purposes of the possibility to substitute one for the other in order to keep the right hand practised for the harp. This natural compatibility also helped to make the guitar easier to master to a tolerable sound quality.

I also play the guitar, on which I was a very formidable talent that I have much lost because I cannot imagine on this instrument ways to replace regular and daily studies, so that

<sup>7</sup> Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, 165.

<sup>8</sup> Proof of this can be derived from the instructions in Jean-Baptiste Merchi, *Le guide des écoliers de guitare*, published ‘chez l’auteur’ in 1771 where he advises the same tuning for the five strings of the guitar as François Campion used in his *Pièces de guitares* in 1731, showing that the instrument still had only five courses.

<sup>9</sup> For this English instrument, a close relative of cittern, see Kloss, *The Guitar in Britain 1753-1810*.

<sup>10</sup> Page, *The Guitar in Tudor England*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Boruwlaski, *Mémoires du célèbre nain*, 114, 118. “J’eus le bonheur d’y attirer les regards de tout le monde, et j’y intéressai encore en pinçant de la guitare.”

<sup>12</sup> Said by Lady Margorine Strabon, in Mrs. McDonald, *Evening amusements*, 121.

playing only occasionally my left hand is much less agile, and the right is always good because the arpeggios and the strokes executed on the harp translate faithfully onto the guitar.<sup>13</sup>

She also left a poem to her old guitar and lyrics for songs to be accompanied by the guitar including the lines:<sup>14</sup>

Of your mother-of-pearl and of your beauty  
Of your superb Cathedral  
Make no more vanity  
Time, fatal influence

And fashion have destroyed forever  
Your charm and your brilliant talents.<sup>15</sup>

So the guitar served as an outlet for the imagination and provided a less painful musical space than the reality of Europe that the émigrés were travelling through as migrants and as refugees. It was a moment of stolen pleasure in an otherwise grim landscape of war, loss and political victimisation. The guillotine and those who had gone to it loomed large. Frances Burney's incognita in *The Wanderer* was interrupted by the early return of the party who simply refused to believe that the bedraggled stranger was an accomplished artist; "Eleanor pronounced: This divine singer, whom you were all ready to worship, is no other than the lonely Wanderer whom you were all ready to condemn".<sup>16</sup> They had in fact heard:

An Arpeggio succeeded, followed by an air, which produced, alternately, tones sweet, yet penetrating, of touching pathos or impassioned animation; and announced a performer whom nature had gifted with her finest feelings, to second or rather to meet the soul-pervading refinements of skilful art.<sup>17</sup>

Of the approximately 130,000 refugees from the French Revolution less than one per cent were professional musicians in France before the Revolution, but it was not so much the professional musicians as the generally accomplished aristocratic émigré population and the priests who, once stripped of their noble rank and ecclesiastical duties, had to earn their living by teaching.<sup>18</sup> Ecclesiastics who did not leave France also turned to teaching the guitar after the dissolution of the monasteries (February 1790) including the abbé François Guichard and Guillaume Gatayes who taught guitar and composed prolifically during the Revolution. Many of

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<sup>13</sup> de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits*, 287. "Je joue aussi de la guitare, sur laquelle j'ai été d'une très grande force dont j'ai beaucoup perdu, parce que je n'ai point imaginé sur cet instrument de moyens de suppléer à des études ordinaires et journalières, de sorte que en jouant que de loin en loin, ma main gauche est beaucoup moins habile, la droite est toujours bonne car les arpègements et les batteries exécutés sur la harpe la donnent toujours telle sur la guitare."

<sup>14</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BNF), Département de Musique, 4-VM7-811. de Genlis, "Romance, paroles de Mme de Genlis. Arrangée pour la guitare, par Meissonnier jeune. Chant et guitar," 6.

<sup>15</sup> de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits*, 203. "De ta nacre et de ta beauté, De ta superbe cathédrale (rosace), Ne fais plus de vanité. Du temps, l'influence fatale, Et la mode surtout ont détruit pour jamais, Ton charme et tes brillants attraits."

<sup>16</sup> Burney, *The Wanderer*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>18</sup> See Pestel, "Educating against Revolution."

the former nobles drew on their music and dance skills to find a talent to sell in London or Hamburg, especially if they had other family members to support.<sup>19</sup> The fact that some of them had only moderate skills also favoured the guitar compared to instruments like the rapidly evolving harp and pianoforte. Before the Revolution the baroque five string guitar was still in use, but by 1815 the six-string or modern classical guitar was established in the path it would follow towards the twentieth century as an instrument of complex melodic and emotional expression, and versatile playing options.<sup>20</sup> It could be a concert instrument used to good effect in duos or trios, or an accompanying support to the voice in the private salon. It is clear that in 1815 two traditions, one from the depths of popular Spain and the other from the French court, came together, enriching both the repertoire and the range of the instrument. In fact the emigration brought out the versatility of the guitar as an instrument that crossed social divides and bridged the social barriers that saw talented musicians and vocalists accepted among former aristocrats as their own society. This elision of the formerly separate spheres and musical cultures happened because the emigration forced a recalibration of the networks of influence, and music and musical instruments were central to that sociability. The memoirs of the émigrés as well as émigré novels and correspondences show an increasingly portable and private musical tradition that saw the creation of a divide between heavy immobile instruments used for formal concert purposes, and lighter and more portable ones for private entertainment. A subtle transition in salon practices produced a less formal musical tradition that had started to appear during the eighteenth century, with women playing the lute, but that was always dangerously associated with moral laxity and seduction.<sup>21</sup> David Charlton wrote:

The French Revolution offers an as yet unmatched challenge to musical historians. It challenges the accepted ways we write about music. It challenges us to explore the musical experience of men and women over a wider-than-usual spectrum...Studying the 1789 period also means looking at a quickly changing pattern of musical patronage, whether state-inspired or individually organised.<sup>22</sup>

Guitars and harps were confiscated as property, and documented in Paris as property seized from émigrés. Guitars were able to be replaced in emigration, and Sebastian Érard and his harp-making activities in London provided the émigrés and the British with a new pedal harp patented in London in 1794.<sup>23</sup> The harp and the guitar moreover featured as complementary instruments, to ensure that technical ability was not lost, and the cost effectiveness of the guitar by comparison with the harp in exile saw many players take up the simpler instrument. Both harp and guitar could be complemented with the voice to achieve a high level of performance. Madame de Genlis,

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<sup>19</sup> See Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*, 101-108.

<sup>20</sup> The French émigrés were not responsible for the technical addition of the sixth string, but their playing definitely popularised the new six-string instrument. It is not known exactly when the sixth string was added or by whom. One of the earliest references to a sixth string is in Pontécoulant, *Organographie*, 397, attributing it to sieur Naumann, a Dresden chapel master, but it is also attributed to Federico Moretti in Naples and other Italian makers of lutes and mandolins (like Giacomo Merchi who came to London from Paris in 1771). In his method published in 1799, Moretti indicated that the six string guitar was the Spanish model. See Federico Moretti, *Principios para tocar la guitarra de seis ordenes*.

<sup>21</sup> Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France*, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Charlton, "Exploring the Revolution," in Boyd, *Music and the French Revolution*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Grangier, *A Genius of France*, 6. Erard took out the first patent for the pedal harp while in emigration in London in 1794 and five others between then and 1814. His "Registre des ventes de harpes" for the maison Érard is held by the Royal College of Music.

Madame de Souza and Madame de Staël all wrote of the role of music in the daily life of émigrés and emigration.<sup>24</sup> The main French émigré character, the Count d'Erfeuil, in her novel *Corinne*, had coped with losing a great fortune, and “by his musical talents he had maintained himself and an aged uncle, over whom he watched till the good man's death, constantly refusing the pecuniary aid which had been pressed on him”.<sup>25</sup> Pianos were rare and treasured possessions for émigrés like Madame de la Tour du Pin, and the Duke de Vaudreuil, who had to sell his piano lamenting that it was “the last possession he had to sacrifice and a real one, for it meant that the mournful evenings could not be brightened with music, with the nostalgic songs of their childhood which made home seem less far away”.<sup>26</sup> Nostalgia and music were closely linked in the émigré society that missed home and friends who were scattered across Europe. Madame de Staël's Delphine reflected:

I returned home; Isore was playing the harp; until this day I had begged her not to play in front of me; my spirit was not in a state to support the music, bringing back as it did too vividly all the memories.<sup>27</sup>

The guitar, like the harp but more so, was not only a portable instrument but an objet d'art or a personal treasure that gave an outlet to the emotions of revolution or counter-revolution, much in the same way that writing novels provided a release and an escape into an imaginary former ancien régime life. A good example of this is given by Madame de Flahaut describing the intimacy of her “chamber” in the Old Louvre palace where she organised her apartment to make

A little retreat where she placed a single chair, her piano, a harp, some books, a pretty table on which lay her drawings and her writing materials. There, said-she, I have traced myself a sort of ideal circle that separates me from the rest of the apartment. Should anyone come to see me? I very quickly slip through the barrier in order to prevent anyone from entering. If by chance someone does advance towards my special place, I can hardly contain my bad humour and the desire to see them depart.<sup>28</sup>

This tells us not only about the importance of the objects that were housed within the imaginary circle, but also the interaction of private and public space, and the struggle to keep it separate and to privilege an independent space where a woman could be in complete control of her reality.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For more on travel, see Horrocks, *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility*.

<sup>25</sup> de Staël, *Corinne or Italy*, 33-34.

<sup>26</sup> Weiner, *The French Exiles 1789-1815*, 134.

<sup>27</sup> Herrman, *Madame de Staël*, 2, 186. “Je revins chez moi; Isore jouait de la harpe; jusqu'à ce jour je l'avais priée de ne pas faire de la musique devant moi; mon âme n'était pas en état de la supporter, elle rappelle trop vivement tous les souvenirs.”

<sup>28</sup> Souza, *Emilie et Alphonse*, 137. “Une petite retraite où elle a placé une seule chaise, son piano, une harpe, quelques livres, une jolie table sur laquelle sont ses desseins et ses écritures. Là, dit-elle, je me suis tracée une sorte de cercle idéal qui me sépare du reste de l'appartement. Vient-on me voir ? Je sors bien vite de cette barrière pour empêcher qu'on y pénètre. Si par hasard on s'avance vers mon asile, j'ai peine à contenir ma mauvaise humeur, je voudrais qu'on s'en allât.”

<sup>29</sup> This trend was also happening in Britain. There is an example in Charlotte Lennox's novel *Henrietta* (1758) of first one young lady, then Henrietta singing in private to the accompaniment of their own guitar-playing.

The musical instruments belonged to this private space for practice and pleasure, and to the public for performance and show or celebrity purposes.<sup>30</sup>

The 1808 novel *A Peep into the Thuilleries or Parisian manners* (Eugène de Rothélin) describes a young Englishman introduced into Paris society by Madame, the countess of Estouteville, and her widowed daughter, Madame de Rieux, with whom he falls in love. This passage presents the piano, the harp and the guitar all as intimate musical objects owned by the heroine, Athénaïs:

In the course of evening, the countess desired that Madame de Rieux treat her with a little *musique* : I offered to bring her harp. I had not yet seen her apartment, and wished to know it; this appeared a favourable occasion.

What a strange tumultuous sensation I experienced, for the first time, I entered her cabinet; everything presented the habit of occupation, and the inconsistency of taste — a piano — a harp — a guitar — drawings — pictures — books — flowers — embroidery.<sup>31</sup>

The figure of Athénaïs was believed to be based on the famously musical Hortense, Queen of Holland, with whom Madame de Souza's son Charles was having an affair. He was widely congratulated on his lovely voice and his mother, who had been largely responsible for her son's musical education, sent music books to her English friends as tokens of gratitude.<sup>32</sup> But it is clear that there were multiple messages passed in salons where different people were interpreting and understanding musical lyrics and silences, and that a language of intimacy existed alongside the words being sung. Eugène continues:

I bought the harp and placed it before her, and held it while she tuned it; I ventured, in a low voice, to request that she would sing her favourite romance; the one that pleased her most — “Do you think,” she said, quite low, “that you can judge of anyone from the choice of the airs they may select?” — “I cannot say till after I have heard you.” — “O yes, for instance, were I to sing some lively sprightly air, you would suppose me careless, thoughtless, and possessed of levity; or if I chose a plaintive melody, you would suppose me sentimental and romantic” — “No, no; a piece of music, though lively, yet of merit, would induce me to believe that the difficulty of the execution alone enticed you; if a tender air, that it revived some pleasing recollections.” In an instant her countenance altered; and, drawing the harp which I still held towards her, she replied coldly, “recollections! I know of none.” She played a long wild kind of prelude; during which she asked with a little petulance, “at what age then, sir, do you think these recollections that you speak of commence?” Without waiting for my reply, she began a grand noisy sonata, a very fine composition, and finely executed; not one passage of which, however, spoke to the feelings or touched the passions. When she had finished it, the countess requested her to sing — all the company entreated her. I had placed myself in a corner of the room, and was careful not to say a word — yet still she did not sing.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See the work of Davidson and Verjus, *Le Roman conjugal*, and Davidson, *France after Revolution*, as well as Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*.

<sup>31</sup> de Souza, *A Peep into the Thuilleries*, 131.

<sup>32</sup> British Library (hereafter BL), Holland House papers, Ad ms 51718.13. Letter of 29 October 1815.

<sup>33</sup> *A Peep into the Thuilleries*, 131.

Without dispute the most popular instrument that went with the émigrés into emigration, no matter where their travels took them, was their singing voice. The voice had long been a mark of accomplishment at court and in the societies that many émigrés were used to. In Isabelle de Montolieu's novel set at the Prussian court, her principal character learnt to modulate her voice, "and it acquired a sweetness and flexibility so that, when she sang to the harp, or Spanish guitar, it was not possible to resist those mild emotions, those delicious sensation, which she so well could feel, and so powerfully inspire".<sup>34</sup> The courtly tradition involved singing and dance as well as a knowledge of music in all forms, and those émigrés who were of noble birth had acquired singing skills as well as instrumental talents during their education.

The harp or the pianoforte were not easily portable instruments, and they were expensive. A pedal harp cost between 288 and 480 livres, and a pianoforte between 144 and 240 livres. A guitar by contrast cost under one hundred livres, and sometimes under ten livres. There were big variations depending on the decoration of the instrument, and the maker's reputation and identity.<sup>35</sup> After 1817 a Panormo guitar cost between two and fifteen guineas — Vincenzo Panormo father of Luis the most famous guitar maker of the family, had emigrated and established himself in London in 1791.<sup>36</sup> He provides a good example of an Italian craftsman who followed his market from Paris to London, because London was the capital of French emigration as well as a thriving centre of British and Italian music.

The other implication that is reinforced elsewhere is that the daily practice routine was something that in emigration broke the monotony of news that seemed endlessly bad. Like Madame de Flahaut editing her own text in London in order to save the price of the copyist but also to give herself the way to take her mind off other things, musical drills (scales and arpeggios) were also a way to forget the grimmer sides of an émigré's daily existence. Artist Madame Vigée Lebrun who confessed the only tone she could distinguish was the barking of her dogs, painted a number of portraits with musical instruments in them and in particular Marie-Louise de Robien playing a guitar in 1774.<sup>37</sup> In emigration she told the story of the Count d'Artois's generosity towards a Mademoiselle Mérel who played the harp exquisitely, and who had come to London in the hope of making a living from her talent. When she advertised a concert Vigée Lebrun bought some tickets and undertook to dispose of as many others as she could, but despite her efforts there were so few people in the hall and she was so freezing that she had to leave before the end of the concert. When she told Vaudreuil about this when she met him the following day he mentioned it to the Count d'Artois who after verifying that she was a French woman had her sent ten guineas.<sup>38</sup> This story is recounted in several memoires, but it shows how difficult it was for a musician to be able to perform in public.

Guitars were confiscated from a number of prominent émigrés and notably men like the Prince de Conti who had three. The Marquis de Laborde had one made by Pierre Louvet (1758), and Louis de Lomenie de Brienne had three made by Jean-François Salomon who later invented the harpolyre.<sup>39</sup> The Marquis de Marboeuf had one made in 1789 by Pierre-Antoine Guillaume

<sup>34</sup> de Montolieu, *Caroline of Lichtfield*, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Miteran, *Histoire de la Guitare*, 25. By 1830 an ordinary guitar cost 30-40 francs.

<sup>36</sup> See Southwell, *The Panormo Guitar*.

<sup>37</sup> The painting "Jeune femme à la guitar" is in the Musée Cognacq-Jay in Paris.

<sup>38</sup> Goodden, *The Sweetness of Life*, 183, and 236 for the incident involving Mlle Mérel.

<sup>39</sup> In 1828 Jean François Salomon (1781-1831) invented the unusual three necked harpolyre. An example can be seen in the eighteenth century guitar cabinet of the Musée de la Musique, Paris.

estimated at one hundred francs.<sup>40</sup> The Viscountess de Jaucourt had a guitar made by Georges Cousineau,<sup>41</sup> who was the master of the guild of instrument makers (*maître juré de la corporation des faiseurs d'instruments*) in Paris in 1769.<sup>42</sup> Matthieu de Montmorency had a guitar that was among the many very nice examples of the instrument, seized as the possessions of the émigrés, that were acquired by the state for the newly created National Institute of Music (*Institut national de Musique*).

The popularisation of the guitar obviously had two important links to the turbulent politics of the period. It had formerly been an aristocratic instrument so that made it appeal to the third estate as a group, and secondly it was accessible to those who could afford small luxuries. It must also be noted that another factor at work in the popularity of this instrument was timing, and the changes of legislation. The dissolution of the musical instrument-makers' guild in 1776 gave greater freedom to the makers of the instrument by lifting restrictions that governed techniques of instrument making and regimented the output.<sup>43</sup> At this point in France there were no members of the guild registered as makers of the guitar, but guitars were fabricated mainly by makers of violins, and strung with strings originally intended for violins. So an instrument maker who was principally a maker of violins would have been registered for that instrument. Guitars needed regular supplies of strings and the fabrication of strings only became readily available and continuous as of 1780, at least in France and in Britain. The house of Savarez or Savaresse was established in Lyon at this time — they were Italian makers of strings working in France and largely supplying the Parisian market. Strings made of catgut were used (these were made of bovine intestines) and during the 1790s wound strings were introduced made of metal wound around a silk core.

This was also a period of rapid change in musical techniques both for written scores and tablature for the instrument. There was controversy about correct techniques as well as strategies for maximising the musical potential for national use. In 1789 just as the lifting of censorship caused havoc for the stage industry and dramatic production, there was a similar freeing up of music that was not court or regimental music — two forms that had dominated the eighteenth century. But the guitar was a quiet instrument. In Diderot's *Encyclopaedia* (*Encyclopédie*) there is a description of an instrument with strings of lamb gut and frets of gut stretched around the neck noting that:

The sound of this instrument is so gentle that the greatest silence is necessary to appreciate all the delicate tones of a gifted touch. In a noisy room one hears often only the tap of fingers, and the charm is completely lost. It is made to play alone, or to accompany a voice on instruments of a similar sort. It will not succeed in a concert.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Gally, *Un inventaire sous La Terreur*, 151.

<sup>41</sup> Cousineau, whose business *Cousineau and sons* rivalled that of *Érard Frères*, also emigrated to London in 1792 where he advertised his services to repair and build harps in the *Morning Herald*. His harps had been sold in Britain since the 1780s in the music shop *Longman and Broderip*. See Juliette Reboul, *French Emigration to Great Britain*, 118, and *Biographical sketches of French Makers* (rev 2017) <https://vdgsa.org/pgs/viols>, accessed 4 September 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Preference was given to the Institut national de Musique, and its representatives were able to accompany the commissioners who collected confiscated property and instruments to choose which instruments to retain for the new national conservatory. Gally, *Un inventaire sous La Terreur*, xii.

<sup>43</sup> See Garrioch, "Royal Policy and the Secularisation of the Paris Guilds," 24-33.

<sup>44</sup> Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 40: 980. "Le son de cet instrument est si doux qu'il faut le plus grand silence pour sentir toutes les délicatesses d'un beau toucher. Dans un lieu bruyant, on entend souvent que le tac des doigts, le charme est totalement perdu. Il est fait pour jouer seul, ou accompagner une voix sur des instruments du même genre. Il ne réussiroit pas dans un concert."

Despite this during the 1780s, and after 1789 there is evidence of a market in Paris for music scores for guitar that continued with the Revolution and that market privileged more republican tunes. By the first decade of the new century published methods were readily available in Paris and London, and popular vocal and operatic tunes were available in versions for the guitar.<sup>45</sup>

In Britain the guitar provided the émigré with accomplished musical skills with a way to earn money. Musicians set up in Marylebone and Soho to teach both French and English students and to take advantage of the pairing of the harpsicord and the guitar mentioned in manuals for female education in Britain.<sup>46</sup> The Marquis de Chastellux also found this on his travels in North America when as a guest he was shown into a room with a harpsicord on which lay a guitar that belonged to the daughter of the house.<sup>47</sup> On May 17, 1793, the French newspaper in London, the *London Post*, (*Courrier de Londres*) carried this advertisement for Monsieur Brillaud de Lonjac of 103 High Street, Marylebone:

Resident in London for two years and out of gratitude for all the encouragement he has received from the nobility of this country, Monsieur B. has the honour to offer his humble talents to all the respectable French families exiled in this city. He proposes to offer, three days a week, to a limited number of people, group lessons in singing, the English guitar and accompaniment.<sup>48</sup>

Inside France however the guitar was confronted with not inconsiderable obstacles to its use. It was learned as a hobby instrument. Madame Rolland played the guitar (a guitar that had formerly belonged to Madame Adélaïde) taught by an impoverished Spanish noble from Malaga.<sup>49</sup> But as an instrument of national significance it was an awkward fit. It did not integrate easily into the mass military bands or into the republican festival orchestras due to its problems of projection compared to louder orchestral instruments. During the revolution choirs were preferred to solo voice, so music for public consumption was necessarily written and played by big orchestral ensembles. This automatically excluded the guitar from public performance and relegated it to the private sphere, and in so doing made it more likely to be an instrument of a woman's preference than a man's, and of an amateur musician rather than one who aspired to national notice and institutions such as the School of Singing (*École de Chant*, formerly the *École Royale de Chant*) or the Institute of Music (*Institut de Musique*).<sup>50</sup> Therefore by 1792 the guitar had been relegated to relative obscurity in national terms, but was played privately with much enjoyment and even the Marseillaise can be found in editions arranged for guitar.<sup>51</sup> Of course, in Spain and

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<sup>45</sup> Catherine Massip, "Periodical editions of music at the time of the French Revolution," in Boyd, *Music of the French Revolution*, 61. The guitar comes to the fore towards 1786-88 with the journaux of Vidal and Porro, as well as the *Journal des airs italiens* (1789), while the pianoforte is finally disassociated from the harpsichord after 1792.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Allen, *The polite lady*, 21. "As most young ladies are taught to play on the harpsicord and guitar, I expect you will learn to perform on both instruments especially the first. But still, I would have you to apply your chief attention to vocal music."

<sup>47</sup> de Chastellux, *Travels in North America*, 130.

<sup>48</sup> *Courrier de Londres* 17 May, 1793, cited in Carpenter, *Refugees of the Revolution*, 72.

<sup>49</sup> *Appel à l'impartiale postérité*, 2: 160.

<sup>50</sup> Cynthia Gessele, "National music education in France 1795-1801," in Boyd, *Music and the French Revolution*, 199.

<sup>51</sup> Miteran, *Histoire de la Guitarre*, 119.

in Portugal, the guitar as the popular instrument of the people was well established, but in France it was reserved for the aristocracy, and the political tumult helped its descent into the street.<sup>52</sup>

There was in fact a split into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary guitar culture. The former embraced the former aristocratic connections of the guitar's first appearance, but added a republican performance slant in the absence of its original aristocratic market and application. The latter was predominant in emigration or outside France. The guitar did not, however, return to its popularity of 1789 until well into the nineteenth century, and by that time the instrument had gained greater acclaim in London, where it was hailed in the 1820s and 1830s as an art form with virtuosos such as Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguardo playing a six-stringed instrument.<sup>53</sup> Many famous mid-nineteenth century composers also played the guitar, Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt are good examples. Ignace Pleyel, the piano-maker, was among the instrument's enthusiasts — he wrote six sonatas for guitar and violin.

The concert instrument was in a musical category of its own. Antoine de L'Hoyer, a soldier in the Guard of the King's Sleeve (*Garde de la Manche du Roi*) later of the Army of Condé (*Armée de Condé*) left one of the most comprehensive collections of pieces from the time of emigration.<sup>54</sup> He managed to keep a guitar with him on his travels to Coblenz with the Austrian army. He lost the use of his right hand for three years after 1797, but gave guitar lessons in emigration in Hamburg on a five-string guitar before going to Russia until the fall of Napoleon, where he taught the Empress Elizabeth, wife of Grand Duke Alexander. Between 1804 and 1814 he had a very well paid court position. He returned to France under Louis XVIII to serve as an officer, and continued to write for the guitar, but died impoverished in Paris in March 1852.<sup>55</sup> His is perhaps the most famous body of French production for the instrument dating from the emigration period. Around fifty works including his nine duos are still played today. Another émigré, François de Fossa, left France and joined the Pyrenees Legion (*Légion des Pyrénées*). He went to Mexico and returned to Spain in 1803, where he was assigned to the Ministry of the Indies.<sup>56</sup> Taken prisoner by the French after the Battle of Granada on 29 January 1810, Joseph Bonaparte reassigned him his old post at the Ministry of the Indies. After the defeat, Fossa fled to France with the French army but later returned to Spain in the campaign of 1823 with the royalist army led by the Duke d'Angoulême. He retired from military service and died in Paris in 1849. Unlike L'hoyer, Fossa's contribution to the repertoire of the guitar was published after his emigration had ended. A close friend of Aguardo, Fossa's legacy was a *Complete Method for the Guitar (Méthode complète pour la guitare)* compiled in collaboration with Aguardo, and published in Paris in 1826, as well as chamber music (most of it published only in the 1840s) that is still played and recorded.<sup>57</sup> The Spanish campaign also made its contribution to the spread of

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<sup>52</sup> Arthur Costigan, *Sketches of society and manners in Portugal*, 170, wrote, "I have not yet had time to tell you, this is quite a musical and a singing country, and there is hardly a peasant, a country girl, or a common soldier, who does not play on the Guitar, and is not provided with one of those instruments, when they have hardly a shirt to their backs or a rag to cover their nakedness."

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey, *Ferdinando Sor Composer and Guitarist*, 71, cites an early nineteenth century guitar magazine *The Guiliani* from 1833: "The successful introduction of the guitar in England has been comparatively of recent date. Till the peace of 1815 it may be assumed that few persons in this country were acquainted with its full powers. From that time, however, to the present moment, no instrument can be brought in comparison with its rapid advancement in public estimation."

<sup>54</sup> Held in Yale University Library.

<sup>55</sup> See fuller biography in the introduction to L'hoyer, *Douze Romances Nouvelles*.

<sup>56</sup> His letters and compositions are preserved in the Fonds Fossa, in the Archives départementales de Péripignan.

<sup>57</sup> See Mantanya Orpheo, "A propos de François de Fossa, une étude préliminaire," in *Boccherini Guitar Quintet*.

the guitar and its music in London and to the British. British soldiers were struck by the use of the instrument in its country of origin, and it found its way into poems such as this one;

The youthful hero, resting from the war,  
Shall to thy glories, tune the light guitar;  
And, mid the watchings of the serenade,  
Sing thy lov'd triumphs to the list'ning maid.<sup>58</sup>

The guitar perhaps illustrates as no other instrument the change in popularity that made it a much more widely played and used instrument than it had been before 1789. To call it the ukulele of the revolutionary period may not be going too far. It was the ideal instrument, first of the aristocracy, then of the third estate. Cheap, portable, and easy to learn, it had an increasingly wide range of arranged music published for it. Those characteristics also made it appealing in emigration to an aristocracy that could no longer afford grand pianos and harps, and that took to the guitar, happy to have an instrument which responded well to their straitened needs and circumstances, but that with a good voice could resound through a salon and leave a lasting impression. Not only did this dissemination of the guitar affect Britain, but the colonies as well. Claude Augarde, a haberdasher and perfume maker, went to London during the emigration. He married an Englishwoman, Ann Budd, in the Marylebone Church on July 11, 1795 and had eight children. The oldest, Henry Arthur, took over his father's perfume business and though he died in London his descendants went to New Zealand. His younger brother, Edward Sydney, became a teacher of music, and his eldest son a professional musician, giving rise to a dynasty of musical children and grandchildren. This family has a history of guitar-playing (the great-grand-children, Amy and Adrienne Augarde were the darlings of the Drury Lane and London theatre during World War I) and in the New Zealand branch of this family based in Nelson, there is a history of guitar playing dating back to an émigré with a clarinet leaving France in 1793.<sup>59</sup> This underscores not only the difficulty of separating the guitar from other musical instruments when a number of instruments were frequently learned and played in one family, but the universality of the guitar as an instrument that was often played and enjoyed by all.

Madame de Staël wrote in *Corinne* that:

Music is so volatile a pleasure — we are so sensible that it escapes from us even as we enjoy it — that it always leaves a tender impression on the mind; yet, when expressive of grief, it sheds gentleness even over despair. The heart beats more quickly to its regular measure, and, reminding us of life's brevity, bids us enjoy what we can: the silent void is filled; you feel within yourself the active energies that fear no obstacle from without. Music doubles our computation of our own faculties, and makes us feel capable of the noblest efforts; teaches us to march towards death with enthusiasm, and is happily powerless to explain any base or artful sentiment. Music lifts from the breast the weight it so often feels beneath serious affections, and which we take for the heaviness of life, so habitual is its

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<sup>58</sup> McGregor, *History of the French Revolution*, 1: 24.

<sup>59</sup> See Sardeson, *Born to Music*. The claim that the clarinet was played in the orchestra at Versailles is probably a fabrication illustrative of the noble links that émigrés' descendants often attached to their ancestry.

pressure: we hang on such pure sounds till we seem to discover the secrets of the Eternal, and penetrate the mysteries of nature: no words can explain this.<sup>60</sup>

Time and time again, the harp and the guitar offer us examples of a culture where airs and songs were taking over from religious music as the vehicle for evocative political and emotional messages. At the end of the revolutionary wars and in the diaspora initiated by emigration, the classical guitar enjoyed a popularity previously unknown in Moscow, Vienna and Italy, and during the Restoration the instrument underwent a further ascendancy in Paris and London. When the émigrés returned to France both sexes were performing in salons alongside each other, and a mixed musical culture had begun that was as much masculine and feminine, as much republican/Bonapartist as royalist. Madame de Souza (formerly Madame de Flahaut) wrote of Marshal Suchet's salon that it was somewhere:

Where one does not breath a word of politics, because one only makes music; but her salon is a true salon of the Emperor and that displeases.<sup>61</sup>

Émigrés had prepared audiences across Europe for the works of concert guitarists such as Dionisio Aguado in Paris and then London after 1814, and Fernando Sor already resident in London when Aguado arrived, and with whom he shared a room.<sup>62</sup> These much-celebrated stars of the guitar during the Restoration period found an enthusiastic audience because the way had been paved by increasing numbers of refugee players during the revolutionary years, and the rich nineteenth-century published repertoire of the instrument quickly flourished.

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<sup>60</sup> de Staël, *Corinne or Italy*. 248.

<sup>61</sup> Archives nationales 565/AP, 16 April 1818. Mme de Souza to her son Charles. "Où l'on ne dit pas un mot de politique, car on n'y fait que de la musique; mais son salon est un vrai salon de l'Empereur, et cela déplaît."

<sup>62</sup> Page, "New light on the London years of Fernando Sor, 1815-1822."

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