

FERNANDO SOR (1778 – 1839)

The Catalan composer and guitarist Fernando Sor (Josep Ferran Sorts i Muntades) is primarily known for his many guitar compositions, although he composed music for a wide range of genres, including: opera, orchestra, string quartet, piano, voice, and ballet.

Originally opposed to the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, he later accepted a position under the French government. As a result he was obliged to seek refuge abroad (London and Paris) but established himself as a successful performer, teacher and composer.

Guitar Music

Sor published a quantity of music for guitar, some of it pedagogical in purpose and some of it for concert performance. His *Méthode pour la guitare*, published in 1830, is among the most important books on guitar technique. His most famous work is probably his *Variations on a Theme of Mozart*.

Vocal Music

Sor wrote a number of *boleros* and *seguidillas* for voices and guitar, in addition to Spanish, Italian and English songs and duets for voice and piano.

Stage Works

Sor's opera *Telemaco nell'isola de Calipso* ('Telemachus on the Island of Calypso') was staged in Barcelona in 1797. His other theatre music was principally for the ballet, including a successful *Cendrillon* ('Cinderella'), a march from which he arranged for guitar.

Sor's contemporaries considered him to be the best guitarist in the world, and his works for guitar have been widely played and reprinted. Unlike modern classical guitar players, Sor's technique excluded the use of fingernails and he rarely used his ring finger.