



# Trinidad Huerta y Caturla (1804–1875): First Spanish Virtuoso Guitarist to Concertize in the United States

James Radomski

A NAME FAMILIAR among Paris and London salons in the 1830s was that of the Spanish guitarist and singer, Trinidad Huerta (known variously at Paris as Trinidad or Fernando Huerta). Even earlier—in 1824—he had preceded Manuel García in establishing his reputation at New York City. Along with García (1775–1832), José Melchor Gomis y Colomer (1791–1836), José Miró y Anoria (1815–1878), and most decisively Fernando Sor (1778–1839), Huerta played a key role in fomenting international interest in Spanish music during the decade that Chopin published his *Bolero* (1834) and Liszt produced his *Rondeau fantastique sur un thème espagnol* (García's *El contrabandista*, 1837). Together with Sor, Huerta fought to establish the guitar as a respected concert vehicle, not merely as a pleasant parlor diversion.

At Paris, both Fétis and Berlioz saluted him. In Berlioz's *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (Paris: Schonenberger, 1843; numerous later editions), he attributed the decline of interest in the guitar, except in Spain and Italy, to the spread of the piano. Himself a capable guitarist, he contended, however:

Unless one can play the guitar oneself, I repeat, it is impossible to write for it pieces in several voices, containing passages that require all the resources of the instrument. If one wants to get an idea of what virtuosos are

able to achieve in this respect, the compositions of such famous guitar players as Zanni de Ferranti, Huerta, Sor, etc. should be studied.

As Graham Wade reminds us in *Traditions of the Classical Guitar* (London: John Calder, 1980), page 128: "Fétis praised Huerta in the *Revue Musicale* of 1830 as a player who 'raised the guitar to the same sublime height as Paganini did with the violin'."

Despite all this, Huerta lacks an entry in music dictionaries of greatest repute. Born June 8, 1804, at Orihuela (Alicante),<sup>1</sup> he was sent by his parents to the *colegio* of San Pablo in Salamanca from the age of ten or eleven—leaving at fifteen to join the factional forces assembled by the ardently liberal General Rafael de Riego y Núñez (1785–1823). Paying tribute, sixteen-year-old Huerta is credited with having composed the music for the so-called *Himno de Riego*, performed for the first time upon Riego's entry into Málaga February 19, 1820. By royal decree September 4, 1822,<sup>2</sup> Fernando VII named this hymn the Spanish national anthem. But not for long. With the triumph of the absolutists in 1823, Riego was executed at Madrid by order of Fernando

<sup>1</sup> Baltasar Saldoni, *Diccionario Biográfico-Bibliográfico de Efemérides de Músicos Españoles* (Madrid: Antonio Pérez Dubrull, 1880. R/Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1986), 2:519.

<sup>2</sup> Madrid, Archivo de la Villa (Corregidor), MS 1-63-101.



VII November 7, 1823. Huerta thereupon fled to Paris, there taking refuge with Manuel García, who for a time treated the nineteen-year-old as a protégé.<sup>3</sup> After a further stopover in London Huerta travelled to Canada by way of Martinique.

Capricious artist of a bizarre character and adventurous life, he went as a singer to North America. He set out after having been invited off the cuff by a pair of strangers while in the port of Havre, never reflecting whether at that moment there might even be a public to attend one of his concerts.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, his first dictionary biographer did assert that in Canada he played before "amazed" North American tribes (*hasta en el Canadá logró triunfos entre indios estupefactos*).<sup>5</sup> Whether or not this "stupefying" anecdote can be substantiated, all did not go well in Canada. He was robbed of the 400 pounds sterling brought with him from London—victimized by an artist "with whom he was associated."<sup>6</sup> Worse still, he lost his voice during an illness resulting from the climate.

Undaunted, he reverted to the guitar, determined to make himself a virtuoso. Shaving his hair, eyebrows, and beard so that he dared not go out of the house, he locked himself in his room, allowing himself no other occupation during three months, than assiduous guitar practice, resolving to attain perfection. With the three months over and his hair grown back, he presented himself to the public and proclaimed himself the foremost guitarist of America!<sup>7</sup>

Even if his career as guitarist was not ignited in precisely the above manner, it is nonetheless true

<sup>3</sup> Saldoni, 2:519.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Schmidl, *Dizionario Universale dei Musicisti* (Milan: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1928), 1:731.

Artista capriccioso e carattere bizzarro ebbe vita molto avventurosa, fu come cantante nell'America del Nord per la quale trovandosi all'Havre, parti improvvisamente invitato da due forastieri, senza nemmeno riflettere che nello stesso momento il pubblico affluiva al teatro per assistere a un suo concerto!

<sup>5</sup> Saldoni, 2:520.

<sup>6</sup> Schmidl, 1:731.

<sup>7</sup> Schmidl, 1:731.

Huerta, la cui risorsa principale era stata sino allora il canto, si rade i capelli, le ciglia e la barba solo a metà onde non poter più uscire di casa, si chiude in camera e non ristà dallo studiare per tre mesi difilati assiduamente la chitarra, risoluto a raggiungere la perfezione. Finiti i tre mesi e ricresciutogli il pelo, si presenta al pubblico ed è proclamato il primo chitarrista d'America!

that he was performing in New York before Manuel García and his troupe arrived in October 1825 for the historic season of Italian opera at the Park Theatre that included the New York premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

On May 15, 1824, assisted by artists Gillingham, Kinsela, and Milon, Huerta played at the City Hotel in New York, under auspices of the Philharmonic Society. On June 5 he appeared at Washington Hall, assisted at the piano by "Mrs. Huerta,"<sup>8</sup> who was also a guitarist (she later published in London an arrangement for guitar and voice of the song, "Weep Not for Me"). He performed again at Washington Hall on September 9, 1824, this time with the flautist, Blondeau. General Lafayette, who was present, responded with recommendations that enabled Huerta to tour the East Coast. (Lafayette was a friend of artists: as late as 1833, Maria Malibran, García's most famous daughter, sought his help in obtaining a divorce.<sup>10</sup>)

On December 13, 1824, Huerta played at Mallet's Ballroom. On October 12, 1825, he anticipated García's opera season, announced to begin November 29, by performing among his own compositions a "Grand Waltz," a "Grand March" (dedicated to General Lafayette), and "several fancy pieces."<sup>11</sup>

Amazed at Huerta's brazen aggressiveness, Peppino Pasta had written a letter to his famous prima donna wife Giuditta Pasta, in August 1825, thus trouncing Huerta.

García, some time ago, received a letter from a Spaniard who hardly plays the guitar and croaks out some boleros without knowing anything about the music, and who once in a while gives concerts. In a few years he has made a considerable fortune.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> George Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), 3:113. Odell cites advertisements in the *New York Post*.

<sup>9</sup> The British Library, MS H.1694.

<sup>10</sup> April Fitzlyon, *Maria Malibran: Diva of the Romantic Age* (London: Souvenir Press, 1987), 173.

<sup>11</sup> George Odell, *Annals*, 3:221. The complete concert is given in the *New York American* on October 12.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Peppino Pasta to Giuditta Pasta, August, 1825. New York Public Library, Pasta Collection.

Garzia ha ricevuto tempo fa una lettera da uno spagnolo che tocca appena la ghitarra e canticchia dei bolieri senza saper la musica, e da di tanto in tanto dei concerti: Esso in pochi anni ha fatto una fortuna non indifferente.



Nonetheless, García did treat Huerta respectfully during his New York first season and did conduct the orchestra that performed at Huerta's farewell concert at the City Hotel January 2, 1826, during which Huerta played a duet with a guitarist named Maurez.<sup>13</sup>

Next, Huerta shipped on to Havana, supposedly surviving en route an attack by pirates.

And his faithful guitar saved him in the outrage of the fury of some pirates who, having sacked the boat and after hanging the captain, mistreated all of the passengers, except for the modern Orpheus.<sup>14</sup>

In 1827, Huerta's easy "Three Waltzes for Guitar" were published in London as a collection for amateurs. According to *The Harmonicon*, v/3 (March 1827), page 52:

The three waltzes by Signor Huerta are the first of his productions that we have seen. They are not, we conceive, what he means to rest his fame on, but rather fugitive trifles, intended to answer a temporary purpose. We therefore shall not examine them minutely, but merely hint, that an attention to the rules of harmony are indispensable in guitar music, which is in the constant employment of chords, simultaneously struck, or in arpeggios; and the present publication either abounds in errors of the engraver, or its author has suffered many things to escape him which stand in great need of correction.<sup>15</sup>

These "trifles," were of course the sort of thing meant to delight young ladies in the salons. Whatever their merit as teaching pieces, he quickly became a popular figure at concerts, performing with Pasta, Lablache, Moscheles, and before the British nobility—even before Queen Victoria herself.<sup>16</sup>

In 1829 Huerta toured Europe and the Middle East in the company of Madame Montefiori, sister-in-law of the famous banker, Rothschild. Together they reached Malta, Constantinople, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> In 1830 L. Parent at Paris published his exquisite romance for voice, guitar, piano

<sup>13</sup> George Odell, *Annals*, 3:222.

<sup>14</sup> Saldoni, 2:520.

Y su fiel guitarra le salvó en la travesía del furor de unos piratas que, habiendo saqueado su buque y ahorcado al capitán, maltrataron a todos los pasajeros, menos al moderno Orfeo.

<sup>15</sup> Mori and Lavenu, 28, New Bond Street, credited this money-making collection to "A.T. Huerta."

<sup>16</sup> Saldoni, 2:520.

<sup>17</sup> Saldoni, 2:520-521.

or harp, "Chi Mai di Questo Core" (words of Metastasio), Op. 22, "respectueusement dédiée à Miss Louisa de Rothschild."

In May 1830 he appeared again at London. According to the *Times* review:

Huerta, the guitar player, has had a benefit concert at the Great Room in the King's Theatre. The bill announced a good selection of music, vocal and instrumental, but of the latter the audience were in a great measure disappointed, owing to the absence of the whole of the performers of the orchestra, who, with Signor Spagnoletti at their head, had been summoned by Mr. Laporte to a rehearsal of *Semiramide*. Señor Huerta addressed the audience in English, explaining the cause of the disappointment, and the regret he felt at it. The singing was consequently accompanied only by the pianoforte. Signor De Begnis was the first to enter the orchestra, and he sang one of his favourite buffo songs accompanied by himself. Among the vocal performers were Miss Childe, Mademoiselle de'Blasie, and Signors Donzelli, Lablache, and Santini. The two latter sang admirably a comic duetto from the *Matrimonio Segreto*. Huerta played several pieces calculated to exhibit in full effect his wonderful powers of execution on the guitar. Mr. Sedlazeck performed a fantasia on the flute; and a boy named Cooper, apparently not more than 10 or 12 years of age, played one of Mayseder's fantasias on the violin in a style which would have done no discredit to older and more practiced performers. The perfect way in which he ascended to notes of great height in the scale was remarkable, and his performance well deserved the applause it received.<sup>18</sup>

By 1831 Huerta was again in Paris. Here he now became a regular in the salons. This period marks the apex of his career.

*Paris News*. Concert for the benefit of a family of Spanish refugees, January 16, 1831.

Among the various artists heard in this concert was Monsieur Huerta, Spanish guitarist whose talent is all the more extraordinary inasmuch as he plays in spite of a lack of knowledge of musical elements. His style is completely original, completely different from that which we have known; his procedures for varying the effects of his frail instrument are unique. His talent is, after all, one of these happy gifts of nature which nothing can replace. He executes harmonic difficulties so prodigious that one would scarcely think possible, considering the obstacles of handling the guitar and its narrow limits. The compositions of Monsieur Huerta are not very good, but it is

<sup>18</sup> London *Times*, May 24, 1830.



already a lot to compose, when one doesn't know music. All in all, Monsieur Huerta appears to us to be the most talented guitarist that we have ever heard.<sup>19</sup>

The last comment is all the more remarkable, given the fact that both Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado were performing in Paris at this very time.

In January of 1832 Huerta appeared at a "soirée musicale" given by M. Wagner (clarinet) at the salons of M. Dietz.

<sup>19</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, vol. 10 (1831): 330.

*Nouvelles de Paris*. Concert—au bénéfice d'une famille de réfugiés espagnols" le 16 janvier 1831.

Au nombre des artistes qui se sont fait entendre dans ce concert se trouvait M. Huerta, guitariste espagnol dont le talent est d'autant plus extraordinaire qu'il sait, dit-on, à peine les éléments de la musique. Sa manière est toute originale, toute différente de ce que l'on connaît; ses procédés pour varier les effets de son frêle instrument sont à lui, enfin son talent est un de ces heureux dons de nature que rien ne peut remplacer. Il exécute des difficultés harmoniques qui tiennent du prodige et qu'on croit à peine possibles quand on connaît les obstacles du manche de la guitare et ses bornes étroites. Les compositions de M. Huerta ne sont pas très bonnes, mais c'est déjà beaucoup que de composer quand on ne sait pas la musique. En somme, M. Huerta nous paraît être le guitariste le plus habile que nous ayons entendu.

Truly, M. Huerta is an extraordinary man; the difficulties that he executes are prodigious. Nothing can give the idea of the marvelous agility of his fingers; you must hear him.<sup>20</sup>

On July 15 he played again at the salons of M. Dietz:

The honors of triumph went to Monsieur Huerta. We have already said, and everyone knows that Monsieur Huerta executes on the guitar very great difficulties; but while I listen to a distinguished artist employing an extraordinary talent on the guitar, the feeling that overcomes me is that of regret at seeing faculties applied in a somewhat useless manner; for a fact that cannot be contested is that the guitar is destined to remain constantly in a state of complete inferiority with regard to other instruments, in spite of all the talent that some artists of the likes of Messieurs Aguado and Huerta employ in order to extend its feeble resources. Monsieur Huerta is not much of a musician, and the harmony with which he accompanies his melodies is at times *strange*.<sup>21</sup>

A concert of Huerta was announced in the *Revue Musicale* for November of 1832:

Monsieur Huerta, one of the most remarkable guitarists that Spain has furnished us, will give, during the month of November, a concert in which he will perform several pieces of his own composition, among others a religious sonata in which he has placed some new kinds of effects. One knows that Monsieur Huerta possesses a talent of execution that is truly extraordinary and truly original.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, vol. 12 (1832): 394.

En vérité, M. Huerta est un homme fort extraordinaire; les difficultés qu'il exécute tiennent du prodige. Rien ne peut donner l'idée de la merveilleuse agilité de ses doigts; il faut l'entendre.

<sup>21</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, vol. 12 (1832): 199.

Les honneurs du triomphe ont été décernés à M. Huerta. Nous avons déjà dit et tout le monde sait que M. Huerta exécute sur la guitare de très grandes difficultés; mais lorsque j'entends un artiste distingué déployer un talent peu ordinaire sur la guitare, la sensation qui domine en moi est celle du regret de voir des facultés appliquées d'une manière peu utile; car un fait qui ne peut être contesté, c'est que la guitare est destinée à demeurer constamment dans un état complète d'infériorité à l'égard des autres instrumens, malgré tout le talent que des artistes tels que MM. Aguado et Huerta emploient à donner plus d'étendue à ses faibles ressources. M. Huerta est peu musicien, et l'harmonie dont il accompagne ses mélodies est quelquefois *étrange*.

<sup>22</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, vol. 12 (1832): 351.

Monsieur Huerta, l'un des guitaristes les plus remarquables que nous a fournis l'Espagne, donnera dans le cours du mois de novembre un concert où il fera entendre plusieurs morceaux de sa composition, entre autres une sonate religieuse dans laquelle il a placé des effets d'un genre nouveau. On sait que M. Huerta possède un talent d'exécution fort extraordinaire et fort original.



The concert seems to have been delayed to December:

The concert of M. Huerta is fixed definitely for the 14th of this month. It will take place in the Salle Taitbout. One will hear there some of the most distinguished artists of Paris. Tickets can be purchased at M. Pacini, boulevard des Italiens, no. 11, and at the principal music dealers.<sup>23</sup>

Two days later, on December 16, Huerta, together with Aguado and Sor (among others), participated in one of Fétis's "Historical Concerts." Amid works by Josquin Desprez, Henry VIII, Nicolas Gombert, Jean Mouton and Palestrina, a villancico by "Soto de la Puebla," was sung by six women to the accompaniment of eight guitars. This work so delighted the audience that it had to be repeated:

From all parts of the hall there also came cries of *bis* so that a Spanish *villancico* for six female voices, accompanied by eight guitars, might be heard a second time.<sup>24</sup>

In 1833 Huerta visited San Sebastián, there playing for the infante, Don Francisco de Paula "from 9 until 11."<sup>25</sup> Returning to Paris, he gave a farewell concert and set out once again for Spain, passing through Toulouse and Perpignan before arriving at Barcelona (where he gave three concerts: two in a salon, and the last in the theater). From Barcelona he sailed to Valencia, surviving a shipwreck in the gulf of San Jorge, after which he visited Alcarria, desirous of seeing his father after so many years' absence.

It was in February of the following year that Victor Hugo wrote Huerta a letter:

Since you give some value, Señor Huerta, to an opinion of such slight importance as mine, I am happy to tell you to what extent your talent has delighted me. The guitar, such a limited instrument, knows no bounds in your hands. You make it produce all sounds, all chords, all

melodies. You know how to draw from those few strings the most varied notes: those that speak to the soul, to the mind, to the heart. Your guitar is an orchestra. I love Spain and the Spaniards very much, Señor Huerta, and therefore the guitar as well—but especially in your hands. There it is not only a string that breathes; it is a voice, a true voice that sings, that speaks, and that weeps: one of those deep voices that makes those who are happy think and brings those who are sad to meditation. Believe me, Señor Huerta, that I have the greatest pleasure in communicating my ideas to you in this matter, and accept the assurance of the desire that I have to serve you. Paris, February 16, 1834. Victor Hugo.<sup>26</sup>

It was at this time, as well, that another French admirer, Madame Girardin Delfingay, wrote the following verses of praise.

To Monsieur Huerta  
After having heard him play the guitar;  
*improvisation of Mad. E. de G....*

Have you heard this Spanish troubadour?  
On his guitar he sings and sighs at the same time;  
His fingers have an accent, his strings a voice:  
His song is a harmonious poem without rhyme,  
All that one can experience, that one can dream, he  
expresses:  
Hearts are rejuvenated by his chords;  
That which has never been told so sweetly, so tenderly.  
His guitar, vibrating, speaks to you time and again,  
The language of the spirit, the language of love.  
Everyone recognizes there the instrument which inspires:  
For the composer it is an entire orchestra,  
For the delirious Basque it is the light drum,  
For the warrior it is the trumpet,  
For the poet: it is the lyre!<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Saldoni, 2:522.

Puesto que da V. algun valor, señor de Huerta, á una opinion tan poco importante como la mia, me contemplo feliz al explicarle hasta qué punto me ha encantado su habilidad. La guitarra, ese instrumento tan circunscrito, no reconoce límites entre sus manos. Usted le hace producir todos los sonidos, los acordes todos, todos los cantos. Usted sabe sacar de esas pocas cuerdas las notas más variadas, las que hablan al alma, al entendimiento, al corazón. La guitarra de V. es una orquesta. Gusto mucho de la España y de los españoles, señor de Huerta, y por consiguiente de la guitarra; pero sobre todo en las manos de V.: en ellas no es ya solamente una cuerda que suspira; es una voz, una verdadera voz que canta, que habla y que llora: una de esas voces profundas que hacen pensar á los que son dichosos y que inclinan á la meditacion á los que están tristes. Crea V., señor de Huerta, que tengo el mayor placer en comunicar mis ideas á V. en este particular, y acepte las seguididades del deseo que tengo de servirle. Paris 16 de Febrero de 1834.—Victor Hugo.

<sup>27</sup>Saldoni, 2:522-523.

<sup>23</sup>*La Revue Musicale*, vol. 12 (1832): 359.

Le concert de M. Huerta est fixé définitivement au 14 de ce mois; il aura lieu dans la Salle Taitbout. On y entendra quelques-uns des artistes les plus distingués de la capitale. On se procure des billets chez M. Pacini, boulevard des Italiens, no. 11, et chez les principaux marchands de musique.

<sup>24</sup>*Journal des débats*, December 22, 1832.

On a également crié *bis* de tous les parties de la salle pour entendre une seconde fois un *villancico* espagnol à six voix de femmes accompagnées par huit guitares.

<sup>25</sup>Saldoni, 2:521.



Now at the height of his career, it was in September of 1835 that the biography of Huerta, used by Saldoni, appeared in the *Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Málaga*. Sixteen years later, Mariano Soriano Fuertes included Huerta in his *Historia de la música española*.

Don Trinidad Huerta, from Orihuela, owes his skill to his genius. The press has made an apotheosis of this guitarist. After his having traversed the greater part of Europe and shone before princes and kings, the queen of Spain, Isabel II, bestowed upon him, in honor of his great merit, the cross of knighthood of the Order of Carlos III. Huerta's principal merit consists in the sweetness of the sounds that he produces, singing on the string. He plays exquisitely (*con primor*) thirds and also an extremely complicated arpeggio of his own invention. In his music one notes a lack of harmonic understanding. With his most delicate passages he continuously mixes a kind of *rasgueo*, to which he gives the name, *Tutis*, with which he extinguishes the illusion that inflames when he plucks the strings with passion. This contrast between good and bad was the cause for which Sors summed him up with the title, *sublime barbarian*, and that Aguado declared that he abused the instrument. If Huerta had refined his music, as the worker separates the wheat (for rational beings) from the chaff (for the beasts), there is no doubt that the most demanding experts would admire him, for when he sings, he delights.<sup>28</sup>

A. M. Huerta

Après L'Avoir Entendu Sur la Guitare  
improvisation de Mad. E. de G....

Heureux pays d'Andalousie,  
Garde ta joie et ta fierté,  
Ta noble part si bien choisie;  
Honneur, amour et poésie,  
Vaut mieux qu'argent et liberté!

L'avez-vous entendu, ce troubadour d'Espagne  
Qu'un art mélodieux aux combats accompagne?  
Sur sa guitare il chante et soupire à la fois;  
Ses doigts ont un accent, ses cordes une voix:  
Son chant est un poème harmonieux sans rime,  
Tout ce qui l'on éprouve, qu'on rêve ce qu'il l'exprime:  
Les cœurs à ses accords se sentent rajeunir;  
La beauté qui l'écoute, heureuse en souvenir,  
S'émeut, sourit, et pleure et croit entendre  
Ce qu'on lui dit jamais de plus doux, de plus tendre,  
Sa guitare, en vibrant, vous parle tour à tour,  
Le langage d'esprit, le langage d'amour;  
Chacun y reconnaît l'instrument qui l'inspire;  
Pour le compositeur c'est un orchestre entier  
C'est le tambour léger pour le Basque en délire;  
C'est le clairon pour le guerrier,  
Pour le poète, c'est la lyre!

<sup>28</sup>Soriano Fuertes, *Historia de la música española* (1851), 4:214. Quoted in Saldoni, 2:523-524.

In October of 1855 there were reports that Huerta had committed suicide. The *Gaceta Musical de Madrid*, however, doubted the reports:

We read in *l'Italia è Popolo*:

The celebrated Spanish guitarist, Huerta, has just ended his days, shooting himself in the heart with a pistol. His body was found in one of the least frequented streets of Nice. Before dying, he had written a letter, requesting that a certain amount of money in his possession be distributed to works of charity. He was supposed to give a concert in Nice, and the posters were already up.

This is not the first time that the newspapers have announced the death of Huerta, only to resuscitate him later, and it is very probable that it will be the same this time, inasmuch as we know that only a little while ago he gave some concerts in Spain, and we know for certain that very recently he was in the Escorial.<sup>29</sup>

Another article in the *Gaceta Musical* in November<sup>30</sup> marvelled that the Paris press was still reporting the death of Huerta. The guitarist's son finally clarified the situation.

D. Trinidad Huerta, natural de Orihuela, debe su habilidad á su ingenio. La prensa periódica ha hecho el apoteosis de este tocador de guitarra, que habiendo corrido gran parte de Europa, y lucido delante de principes y Reyes, la que lo es de España, Isabel II, le condecoró, en premio de su mérito, con la cruz de caballero de la Orden de Carlos III. El principal mérito de Huerta consiste en la dulzura de los sonidos que produce cantando sobre una cuerda. Hace con primor las terceras, y un arpegio sumamente complicado, que se debe á su invento. Su música se resiente de falta de conocimientos armónicos. Con sus pasos más delicados mezcla continuamente una especie de rasgueo, á qué da el nombre de *Tutis*, con los cuales apaga la ilusion que inflama cuando pulsa las cuerdas con halago. Este contraste de bueno y malo fué causa de que Sors le definiese con el nombre de *sublime barbaro*, y de que Aguado dijese que ultrajaba el instrumento. Si Huerta aventase su música como el Labrador aventada sus mies trilladas para dar el grano á los racionales y la paja á las bestias, no cabe duda de que sería admirado de los profesores más severos, porque cuando canta, encanta.

<sup>29</sup>*Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (October 28, 1855): 310.

See lee in *l'Italia è Popolo*:

El célebre guitarrista español Huerta acaba de poner fin á sus días, tirándose un pistoletazo en el corazón. Su cadáver se ha encontrado en una de las calles menos frecuentadas de Niza. Antes de morir, había escrito una carta recomendando se distribuyese en obras de beneficencia una cantidad de dinero que poseía. Debía dar un concierto en Niza, y ya los carteles estaban fijados.

No es la primera vez que los periódicos han anunciado la muerte de Huerta para resucitarlo otra vez, y sería a la vez probable que sucediese ahora lo mismo, pues sabemos que hace poco ha dado conciertos en algunas capitales de España, y nos consta de una manera positiva que hace muy poco tiempo se hallaba en el Escorial.

<sup>30</sup>*Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (November 11, 1855): 325.



Don Francisco Paula de la Huerta, son of the celebrated guitarist of this name, in a communication directed to the newspapers, denies the report of the death of his father, which the foreign newspapers have tried to affirm as true in spite of the indications that we made regarding the falsity of the claim. From this communication we learn that the person who died in Nice was Colonel Don Pedro Huerta, who had served in the ranks of Don Carlos, and who was the uncle, and not the father, of the writer of the communication.<sup>31</sup>

The guitarist, crushed by his brother's death, wrote a *Recuerdo Triste* (Op. 62) in his memory. This was the second suicide that had touched Huerta closely: in 1839 he had written a "Mélodie" for voice and piano upon the death of his friend, the great tenor, Adolphe Nourrit.<sup>32</sup> Whereas the *Mélodie* stirs no profound emotion, the *Recuerdo Triste* (for guitar alone), in a somber D minor, is quite moving. It also exhibits something of the "strange" harmony remarked upon by his contemporaries. Given the morose sentiment of the piece, the rough harmony is actually effective. Especially touching are the spoken words, "Adios Perico," written in the score at the last line.

The *Recuerdo Triste* was published in Paris by Huerta's pupil, G. Baccelleri, a graduate of the University of Bologna, to whom he dedicated his *Fantaisie* in A minor (no opus number). Baccelleri also published Huerta's *Grande Fantaisie sur le thème de la Cachucha Nationale*, Op. 64—in one printing dedicated to the violinist, José Bousquet, and in another to "amateurs de la guitare." One of Huerta's more substantial works, the *Symphonie Fantastique: Souvenir d'une soirée a Passy*, Op. 63, dedicated to Édouard Dentu, was published by Gauvin, presumably in about 1855 as well.

In March of 1856 Huerta arrived in Madrid, en route from Lisbon,<sup>33</sup> to play a concert before the

<sup>31</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (December 2, 1855): 350.

D. Francisco Paula de la Huerta, hijo del célebre guitarrista de este nombre, en un comunicado dirigido á los periódicos, desmiente la noticia de la muerte de su padre, que los periódicos extranjeros se han empeñado en dar por cierta á pesar de las indicaciones que hemos hecho acerca de la falsedad es esta noticia. Del dicho comunicado se desprende que la persona que ha fallecido en Niza, se llamaba D. Pedro Huerta, coronel, que había servido en las filas de D. Carlos, y que era tío, y no padre del comunicante.

<sup>32</sup> Nourrit flung himself out of his hotel window in Naples after a fit of depression occasioned by the warm reception of a concert the previous day: he thought the applause was insincere.

<sup>33</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (February 24, 1856): 62.

Queen—although it seems that she was unable to attend:

Señora:

With all respect I present to Your Majesty, that, with the flattering idea that the magnanimous heart and goodness of your soul will accept the invitation that I allow myself to make, I do so, if not so that Your Majesty might honor my concert with your presence, at least you might receive the tickets, which are therefore attached.

May God watch over the precious life of Your Majesty.

Madrid, March 25, 1856.

Señora.

A.L.R.P.D.V.M. [At the Royal Feet of Your Majesty]  
F.T. Huerta.

March 24. So advised, Her Majesty charged her principal majordomo to tell the interested party that she regretted not being able to attend, and was returning the tickets so that he might make use of them by selling them.<sup>34</sup>

The performance was originally scheduled to take place in the Teatro Real, and to include singers from the Italian Opera company and other Spanish musicians: Alajmo, Galvani, Beneventano, Sarmiento.<sup>35</sup> The lengthy concert, which was given instead in the concert hall of the Conservatorio de Música (adjacent to the Teatro Real) included the following works performed by Huerta:

*Fantasia* on themes of Rossini.

*Recuerdos de España en Inglaterra*, romanza.

*Bolero* (original).

*Jaleo de bravura*.

*Fantasia* on a theme of Sor, played with the left hand.

*Variations* on the National Anthem.

*Fandango nacional* (improvised).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Papeles de Barbieri*, 14.032-157 (Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, *Biografías y Documentos sobre Música y Músicos Españoles (Legado Barbieri)*, vol. 1, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Fundación Banco Exterior, 1986): 261.

Señora:

Con todo respecto expongo a V.M. que abrigando la halagüeña idea de que el magnánimo corazón y bondad de alma de V.M. acogerán la invitación que me permito, hago la misma, si no para que V.M. se digne honrar con su presencia mi concierto musical, si al menos para que se sirva recibir los billetes que para ello son adjuntos. Dios guarde la preciosa vida de V.M.

Madrid, 25 de marzo de 1856.

Señora.

A.L.R.P.D.V.M.

F.T. Huerta.

24 de marzo. Enterada S.M. se sirvió encargar a su mayordomo mayor que se dijera al interesado que sentía no poder asistir devolviéndole los billetes para que pudiera utilizarlos expendiéndolos.

<sup>35</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (March 9, 1856): 77.

<sup>36</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (March 23, 1856): 93.



Lith. de Thierry freres.

# RECUERDO TRISTE

*Composici6n de Viol6n.*

à D.<sup>a</sup> Pedro Huerta y Catarina.

par son frère

## T. HEURTA.

(Euv. 62.

Prix. 5<sup>f</sup>

à Paris Chez G. Baccellieri Rue Vivienne N<sup>o</sup> 47  
et Chez tous les principaux marchands de Musique





# RECUERDO TRISTE.

Composé et Dedicé

à D<sup>r</sup>. PEDRO HUERTA - CATURLA.

par

Son Frère TRINITARIO HUERTA.



And<sup>te</sup> sostenuto

La 6<sup>e</sup> Corde en Ré.

con espressione.

The musical score is written for guitar on a single staff. It begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The tempo is marked 'And<sup>te</sup> sostenuto'. The piece is dedicated to Pedro Huerta-Caturla and composed by his brother Trinitario Huerta. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, common time signature, dynamic markings (f, p), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like 'con espressione', 'morendo', and 'ri-tar-dando'. The music features complex chordal textures and melodic lines.



And<sup>te</sup> mosso.



trinando

Coda.

Ped:

en la 2. Corda

rall<sup>o</sup>

adios

Perico.

Fine



# Fantaisie.

*POUR*

GUITARE

*de G. Baccelieri*

*à son élève*

G. BACCELIERI.

*Romain*

*Gradué de l'Université de Bologne.*

P. A. R.

T. HUERTA.

*Prix - 4.<sup>s</sup> - net*

*A PARIS, chez G. BACCELIERI, Rue Vivienne, 17.  
et chez tous les Principaux Marchands de Musique.*



# FANTASIE.



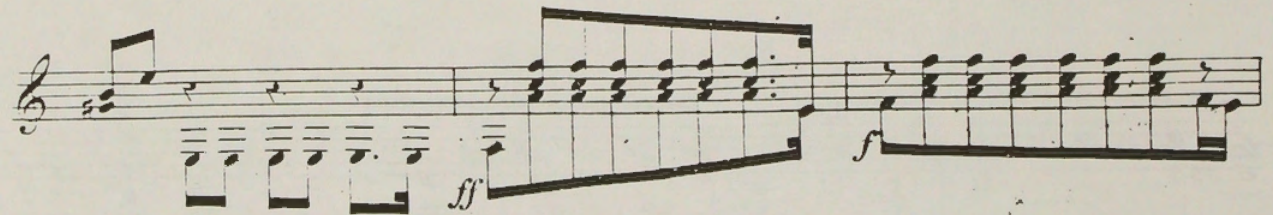
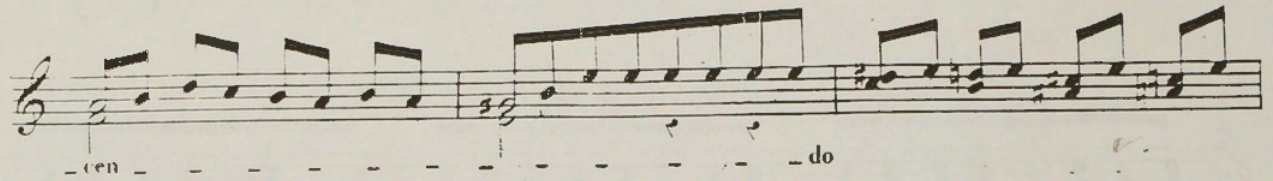
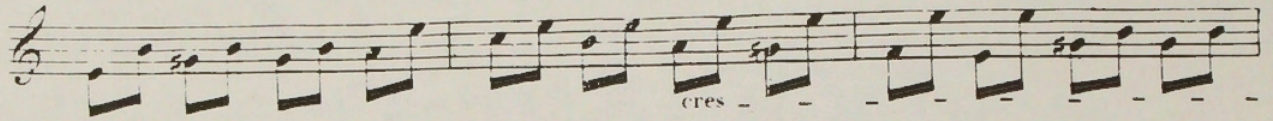
INTRODUCTION . *Largo.*

*p* *f*

*f* *p* *f*

con espressione.

staccato, e a tempo.





The first musical staff features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a series of chords and melodic fragments. The first part consists of several chords with eighth notes. The second part shows a descending melodic line with eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed at the end of the staff.

The second musical staff continues the piece with a treble clef and one sharp. It features a series of chords with eighth notes, some of which are beamed together. The dynamics are consistent with the first staff.

The third musical staff shows a sequence of chords with eighth notes. It includes dynamic markings of *p* (piano) and *f* (forte) alternating throughout the staff.

The fourth musical staff continues the chordal sequence with eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is visible in the middle of the staff.

The fifth musical staff shows a continuation of the chordal texture with eighth notes. There are some slurs and accents over the notes.

The sixth and final musical staff on the page features a treble clef and one sharp. It concludes with a series of chords and a melodic flourish. A dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) is placed at the end of the staff.



ritar . . . dan . . .

- do. ri - - tar - - dan - - do.

harm:

calenza a tempo.





Allegretto piu mosso.

FINAL.

can - ta - bi -

le -

a tempo.

CODA

FIN.

T. Huerta.



The National Anthem was of course the *Himno de Riego*. No mention was made in the announcements or reviews of its being Huerta's composition.

After all the fanfare that preceded Huerta's performance, the reviewer for the *Gaceta* was disappointed:

Señor Huerta, if we have to express our opinion frankly, did not amaze us, as we had hoped, in the various pieces announced in the program.

The mania to want to make a concert instrument out of the guitar, and to oblige it to interpret ideas for which it does not have sufficient means adequate for expression, is precisely the cause of the neglect and abandon in which it finds itself today, and that will last a long time, if effort is not made to maintain it in the line to which it corresponds within the great family of instruments, writing properly according to its true nature and to its natural means of expression. There was a large audience and the artists reaped an abundant harvest of bravos and applause.<sup>37</sup>

The criticisms, however, were less against Huerta than against the guitar in general. Although the critic is correct in observing the futility of trying to promote the guitar by pretending to play inappropriate music upon it (Rossini variations), nevertheless the well-known guitarist Antonio Cano (1811-1897) submitted the following defense:

Having seen that which was said of the guitar in the 13th issue of the *Gaceta Musical*, in speaking of the concert given by Sr. Huerta in the salon of the Conservatorio, and in spite of the fact that the judgments formed by very learned critics with respect to this instrument are entirely distinct from that submitted by the *Gaceta*, I believe I have a duty to express to the latter that the "mania of wanting to turn the guitar into a concert instrument" is due, without any doubt, to the mania that the intelligent public has everywhere for applauding performers, admir-

<sup>37</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (March 30, 1856): 101.

El Sr. Huerta, si hemos de decir sin rebozo nuestra opinión, no nos sorprendió como esperábamos, en la ejecución de las varias piezas anunciadas en el programa.

La mania de querer hacer de la guitarra un instrumento de concierto, y de obligarla á interpretar ideas para las cuales no cuenta con medios suficientes y adecuados de espresión, es precisamente la causa del olvido y abandono en que hoy se encuentra, y que durará por largo tiempo, si no se procura mantenerla en la línea que le corresponde entre la gran familia instrumental, escribiéndole con arreglo á su verdadera naturaleza y á sus medios naturales de espresión. La concurrencia fué numerosa, y los artistas recogieron abundante cosecha de bravos y aplausos.

ing at the same time the beauties of an instrument that, with our disapproval is more appreciated in other countries where no consideration of nationality merits it. And if the intelligentsia of the musical world were not to have applauded the eminent Sors in Paris and other cities, the latter would not have fallen into the "mania" of making it heard in philharmonic circles, in which so many others have since participated, being equally applauded, and making the guitar a concert instrument, worthy, therefore, of capturing the attention of a chosen people, if the artist knows how to draw from it the wealth it contains.

The cause of the neglect into which the guitar has fallen, according to the opinion of the author of the article (which is far from being true), and from which abandon it will not escape, if effort is not made to write with attention to its nature, we also deny, since for this one must first examine all the compositions which have been written and which are being written at present. And if they do not seem to be written in accord with means of expression and character of the guitar, could you please indicate these, certain of the gratitude of all guitarists, and in particular that of your dearest friend,  
Your Servant, Who Kisses Your Hands.

Antonio Cano.<sup>38</sup>

The *Gaceta's* lengthy response on April 13 revolved around the notion that what they had decried

<sup>38</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (April 6, 1856): 109.

Habiendo visto lo que se dice de la guitarra en el número 13 de la *Gaceta Musical* al hablar del concierto dado por el Sr. Huerta en el salon del Conservatorio, y sin embargo de que el juicio formado por críticos muy entendidos con respecto á este instrumento sea enteramente diverso del emitido por el de la *Gaceta*, me creo en el deber de manifestar á este, que la mania de querer hacer de la guitarra un instrumento de concierto, es debida sin duda alguna á la mania que el público inteligente en todas partes tiene de aplaudir con entusiasmo á los concertistas, admirando á la vez las bellezas de un instrumento que, con mengua nuestra, es mas apreciado en otros paises donde ninguna consideracion de nacionalidad les merece. Y si la inteligencia del mundo musical no hubiese aplaudido en Paris y otras capitales al eminente Sors, no hubiera caído este en la mania de hacerse oír en los círculos filarmónicos, y de la cual han participado cuantos le han sucedido después, siendo aplaudidos igualmente y haciendo de la guitarra un instrumento de concierto, digno por lo tanto de cautivar la atencion de un público escogido, si el artista sabe sacar de él los recursos que encierra.

La causa del olvido en que ha caído la guitarra, segun el parecer del articulista (lo cual está muy lejos de ser cierto), y de cuyo abandono no saldrá, si no se procura escribir con arreglo á su naturaleza, tambien la negamos, pues para esto debe examinar primero todas las composiciones que se han escrito y se escriben en la actualidad, y si no las encuentra con arreglo á los medios de espresion y carácter de la guitarra, podría indicarnos cuáles sean estos, seguro de contar con el aprecio de todos los guitarristas, y en particular con el de su amigo afectísimo S.S.Q.B.S.M.

Antonio Cano.

was not the guitar, but the intent to write unidomatic music for the instrument. This amounted to the same thing, for the only music that the writer deemed appropriate was the accompaniment of simple songs and the like. To support this stance, the writer quotes an opinion that he credits (without documentary warrant) to François-Joseph Fétis:

Everyone knows how limited the guitar is in its potential: it does not seem destined to anything more than lightly sustaining the voice in little vocal pieces, such as romances, songs, boleros, etc. But some artists have not been content with this weak merit, and have wanted to overcome the disadvantages of a weak sound, the difficulties of fingering and the limited range of the instrument. Carulli was the first to tackle the execution of difficulties on the guitar and who, with these, managed to excite admiration. Sor, Carcassi, Huerta, and Aguado have raised this art to the highest degree of perfection: *if the guitar were capable of occupying a place in music, properly speaking*, these virtuosos, without a doubt, would have effected the miracle; *but for such a metamorphosis, the obstacles are insurmountable.*<sup>39</sup>

By this time, Huerta was 52, not quite the dashing bohemian of the days of world adventure in the 1820s and 1830s. He was not able to make ends meet and wrote to the composer, Barbieri, in 1857, begging financial assistance.

Madrid, February 7, 1857

Sr. de Barbieri

My dear Señor and esteemed friend:

My position is so completely disgraced, that I beg you that you contribute some aid, on the word of companions who have affirmed to you my need. In spite of all that I have done, I have no more recourse and find myself in the need of begging from You your protection and that you might send all that you please and I will serve you in any way that I can. To the

<sup>39</sup> *Gaceta Musical de Madrid* (April 13, 1856): 117.

Todo el mundo sabe cuán limitada es la guitarra en sus recursos: ella no parece destinada mas que á sostener ligeramente la voz en pequeñas piezas vocales, como ramanzas, canciones, boleros, etc. Pero algunos artistas no se han contentado con este débil mérito, y han querido vencer las desventajas de un sonido débil (maigre), las dificultades de digitación y la limitada estension del instrumento. Carulli fué el primero que emprendió la ejecucion de dificultades en la guitarra, y que consiguió con ellas escitar la admiracion. Sor, Carcassi, Huerta y Aguado han llevado este arte al mas alto grado de perfeccion: *si la guitarra pudiera ocupar un lugar en la música, propiamente dicha*, es indudable que estos virtuosos hubieran efectuado el milagro; *pero para una metamórfosis semejante, los obstáculos son insuperables.*

Kindest of Sirs, he Who Kisses Your Hands.  
Francisco Trinidad Huerta.<sup>40</sup>

A similar letter was sent in May:

My dear friend, Barbieri:

At this very moment I have just had a squabble with the landlord, for not having been able, because of Romea's delay, to go on, as I desired, with my benefit concert; and I wish that you might advance me 11 napoleons, which I will return to you the night of my benefit. And at the same time, please forgive this directness that I take with you, and that for no reason would I want to take with anyone—since the great interest you take in me is well known. Be so good as to remind our friend Gastambide that my benefit should be next week since I am in such a bad way and quite desperate.

Your deepest friend,

Huerta

Today, Friday, May 30

Preciados, 20 Second Floor<sup>41</sup>

Disappearing henceforth from the concert stage, he probably eked out a living in his home town by teaching. He died, forgotten, in 1875, not even the exact date being recorded. He deserved better. His life and his music reflect the brief glimmer of an early Romantic, whose influence in Paris helped kindle such diverse spirits as George Sand, Prosper Mérimée, Victor Hugo, and Georges Bizet.

<sup>40</sup> *Papeles de Barbieri*, 14.032-158.

Madrid, 7 febrero 57

Sr. de Barbieri muy Sr. mio, y estimado amigo:

Mi posicion es tan sumamente desgraciada, que le ruego a U. contribuya con algun auxilio en compañía de los demás compañeros que ya me han dado palabra de creer en mi obsequio. Todo lo que puedo. No tengo ya ningun recurso me veo en la necesidad de rogar a U. su proteccion y mande todo lo que guste y pueda servirlo en todo lo yo pueda a S.S. A.mo a Q.B.L.M.

Francisco Trinidad Huerta

<sup>41</sup> *Papeles de Barbieri*, 14.032-159.

Mi querido amigo Barbieri:

En este mismo momento acabo de tener una desazon con el propietario de casa no habiendo podido cumplir como yo deseaba por el retardo de Romea con mi beneficio, y quisiera que V. me adelante 11 napoleones los que devolveré a V. la noche de mi beneficio, y al mismo tiempo me disimule V. esta franqueza que yo me tomo con V. y que por ningun pretexto me la quiero tomar con nadie pues es conocido el grande interes que V. se toma por mi—tenga V. la bondad de recordar al amigo Gastambide que mi beneficio sea para la semana que viene pues estoy de un modo tan malo y bastante apuradísimo.

S.A. de corazón,

Huerta

Hoy viernes, 30 mayo

Preciados, 20 2<sup>do</sup>