

Mp3 Disk # 1

The Complete Solo Guitar Music of Fernando Sor

1-6. Six Divertimenti Op. 1 A divertimento by Sor can be any relatively short work. This set of six were first published in London around 1814. The six pieces are respectively 1. Minuet, 2. Waltz, 3. Larghetto, 4. Minuet, 5. Andante with Variations, and 6. March. Of special note in this set is the exquisite, but seldom performed, Larghetto. Also a word about the two minuets. They, like so many from Sor of this period, seem to be derived from early Baroque minuets in both style and their binary form. They are but one example of Sor "looking back" to past styles **Timing:** Op.1#1-1:46, #2-1:59, #3-5:06, #4-1:26, #5-8:04, #6-3:06

7-12. Six Divertimenti Op. 2. This opus consists of 1. Minuet, 2. Waltz, 3. Andantino, 4. Minuet, 5. Waltz and 6. Siciliana. These two minuets are two more examples of Sor's earlier "Baroque" style binary minuets. The lovely Andantino is a very popular work, having been recorded by Llobet, Segovia and many more recent artists. The equally lovely Siciliana is practically unknown and seldom performed, demonstrating why one should investigate *all* of Sor's works before making any decisions about his true greatness. **Timing:** Op.2#1-1:16, #2-1:01, #3-3:54, #4-1:52, #5-1:46, #6-7:20

13-14. Theme, Variations and Minuet, Op. 3 Sor uses this theme and several of the variations (with some alterations) for his Fantasia Op. 12, but in this, the evident earlier work, not only are they in a different order but many details of rhythm etc. are different making this a separate work unto itself. It is interesting that there exists a manuscript version of the minuet for piano. There are two early editions of this work, the Castro (which does not include the minuet) and the Meissonnier. I prefer and use the later for this performance. **Timing:** Op. 3, a)-8:20, b)-2:15

15. Fantasia, Op. 4 This work consists of a short introduction and a high spirited and delightful rondo-Allegretto with a 6/8 time signature. (This is very common with Sor.) This is the first of many works by Sor that was designated as a Fantasia although it is called "2nd Fantasia" in its earliest published edition. Could it be possible that there is an earlier Fantasia that was never published or has since been lost? **Timing:** 6:04

16-21. Six Petites Pieces, Op. 5 Why Sor sometimes labels these short works as "Petites Pieces" as opposed to "Divertimenti" (as in Op. 1 and 2) is unknown, but the concept of the two seems to be identical in that they are miniatures in related keys. This set contains: 1. Minuet, 2. Waltz, 3. Minuet, 4. Allegro (Rondo), 5. Andante Largo, 6. Unnamed (but a typical Waltz or Landler). Especially noteworthy in this set is the exhilarating Allegro (Rondo) with the humorous "wrong" notes - a fine example of Sor in a rambunctious mood. Also I should mention easily the most famous work of the set, the beautiful Andante Largo. **Timing:** Op. 5#1-0:56, #2-1:25, #3-1:25, #4-4:21, #5-7:41, #6-:1:02

22-33. Twelve Etudes Op. 6 Sor's Twenty Studies collected and edited by Segovia are amongst his most famous works. Actually he wrote 121 etudes in six sets and a great many of them, in my opinion, are at least as fine as any in the Segovia collection. Among my favorites in the Op. 6 set are number 3, with its somewhat mundane pattern that Sor

miraculously turns into a gem, number 5 with its almost Bachian harmonies within its arpeggios, numbers 7 and 11 with their flowing lyricism, and the chorale like number 8. (Another example of Sor “looking back” to previous styles.) The most unusual of all of Sor’s etudes is number 10, a two movement work, the first being a brilliant study in broken octaves ending on the dominant seventh, and the second a fine musicianly arrangement of *God Save the King*. A special note on number 11 in Em. Much has been made in certain recent guitar publications about the fact that the Segovia edition (#17) of this piece is somewhat different from the earliest published edition of 1815. The claim is made that the Segovia version is not authentic Sor and that Segovia arbitrarily made changes to suit his own fancy etc. I do not know what the source material for this Segovia edition was (It was *not* the Coste version of “Sor’s” method of 1845), but I do feel it to be superior to the earlier edition and therefore I choose to ignore so-called “modern scholarship” and I play this work as written in Segovia’s edition. **Timing:** Op. 6#1-1:54, #2-1:38, #3-2:43, #4-2:59, #5-3:07, #6-1:50, #7-3:06, #8-1:51, #9-2:45, #10-3:15, #11-3:39, #12-6:19

34-35. Fantasia Op. 7 This is the first of eight large works (Op. 7, 10, 12, 16, 20, 30, 46 and 54) in which Sor begins with a slow movement, moves directly into a set of variations and concludes with a brilliant coda or finale. Other commentators have viewed these opening movements as “introductions” (and indeed sometimes the early printed editions name them as such), but they are of such length and have such a multiplicity of themes that I feel it is more accurate to describe them as separate movements. In the earliest published edition, this music was printed on two staves similar to piano music. This is the only guitar work of Sor to be published in this manner. It is dedicated to Ignace Pleyel (1757-1831), Pianist and composer (student of Haydn) and founder of the Pleyel piano firm. **Timing:** 20:17

36-41. Six Divertimenti Op. 8 This is the third set of “divertimenti” of Sor and is very similar to the two earlier sets (Op. 1 and Op. 2). This set consists of 1. Minuet, 2. Waltz, 3. Andantino, 4. Allegretto Scherzoso, 5. March and 6. Waltz. **Timing:** Op.8 #1-1:39, #2-1:03, #3-4:01, #4-2:29, #5-1:42, #6-2:01

42. Introduction and Variations Op. 9 This set of variations (on Oh Cara Armonia [Das klinget so herrlich] from Mozart's Magic Flute) is easily Sor's most popular work. (To my knowledge it has been commercially recorded over 80 times.) One can understand why. This is virtuoso variation writing of the highest order. Interestingly Sor considerably alters Mozart's theme to suit his individual concept of variation form. **Timing:** 9:13

43-44. Fantasia Op. 10 This work must be played with the sixth string tuned to F. This scordatura is almost entirely unique to Sor and entirely unique to that era. Although this work is not as lengthy as its predecessor (Op. 7), it shows considerable progress in Sor's evolution of the form. Like Op. 7 it opens with a slow movement (Andante Largo). But this time the opening theme is similar and related to the main theme of the subsequent variations. And this same main theme is brought back and further (and contrapuntally) developed in the finale. In short this is a much more unified work than Op. 7. Sor continued to develop this formal concept in his Op. 12, Op. 16, Op. 20, Op. 30, Op.46 and Op. 54 works. **Timing:** 14:01

45. Variations in C Op. 11a, 58. Variations in F Op 11c. Two examples of Sor's mastery of variation form. By curious coincidence, neither set has a tonic minor variation

- but one does not miss it because the level of invention in both sets is so high. **Timing:** Op. 11a-13:30, Op.11c-10:26

46-57. Twelve Minuets Op. 11b It is my opinion that the binary minuets of Sor are among his most intriguing miniatures. Even though Sor sticks to the earlier “Baroque” binary form, for the most part, these minuets show considerable development over those in the Divertimenti of Op. 1, 2, 5, and 8. What began as a Baroque, early classically tinged “throwback,” in this opus becomes an early 19th century form unique to Sor. To some extent, he did for the binary minuet what Chopin did for the mazurka. Many of these pieces have one inspired idea after another. The first three of these minuets are also landmarks in that they are the earliest examples of the tuning which toward the end of the 19th century became common in guitar music (Sixth to D and Fifth to G). **Timing:** Op. 11b#1-3:11, #2-2:25, #3-3:22, #4-3:36, #5-2:45, #6-2:41, #7-3:22, #8-3:26, #9-4:36, #10-3:35, #11-3:26, #12-2:21

59-60. Fantasia Op. 12 In this work we can once again see the progress in Sor's development of this form. It is similar to the previous Op. 10 work but much more extended. This work consists of three movements performed without pause: 1. Larghetto Cantabile, 2. Andante con moto with seven variations and 3. Finale that further develops the theme and after this presents an eighth variation before concluding. This beautiful work, like most of Sor's Fantasias, is largely unknown to modern audiences. Yet it is my feeling that perhaps Sor's most creative and original music is contained in this form. **Timing:** 18:16

61-66. Six Divertimenti Op. 13 This opus is similar to Sor's previous sets of divertimenti (Op. 1, 2 and 8). The pieces are as follows: 1. Minuet, 2. Waltz, 3. Andantino, 4. Cantabile (This is essentially the same piece as the minuet Op. 11b #12). 5. A beautiful Andante Pastorale and 6. March. **Timing:** Op. 13#1-1:43, #2-1:18, #3-3:36, #4-1:59, #5-4:11, #6-2:33

67. Sonata No. 1 in D, Op. 14 This work, which is also known as *Grand Solo*, was first published in Paris about 1810, approximately 3 years before Sor was permanently exiled from Spain. Therefore it was undoubtedly written in Spain for a Spanish audience. Indeed it is permeated with a very special quality of Spanish “duende.” It is a very well-known piece and in a sense stands above Sor's other solo guitar works as a defining masterpiece. In this 1810 edition (which I use for this recording) there are many surprising harmonic shifts and dramatic effects that are noticeably absent from later editions. This leads me to view the work as a highly charged early Romantic sonata as opposed to the Haydnesque “classical” work it has usually been conceived as. **Timing:** 15:01

68-69. Variations on Les Folias D'Espagne and a Minuet Op. 15a This two-movement work is but one of many sets of variations on Les Folies D'Espagne. For guitar there are two other contemporaneous sets by Carulli and Giuliani plus the later (1930) monumental set with a fugue by Ponce. The most notable sets for other instruments are those by Corelli, Liszt and Rachmaninoff. Sor's set, by comparison is miniature. But coupled with the lovely minuet (which for some strange reason has rarely been played with the variations) it is one of Sor's more charming works. **Timing:** Variations-3:27, Minuet-2:21

70. Sonata Op. 15b This single movement sonata, like Op. 14, was originally published around 1810 and was also (like Op. 14) undoubtedly written in Spain for a Spanish audience. But unlike Op. 14 it has few Spanish overtones. Indeed it is in perfect sonata-allegro form and reminiscent of Haydn and Mozart. It is the only such “classic”

movement (Although the finale of the Fantasia Op. 30 comes close) that Sor wrote for solo guitar. (His other sonata-allegros are quite unorthodox.) **Timing:** 8:33

71. Theme Varie Op. 15c This has the same theme as the Op. 11a Variations. Also several variations are similar. It may therefore be an earlier version of the more extended Op. 11a set. **Timing:** 7:40

72-73. Fantasia: Variations on Paisiello's NelCor Pui non mi sento Op. 16 While Sor's variations on Les Folias(Op. 15a) are miniature, his variations on the equally famous (at least at that time) theme by Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) are monumental. Many early 19th century composers, including Beethoven, varied this theme, but none with the magnificent grandeur of Sor. Indeed this work may very well be Sor's finest masterpiece. It is at once a work of classic perfection and deep romantic expression. It opens with an Andante Largo, the first three chords of which prepare us for a work of huge proportions (at least for guitar). This movement proceeds through various permutations and then "introduces" the theme (from the opera The Miller's Wife). I feel that this movement is one of the more profound things to flow from Sor's pen. We are then taken through nine variations on the theme which build with great inspiration and inexorable logic. Within these variations, he uses all the resources and colors of the guitar to the fullest. One variation (#4), features chords interspersed with delicate harmonics, another soaring variation (#7), features tremolo (a la Sor - it is different from the later tremolo of Regondi, Tarrega or Barrios). Of special note is the dramatic and chromatic third variation, the fifth variation in parallel sixths with its continuous motion and drive, and the eighth variation with a single line throughout. Ironically there is an indication in the earliest published edition to play this entire variation with the left hand alone and there are similar directions for a section of the Op. 59 Fantasia. Besides working on this left-hand-alone technique myself, I have listened to performances by other guitarists of both Op. 16 and Op. 59 using it and have found it completely unsatisfying, therefore I feel that in neither case does it make much musical sense to follow these instructions and I play these passages using both hands in the standard manner. (One wonders, were these Sor's instructions? - unfortunately we have no manuscripts which might answer this question, and if they were Sor's instructions, how did he produce a satisfying musical effect with this technique?)

I believe this work to be music of the highest order and yet it is practically unknown and unplayed today. For those skeptics who still believe that Sor was incapable of producing great and inspired masterpieces, I suggest that they listen to and study this magnificent music. **Timing:** 26:31

74-85. Six Waltzes Op. 17, Six Waltzes Op. 18 Sor wrote a great many miniature waltzes, probably mostly for amateurs. (He also wrote concert waltzes as movements in many of his later large works.) For the most part, there are no tempo indications on these miniature pieces. Indeed many of them resemble the slower landler of Beethoven and Schubert (and later Bruckner and Mahler). The lovely Op. 17 number 5 is a noteworthy example of such. It seems that Sor did not make a distinction between these two miniature styles but simply viewed them as slow or fast waltzes. **Timing:** Op. 17#1-2:35, #2-1:37, #3-1:20, #4-2:45, #5-3:23, #6-1:57, Op. 18#1-2:05, #2-2:18, #3-2:10, #4-2:27, #5-1:31, #6-2:24

86-91. Six Airs from The Magic Flute of Mozart Op. 19 These six excerpts from Mozart's Opera are the only examples we have of Sor the transcriber. Later guitarists (Tarrega, Llobet, Barrios, Segovia and Bream) have indeed developed an ongoing tradition of transcribing works of the masters for the guitar. Perhaps we could say that this tradition started with Sor and these six little gems. (Of course this is only true as it pertains to the modern six-string guitar - The 16th century vihuelists and lutenists transcribed many vocal works from the masters of their period.) These Airs are as follows: 1. Marche religieuse, (No. 9 'Marcia,' Act II) 2. Fuggite o voi bella fallace,(No. 11 Duetto "Bewahret euch vor Weibertucken," Act II) 3. Giu san ritorno I Genii amici,(No. 16 Terzetto "Seid uns zum zweiten Mal willkommen," Act II) 4. O dolce armonia, (No. 8 "Das klinget so herrlich," Act I) 5. Se potesse un suono, (No. 8 "Konnte jeder brave Mann," Act I) 6. Grand Isi grand' Osiri (No. 18 "O Isis und Osiris, welche Wonne!" Act II) **Timing:** Op. 19#1-3:04, #2-1:00, #3-2:22, #4-1:41, #5-1:36, #6-2:42

86-91. Introduction and Theme Varie Op. 20 This work is in the same form as the Fantasias Op. 7, 10, 12, 16, 30 and the Morceau de Concert Op. 54. Why this and the Op. 54 works are not also designated as Fantasias is a mystery. The proper categorization of Sor's works and the quirks of early 19th century publishing are subjects which should be addressed in future research on Sor. In any case Op. 20 is a masterly work consisting of three movements performed without pause: 1. Larghetto, 2. Theme and Variations and 3. Finale. **Timing:** 14:55

94. Fantasia Op. 21 Les Adieux Sor dedicated this work to a well-known London based violinist Francesco Vaccari. What is the significance of the title? It is an evident mystery like many of the other programs and titles of Sor's works. Sor unfortunately has been obscure for so long that it is unlikely that we shall ever fully understand these things. This work opens with a free flowing Andante Largo which moves directly into a driving, tightly constructed allegro. **Timing:** 5:28

95-98. Grand Sonata Op. 22 This sonata is one of two four movement "grand sonatas" of Sor (the other being Op. 25). It may very well be an early work and written in Spain sometime before Sor's exile. (Sor scholar, Brian Jeffery believes it to be so because of the dedication of the work to "The Prince of Peace" who was Manuel Godoy (1767-1851) an important Spanish diplomat of the pre-Napoleon era. Godoy also spent much time in Paris during the post-Napoleon era when Sor was also active in Paris, so in my opinion there is also the possibility that this work was dedicated to Godoy at this later time.) For some strange reason the opening two movements are seldomly performed, yet the minuet and rondo-finale are among Sor's most performed pieces. The opening Allegro with its rich modulations and surprising key changes, is certainly one of the more dramatic and brilliant of his sonata-allegros. And the following Adagio is a sublimely beautiful movement. Beside the apparent beauties of this entire work, it is a possible milestone in guitar literature - it may be the first multi-movement "grand sonata" of consequence to be written for the instrument. **Timing:** Op. 22a)-9:53, b)-10:19, c)-3:37, d)-4:06

99-104. Six Divertimenti Op. 23 These divertimenti are as follows: 1. Waltz, 2. Allegretto, 3. Waltz, 4. Minuet, 5. Allemande and 6. Waltz. **Timing:** Op. 23 #1-1:10, #2-1:13, #3-1:06, #4-3:20, #5-0:36, #6-1:16

105-112. Eight Petites Pieces Op. 24 In 6 of the 8 pieces this opus features the key of F with the sixth string tuned to F. Of these pieces, two are allegrettos (#3 and 7) and six are minuets (#1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8). Indeed these are the last binary minuets by Sor to be published. At this time the minuet was quickly becoming passe, so perhaps Sor decided to concentrate on the increasingly popular waltz as his main miniature dance form. Noteworthy in this set is the stately and dramatic Minuet in C minor. **Timing:** Op. 24 #1-3:03, #2-1:27, #3-1:26, #4-3:27, #5-2:26, #6-2:01, #7-2:46, #8-1:58

113-116. Grand Sonata Op. 25 This, the last work that Sor designated as a “Sonata” is, in my opinion, a sprawling masterpiece and its concept of grandeur has not been since equaled in guitar music and was completely unprecedented and original in its time. (With the possible exception of certain of Sor’s other works). Actually, this work is more 19th century than Sor’s other works in this genre, it opens with a tragic (even pathetic) Andante Largo in C minor. Although this movement’s form has its own science, it is a far cry from traditional Sonata form. It has been said that this is simply an introduction to the main sonata-allegro movement (in the tonic major) except that this alleged “introduction” is easily the longest movement of the work, beside which the second movement also sharply digresses from traditional sonata form. The third movement is a fine set of variations and the fourth movement a tiny and perfect classic minuet-allegro with trio. Despite the strange form and irregular ordering of movements of this work, it has a logic of its own and shows Sor to have evolved toward a much freer and 19th century approach to the sonata than most commentators have acknowledged. Ironically, Sor’s large works after this were named Fantasia, Serenade, Morceau de Concert etc. but he did produce a perfect sonata movement as the finale of his Fantasia Op. 30, whereas this work which carries the sonata label does not have one movement which can truly be described as sonata form. **Timing:** Op. 25 a & b-14:56, c-8:35, d-2:52

117. Introduction and Variations Op. 26 This gentle theme, sometimes attributed to Pergolisi is called Que ne suis-je la fougere. It is one of Sor’s finest short sets of variations. They are in the key of A minor except for the slower third variation which is in the tonic major (A major). This is the reverse of the norm for the era where the isolated tonic minor variation is the slower one. Sor also does this reversal in his Fantasia Op. 30. This seems to be a rarity in other music from the period and is something of an original touch of Sor. **Timing:** 6:58

118. Introduction and Variations Op. 27 The theme of this set of variations is Gentil Housard. This tune was also known as La Hongroise and was quite popular in early 19th century Paris. **Timing:** 9:33

119. Introduction and Variations Op. 28 This set of variations is based on the French folksong Marlborough s’en va-t’en guerre. The tune is best known in English speaking countries as For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow. This is an unusually happy, good-natured work and a perfect set of variations with a brilliant coda. **Timing:** 10:48

120-131. Twelve Etudes, Op. 29 These etudes are numbered 13-24 evidently for the reason that Sor considered them a sequel to the twelve etudes Op. 6. Although Op. 6 contains much virtuoso writing, Op. 29 is generally on a higher technical level. My particular favorites are: No. 13, a profoundly beautiful arpeggio etude in the unusual key (for guitar) of Bb, No. 14 (in F), a virtuoso study in short scale passages, No. 15 (in A) a lyric gem, No. 18 (in Em), with its exquisite melody, No. 21 (in D), a delicate study in

natural harmonics, and No. 22, a lyric and profound andantino in Eb (another difficult and unusual key for guitar). **Timing:** Op. 29 #13-4:41, #14-3:44, #15-2:47, #16-1:44, #17-2:40, #18-3:09, #19-1:07, #20-2:12, #21-2:20, #22-4:27, #23-2:33, #24-3:35

132-134. Fantasia, Op. 30 This highly original work, which was dedicated to Sor's great friend, colleague and countryman, Dionisio Aguado, consists of a) Introduction, b) Theme with Variations c) reworking of thematic material from the introduction d) the theme from b) reworked in a lento tempo and e) Finale in Sonata-Allegro form. Perhaps we can understand why Sor gave up writing works entitled "Sonata" when we view this piece and his Sonata Op. 25 together. In Op. 25 he tried to keep some semblance of the multi-movement classical sonata by including a very unorthodox sonata-allegro and a minuet, even if these movements were out of their traditional order. Yet Op. 25 is a somewhat sprawling, loosely organized work. On the other hand, the Op. 30 Fantasia is a tightly organized piece with themes recurring in different guises etc. And it closes with a perfect sonata-allegro movement. Yet there is no way that this work can be designated as a sonata in the traditional sense. Indeed, it seems that the evolution of Sor's style was becoming further and further removed from the classic style of his formative years, to the point where he was evidently quite unable to write a convincing multi-movement sonata in this traditional sense! **Timing:** 14:59

135-158. 24 Progressive Lessons Op. 31 In the late 1820's Sor found it increasingly necessary to produce easier music for his students and other amateur guitarists. His Op. 31 etudes are among his first results of this. Certainly his previous etudes (Op. 6 and Op. 29) were intended for advanced players. Op. 31 is directed to near beginners to high intermediate levels. This lowering of the technical level however did not appreciatively lower the musical quality of these etudes - most are absolute gems and many are among the finest of Sor's output in this genre. It should be noted that in 1945 Segovia published a collection of twenty etudes. His source material for most of these was evidently the Napoleon Coste (1806-1883) collection published shortly after Sor's death. It is quite natural that guitarists have by and large only performed these twenty etudes, almost certainly because of Segovia's well-deserved stature and reputation. I believe, however that a great many of Sor's finest etudes were not contained in this collection. Perhaps we can see that what has happened to Sor's etudes are symbolic to what has happened to his entire output. Guitarists for the most part have only performed those pieces which they have heard their peers perform and therefore most of Sor's greatest works have lain dormant waiting to be resurrected. For these and other reasons, I feel that we desperately need a re-evaluation of his entire output. My particular favorites from Op. 31 are No. 4, No. 12 (One of Sor's "Spanish" pieces), No. 13, No. 15, No. 18, No. 20, and No. 23. **Timing:** Op. 31 #1-1:29, #2-2:03, #3-1:29, #4-1:44, #5-2:15, #6-1:02, #7-1:08, #8-2:33, #9-0:53, #10-1:22, #11-1:15, #12-3:30, #13-1:28, #14-1:09, #15-1:16, #16-2:00, #17-1:29, #18-2:19, #19-2:09, #20-1:28, #21-2:14, #22-2:01, #23-3:23, #24-2:25

Mp3 Disk # 2

1-6. Six Petites Pieces Op. 32 This opus consists of 1. Andantino, 2. Waltz, 3. Andante-Pastorale, 4. Mazurka, 5. Andante and 6. Galop. (The galop was very popular throughout the 19th Century. It is a fast dance in 2/4 time.) I feel that the shining star of this set is the extraordinarily beautiful Andante-Pastorale. **Timing:** Op. 32 #1-1:41, #2-1:51, #3-5:08, #4-2:11, #5-4:15, #6-1:07

7-10. Three Pieces de Societe, Op. 33 Sor wrote two sets of three *Pieces de Societe*, Op. 33 and Op. 36. A “Piece de Societe” is a two movement work, both of which are in the same key (although they may change from tonic minor to major) and in a slow fast order. These three works of Op. 33 are Romantic writing par excellence. Op. 33 No. 1 consists of a charming Moderato Cantabile followed by a riotous Allegretto. Sor had possibly the greatest sense of humor of all musicians of his period. This Allegretto movement is a case in point. It literally laughs its way from start to its brilliant finish! Op. 33, No. 2 consists of a lovely andante followed by a Waltz. Op. 33, No. 3 consists of a Sicilienne followed by a March. The Sicilienne is notable in that it has an outwardly Spanish quality. This piece, like the Sonata, Op. 14 or the Etudes Op. 6, No. 9 and Op. 31, No. 12 is in the key of Dm with the sixth string tuned to D which seems to be Sor’s favorite key for achieving this “feel.” The final March is notable in that the entire trio is written in natural harmonics. **Timing:** Op. 33 #1-10:03, #2-7:46, #3-7:51

11-34. 24 Exercises Op. 35 This set of etudes is almost identical in purpose and quality to the Op. 31 set. Why these are called “exercises” and Op. 31 are called “progressive lessons” is a mystery. Sor in his method, claimed Op. 35 to be less difficult than Op. 31, but I haven’t found this to be so. I should like to make special mention of Op. 35, No. 22 (Segovia Edition, No. 5). This is one of the best known of Sor’s works having been recorded by Miguel Llobet in 1929 and Segovia and practically every other guitarist of note since then. In the earliest published Pacini edition it is marked allegretto. There has been some recent criticism of the fact that today it is almost universally played at a much slower, smoother tempo. I should simply like to go on record as stating that I believe this *Allegretto* marking to be a misprint. The style of the piece does indeed dictate a slower, more legato approach. My particular favorites from Op. 35 are No. 5, No. 6, No. 11, No. 16, No. 18, No. 20 and No. 22. **Timing:** Op. 35 #1-0:51, #2-1:02, #3-2:21, #4-1:06, #5-1:09, #6-0:45, #7-2:11, #8-1:32, #9-1:26, #10-1:24, #11-1:28, #12-1:18, #13-0:52, #14-1:47, #15-1:07, #16-1:48, #17-1:16, #18-1:11, #19-1:18, #20-1:44, #21-1:40, #22-3:23, #23-2:44, #24-2:20

35-40. Three Pieces de Societe, Op. 36 If possible, these three two movement works are even on a higher level than his Op. 33 set. They are as follows: 1. *Tempo di minuetto* and *Allemande*, 2. *Lento Cantabile* and *Vivace (Minuetto)*, and 3. *Andantino* and *Allegretto (Chase)*. A curious difference between Op. 33 and Op. 36 is: in all three works of Op. 33, the first (slow) movement ends in the dominant key before proceeding into the second (fast) movement, while in all three works of Op. 36 the first movement ends in the tonic before proceeding. The Lento Cantabile (Op. 36 #2a) is one of the most profoundly beautiful works to flow from Sor’s pen. It is followed by a brilliant and humorous Vivace. The Andantino (Op. 36 #3a) is also a beautiful work. **Timing:** Op.36 #1a-5:15, #1b-2:59, #2a-7:32, #2b-2:25, #3a-5:52, #3b-2:37

41-44. Serenade Op. 37 This work is perhaps not among Sor’s most profound large works, but it is full of much delightful and lyrical music. It is in four movements with an interesting key scheme (at least for Sor, who, in his large works tended to write one movement after another in the same key). The first movement is in E. The second in E minor, the third in C, and the finale is in E minor with a brilliant coda in E major. **Timing:** 14:25

45. Introduction and Variations on *Ye banks and braes*, Op. 40 Sor, like Beethoven and Mendelsohn had a certain romantic fascination with Scotland as is evidenced in this work. This is a charming set of variations on this familiar Scottish melody (also known as *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*) written by Neil Gow in 1780. **Timing:** 7:17

46-51. Six Petites Pieces, Op. 42 It is interesting that Sor always included minuets in his earlier sets of miniatures but after Op. 24 he almost completely stopped this practice. This set of pieces includes 1. Cantabile, 2. Waltz, 3. Andantino, 4. Waltz, 5. Moderato and 6.

Waltz. I feel that the the highlight of this set is the lovely Moderato. **Timing:** Op. 42 #1-4:10, #2-2:23, #3-3:52, #4-2:04, #5-3:42, #6-2:43

52-57. Six Bagatelles *Mes Ennuis* Op. 43 This title might be translated “My Burdens.” There evidently was quite a lot of criticism of Sor because his music was so difficult that many amateurs could not play it. So with this opus he began a humorous little bit of retribution on both these amateurs and the Parisian based guitarist-composers who catered to them. Actually these bagatelles are quality miniatures and several are certainly not what I would consider easy pieces at all. I am especially fond of No. 3 Cantabile and No. 5 Andante **Timing:** Op. 43 #1-2:54, #2-1:22, #3-5:49, #4-2:09, #5-5:48, #6-3:42

24 Petites Pieces Progressives, Op. 44 It has been said that these 24 miniatures should not be classified as etudes. The main reason being that they are named “progressive pieces” as opposed to the *Progressive Lessons* of Op. 31. However I feel that they are so similar in style and pedagogic purpose to the Op. 60 set of similarly easy etudes that there is no doubt in my mind that these pieces are as much “etudes” as the other works of Sor that are designated as such. Hopefully having settled this issue, I wrote the following short essay on Sor’s Op. 44 and Op. 60 etudes upon release of those recordings on cassette several years ago and I believe it to be as pertinent now as it was then.

Perhaps instead of judging a composer who wrote for the guitar by his large “important” works (sonatas, fantasias etc.) we should judge him by the pedagogic material he wrote for students. As everyone who has dabbled with the classic guitar knows, there is not much that is easy on the instrument. There are basically only five “easy” or practical keys B C, G, D, A, and E. It is a complete instrument (having both melody and harmony together), but sometimes seems near impossible to have consistent 3 or 4 part harmony. This is especially true when there is no open string to provide the bass which is almost always the case when one is not in one of the “easy” keys. Add to this, the fact that the guitarist uses only four fingers on his right hand to produce tones as opposed to the keyboardist who uses all ten fingers for this purpose.

It appears, therefore, to be an almost herculean task to write quality music for the near beginner to the late intermediate student with these instrumental limitations imposed on the composer. Yet this is exactly what Fernando Sor did in his Op. 44 and Op. 60 etudes. With very few exceptions, these little pieces are absolute gems and are (I feel) the best student material for this level that the guitarist has. Yet these pieces today are rarely used by teachers and students. Modern guitarists all are familiar with the 20 Sor etudes collected and edited by Segovia (1945) and most believe that these 20 works are the best of Sor’s 121 etudes in six sets (Op. 6, 29, 31, 35, 44, and 60). The truth is that Segovia only chose these works from Op. 6, 29, 31, and 35 and the preponderance of evidence exists that he almost entirely chose them from as few as the 26 of those that Napoleon Coste used in his 1845 version of “Sor’s” guitar method! Unfortunately, even though all these 121 etudes have been readily available since 1976 (when the republication of Sor’s complete works occurred), guitarists to this day, in recordings and concerts, largely ignore the “other 101 etudes” not included in the Segovia collection.

Sor wrote his etudes in reverse order of difficulty B Op. 6 and Op. 29 being the most difficult, many of which are virtuoso works a la Chopin. Op. 44 and Op. 60, on the other hand, are the easiest, many of which are quite suitable for near

beginners. Op. 31 and Op. 35 largely fall somewhere in between. Obviously the musical interest in many of these works will be somewhat less than in Sor's earlier virtuoso etudes but still these two sets have many fine works within them.

In this Op. 44 set my particular favorites are No. 3, No. 4, No. 9, No. 15(a fine example of two part writing), No. 16, No. 17, No. 20, No. 21 and 22. **Timing:** Op. 44 #1-1:06, #2-0:53, #3-1:05, #4-1:20, #5-1:04, #6-0:49, #7-1:19, #8-0:59, #9-1:14, #10-1:05, #11-1:21, #12-2:24, #13-1:30, #14-0:46, #15-1:36, #16-2:07, #17-1:30, #18-1:44, #19-1:47, #20-1:43, #21-2:24, #22-1:37, #23-2:32, #24-1:42

82-87. Six Pieces Voyens ci c'est ca (Let's see if this will do), Op. 45 (see notes to Op. 43) Obviously Sor's Op. 43 was beyond most amateurs and he was evidently strongly criticized for it. These six pieces are generally much easier on both the fingers and the mind with many open bass notes and mostly two voice harmony. Sor humorously describes these as "pieces whose aim is to lead gradually to what is generally called difficulty" and they are dedicated to "whoever has the least patience." **Timing:** Op. 45 #1-1:29, #2-1:41, #3-4:38, #4-2:48, #5-4:11, #6-2:10

88. Fantasia Souvenir d'Amitie, Op.46 This work was dedicated to Julio Regondi (1822-1872) who was only nine when it was written! Regondi was to ultimately become one of the important guitarists of the mid-nineteenth century, but he must have been a remarkable prodigy because this fantasia is a truly virtuosic work. This is the first of what one writer referred to as Sor's "dance fantasias" Indeed, from Op. 1 the waltz was prominent in Sor's miniatures and in most of his large later works beginning with this one, he included a brilliant concert waltz for the final movement. This work is in three movements: 1. Andante Moderato, 2. Andantino with variations and 3. Allegro-Waltz. **Timing:** 9:50

89-94. Six Petites Pieces Progressives Op. 47 To Sor, the term "Petites Pieces Progressives" was obviously a generic term. His Op. 44 "Petites Pieces Progressives" are very easy to low intermediate etude-like pieces and these six pieces from Op. 47 are practically indistinguishable from sets of earlier pieces called "Divertimenti" or simply "Petites Pieces." These pieces are as follows: 1.Andante, 2. Allegretto, 3.Andante, 4.Allegretto, 5.Cantabile and 6. Waltz. The Cantabile [d.4,t.20] is an especially beautiful piece. **Timing:** Op. 47 #1-2:21, #2-1:53, #3-3:45, #4-2:32, #5-4:05, #6-1:31

95-100. Six Pieces Est-ce bien ca ("Is This It?") Op. 48 (see notes to Op. 43 and 45.) Even after the relatively simple pieces of Op. 45, Sor was still being criticized for being above the average amateur - hence "Is this it?" He prefaces the work by attacking those bad musicians among Parisian guitar composers who write simple music for the guitar and in the process abandon the principles of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. This opus has an element of a spoof of these "bad musicians," or of Sor demonstrating to them how to write their own music. (I believe that Sor was, for the most part, aiming his sarcasm at Carcassi [1792-1853], Carulli [1770-1840], and Molino[1775-1847].)The first piece is an over-pompous and vacuous march. The second is a totally ordinary and silly waltz. The third is a ridiculous set of variations with pseudo-expressive "bel canto" melodic leaps and other cliches. The fourth is another even sillier waltz. The fifth is another pseudo-expressive "bel canto" style piece (andante). Sor again over-exaggerates certain cliches that make up this style largely used by the previously mentioned Parisian composers. The sixth final rondo is one of the greatest musical parodies (and one of the most humorous pieces) that I know of. Indeed, one has to be familiar with the music Sor was poking fun at to fully appreciate this piece - and the other pieces in this opus. But, even though this music is largely written in two voices (mostly bass notes on open strings plus single line melody) and for the most part is easy to play (except the final rondo

which is not that easy), it is all well written - especially the fifth and sixth pieces. It is as though Sor wanted to beat these musicians at their own game and simultaneously make them look foolish. **Timing:** Op. 48 #1-1:13, #2-1:42, #3-5:53, #4-2:24, #5-3:48, #6-3:04

101. La Calme, Caprice Op. 50 Except for one stormy section this work lives up to its title. It often reminds me of the barcarolles of the period with its lilting triple rhythm. It is indeed a refined and beautiful piece. **Timing:** 8:39

102-107. Six Waltzes, A la Bonne Heure (At last), Op. 51 (see the notes [in VOLUME 3] to Op. 43, 45 and 48) In the preface to this opus Sor states that the music in Op. 48 was “quite different from mine,” and that still those woeful amateurs were not satisfied and asked that it be made even easier. Therefore he continued to discuss this opus “I tried to use only those positions which I believe to be the most common; I used open strings as much as possible for the bass; I put almost as many fingerings as notes; in short: I did everything that was necessary, and so people said that this was really nice of me; to the point where one of you, seeing my first two waltzes, cried out ‘AT LAST!’ “ The first waltz is indeed so simple that it almost entirely uses only open strings so that even a total beginner could play it. The second is hardly any more advanced. However later in this opus Sor came to himself and did produce some lovely music. **Timing:** Op. 51 #1-1:04, #2-1:32, #3-1:21, #4-1:56, #5-2:00, #6-1:26

108. Rustic Fantasia (Fantasie Villageoise) Op. 52 This three movement work, like the Op. 30 Fantasia, is dedicated to Sor’s great friend, colleague and countryman, Dionisio Aguado and is one of Sor’s most unusual pieces. It opens with a haunting, rural-tinged, landler-like Andantino in A minor. The next bridge section is entitled Appel (roll-call, muster) and is done entirely in natural harmonics. This moves into the second movement which is a fantastic country dance in 6/8 time and in the tonic major, which works up to a furious and frenzied pace and abruptly stops, seemingly midway. The following finale in C is entitled Priere (Prayer). To my mind it is one of the most haunting things to come from Sor’s pen, with many special guitaristic effects such as unisons (in imitation of chant?), natural harmonics of the sixth overtone (in imitation of the tolling of bells?). Indeed one cannot help but wonder what sort of program Sor might have had in mind when writing this intriguing and totally unknown work. **Timing:** 11:43

109. Morceau de Concert, Op. 54 This work is similar in form to Op. 7, 10, 12, 16, 20, 30, and 46. After Op. 46, Sor’s Fantasias do not contain variations and perhaps that is why he gave this work (which indeed does contain variations) a different title. It, perhaps more than any other work represents Sor the classicist, with the perfectly formed set of variations, in absolute harmony with Sor the sentimental romanticist, with the wide intervallic leaps etc. of perfumed romantic melody. Of special note is the exquisite 3rd variation. One must remember that Sor wrote this work in the 1830s when the instrumental variation form had, for the most part, degenerated into the bombastic showy operatic paraphrases of Liszt, Thalberg etc. This work, like many others from Sor of this period, concludes with a brilliant concert waltz. **Timing:** 19:01

110. Fantasia, Souvenirs d’une Soiree a Berlin Op. 56 This piece (another of Sor’s “dance fantasias”) consists of a ravishing Andante followed by a large concert waltz. It is interesting that Sor provided a choice of two optional endings for this work: the first is a

recall of the opening Andante, and the second a brilliant conclusion of the waltz. For this recording, I have chosen to use the second, brilliant ending. One aspect of Sor that has not been understood properly is his ability to write wonderful dance music - especially waltzes. Indeed much of his non-guitar music was written for the ballet. The waltz, which closes this work is an excellent example of Sor's superb feel for this dance which he may have, at least partially, learned from producing these ballets. **Timing:** 12:57

111-117. Six Waltzes and a Galop Op. 57 These six waltzes are similar to the Op. 51 set but are on a somewhat higher technical plane. The galop was very popular throughout the 19th Century. It is a fast dance in 2/4 time. **Timing:** Op. 57 #1-1:18, #2-1:46, #3-1:35, #4-2:24, #6-1:34, #6-2:55, #7-1:07

118. Fantasia Op. 58 This work is another of Sor's "dance fantasias." It starts slowly and ends in a lively waltz. It has an irresistible forward pulse and demonstrates Sor's ability to write brilliant virtuoso music for the guitar. **Timing:** 9:43

119. Fantasia Elegiaque Op. 59 This work is generally considered to be one of Sor's finest and most powerful works. It is written on the death of a certain Madame Besley (who was a pianist who also studied the guitar with Sor) whose name is called up at the end of the funeral march (Charlotte adieu!). This work consists of a powerful introduction, a long solemn Andante Largo and a Funeral March (marked Andante Moderato. I don't believe this to be a typically funereal or grave march a la Beethoven or Chopin - hence this tempo marking and my faster than traditional tempo). Much has been said concerning the middle cantabile (E major) section of this march for its Dowland like qualities. While it is doubtful that Sor was familiar with Dowland, he certainly was familiar with a great deal of Renaissance vocal music having received his training at the Monastery of Montserrat which, to this day, predominantly performs this music and trains musicians using it. Indeed one of the fascinating aspects of Sor's work is the eclecticism and wide variety of influences present. Not only are Renaissance, Baroque, Classic and contemporary Romantic elements evident but also Spanish, Italian, French and most certainly Viennese. While Sor was not on the cutting edge of "progressiveness," I believe he was one of the more learned and cosmopolitan musicians of his time.

Timing: 14:52

120-144. Introduction a l'Etude de la Guitare, Op. 60 These little pieces very similar in style and purpose to Op. 44. (See the notes to Op. 44). My favorites from the Op. 60 Etudes are: No. 4, No. 6, No. 12, No.16, No. 18, No. 20, No. 23 and No. 25 (an exquisite study in natural harmonics). **Timings:** Op. 60#1-1:05, #2-1:04, #3-1:27, #4-2:03, #5-1:54, #6-1:54, #7-1:36, #8-1:00, #9-1:06, #10-1:25, #11-1:13, #12-1:20, #13-1:12, #14-1:36, #15-1:20, #16-1:53, #17-0:59, #18-1:59, #19-1:18, #20-1:48, #21-1:17, #22-1:21, #23-1:41, #24-1:30, #25-2:53

WORKS WITHOUT OPUS NUMBER (WoO)

145. Air Varie in C The theme of this piece is quite chromatic, yet curiously, this is nowhere evident in the six variations that follow. This work, like several others of Sor does not have a tonic minor variation. **Timing:** 11:29

146. March du Ballet de Cendrillon Sor wrote a number of ballets from about 1820-1830. Most have been lost. But by far his greatest success in this genre was Cendrillon (based on the story of Cinderella). It quickly became one of the most popular ballets of its time. It was premiered in London in 1822 and was later produced in Paris and Moscow. This March (originally for orchestra) is Sor's solo guitar arrangement from this ballet.

Timing: 2:49

147. La Candeur (Petite Reverie) What is the significance of the title of this beautiful piece? At this point in time we simply cannot know. It was published in 1835 and is evidently a late work. **Timing:** 5:19

148-150. Three Minuets Four minuets were published in 1810 as works without opus number. Of these four, three are unknown in any later publications. The second however is the same as Op. 11 # 6. Minuet # 1 is unusual in that it uses triplets throughout. Minuets # 3 and 4 are somewhat similar in style to Op. 11 # 5. **Timing:** Minuet # 1-2:23, Minuet #3-3:09, Minuet #4-2:43

151. Theme Varie in A Several writers have mentioned that this work varies the same theme as Op. 20 (Introduction and Theme Varie). Actually the theme of Op. 20 is the same as the first variation of this work and although both share some very similar variations, the esthetics of the two works are somewhat different in that Op. 20 is quite Romantic and this something of a reversion to the classical style. **Timing:** 9:42

152-157. Six Pieces from Sor's Method for the Spanish Guitar Sor wrote a number of pieces as examples and exercises in his Method which are not included in the published Complete Works. Most of this music is nothing more than little 2-8 measure vignettes designed to illustrate some point, but there are also some more extended pieces. I have chosen six of the more musical of these pieces (in keeping with Sor's tradition of six miniatures to a set). For some reason Sor did not indicate any repeats in most of this music as he indeed did in his other published works. I have therefore taken the liberty of using repeats where it seemed logical and musical to do so. These pieces are as follows: 1. Example 14 (Andante Largo), 2. Exercise # 4 (on thirds), 3. Example 85 (Andante), 4. Exercise #5 (on sixths), 5. Exercise on Thirds and Sixths, and 6. Exercise #1 (on thirds) (Moderato) **Timing:** 1-1:08, 2-1:39, 3-2:54, 4-1:27, 5-3:41, 6-1:27

Two Spanish Masters – Fuenllana and Segovia

On tracks 158-190 is the music of two of the greatest Spanish masters of the guitar. Miguel de Fuenllana is one of the earliest and Andres Segovia is perhaps the most recent. What they have in common (beside their mastery, national origin and their chosen instrument) is that their compositions are practically unknown to modern audiences.

Few details are known about Fuenllana's life. He was blind - but was he blind from birth? He was in the service of the Marquesa de Tarifa and Queen Isabel de Valois - but the dates of this service are vague. In 1554 his only known work was published; *Orphenica Lyra*, which consists of some 174 folios (one folio consists of two pages) plus introductory and instructional material. The Fantasia is by far the most common form of solo vihuela (16th century guitar) music that Fuenllana wrote. And his works in this form are supreme examples of refined 16th century counterpoint. (Indeed one can see how the 16th century Fantasia developed into later fugal writing. Many of Fuenllana's works in this genre are remarkably similar in form and content to even the fugues of J. S. Bach.)

For this recording I have chosen eight of his Fantasias, six of which are the more common polythematic variety and two (tracks 163 and 165) are monothematic works. I learned these works from the original tablature and they are found in the following folios of *Orphenica Lyra*: Track 158. Fo. CV, Track 159, Fo. XII, Track 160. Fo. XXII, Track 161. Fo. IX, Track 162. Fo. XVII, Track 163. Fo. CV, Track 164. Fo. XLII, Track 165. Fo. CLXVII. (These tablatures are available as Adobe Acrobat PDF files [data files] to freely download from my website www.crgrecordings.com)

Andres Segovia is known as one of the all-time supreme virtuosos and as the father of the 20th century revival of the classic guitar. His achievements in these areas are so legendary that it is not necessary to dwell on them. On the other hand he is almost completely unknown as a composer for his chosen instrument and he may be as responsible for this state of affairs as anyone - the only work of his that he is known to have performed or recorded is his *Estudio sin Luz*! He probably did not believe that composing was important to his greater mission of proselytizing the guitar.

When I first recorded these 25 short works in 1986-88 they were the only known pieces by the Maestro. However, since then, a number of other works have come to light and have been published. One could characterize Segovia's compositional style as a "conservative" attempt to further extend 19th century romanticism with a certain Spanish feel (a possible influence of de Falla?) plus a small amount of impressionism (*Neblina* Track 185). In his earlier pieces (tracks 167-171) I sense a strong influence of Tarrega and in his more recent pieces his writing often reminds me of de Falla or Manuel Ponce.

I feel that these miniatures reveal an exquisite and major (but perhaps somewhat underdeveloped) compositional talent and I believe many of these pieces are **superior** to similar works by other contemporary composers that the Maestro readily performed throughout his long career. I only hope that these works will eventually receive the recognition that they so richly deserve and will achieve a permanent and prominent place in the guitar repertoire.

Previously Unreleased Bonus Tracks

191. Bach-Segovia, Chaconne in Dm - This famous arrangement probably did more to firmly establish the guitar a "serious" instrument in the 20th century than any other work. It was done in the same "romantic" spirit as other famous arrangements by such illustrious musicians as Brahms, Busoni and Stokowski. Today such arrangements are considered unauthentic and are currently out of style. (The Bach Chaconne is still widely performed by guitarists but is done in arrangements that deviate much less from the original violin version). Would Bach have "beefed up" this work had he decided to arrange it for lute? (as he indeed did with some of his other solo violin and cello music) I feel he would have. Therefore I perform this version because I seriously doubt that Bach would disapprove of this wonderful arrangement could he hear it today!

192. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Tonadilla on the Name of Segovia - Castelnuovo-Tedesco is one of the great names in 20th century literature for the guitar. And I feel that this work is one of his most beautiful pieces for solo guitar.

193-195. Ponce, Sonata III – Manuel Ponce was perhaps Segovia’s favorite of all the composers who wrote for him. Indeed he performed and recorded this work more than any other by Ponce. I believe it to be one of the most masterful guitar sonatas of the 20th century.

196. Villa-Lobos, Prelude III – This lyric piece has long been my favorite of the five preludes by Villa-Lobos.

197. Barrios, Mazurka Apasionata – Agustin Barrios was practically unknown until the release of a wonderful recording of his music by John Williams in the late 1970s. He has now justifiably become one of the major figures in recent guitar literature. I recorded this around 1980. Unfortunately, at the time, I was using a faulty pre-amp that caused a curious buzzing noise. However I like the performance enough to include it here despite this problem.

198. Barrios, Alegro Sinfonico – I recorded this in the same session as the previous work. To my knowledge this fine virtuosic work has never been recorded and I therefore include it here.

199. Dorsey (arr: Johnson) Precious Lord Take my Hand – I made this arrangement in memory of the late Dr. Martin Luther King. Indeed this famous Gospel classic by Thomas A. Dorsey was sung by the great Mahalia Jackson at Dr. King’s funeral as well as at other previous civil rights functions.

200. Bach, Prelude & Presto (3rd Lute Suite) – This is an arrangement by Bach himself of the 5th Cello Suite. I made this recording around 1980 – again with the above-mentioned faulty pre-amp. I include it here because I feel it illustrates how Bach often added extra lines and thickened his harmonies (especially in the Prelude) in his arrangements for lute of his solo violin and cello music (as I previously mentioned in my notes to the Bach-Segovia Chaconne).

Lawrence Johnson

Lawrence Johnson has studied with some of the greatest masters of the classical guitar such as Andres Segovia, Christopher Parkening, Ida Presti and Alexander Lagoya, and Oscar Ghiglia among others. Christopher Parkening hails him as “a sensitive artist and one who deeply loves his instrument.” He recently completed a 12 year project of recording the complete solo guitar music of Fernando Sor (over 17 hours of music) to wide critical acclaim. Mr. Johnson presently teaches at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York.

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