

SOR'S METHOD FOR THE GUITAR.

INTRODUCTION.

IN writing a method, I would be understood to speak of that only which my reflections and experience have made me establish to regulate my own play. If certain precepts are in contradiction to the practice heretofore adopted by guitarists who, through blind submission, and a religious respect for their masters, have followed their maxims without examining the foundation of them, it would be wrong to suppose in me a spirit of opposition. I have exalted no maxim into a principle, till after a due consideration of the motives for so doing; I establish nothing by authority nor by caprice; and I merely indicate the route which I have followed in order to produce results from the guitar which have obtained for me the approbation of harmonists, people the most difficult to satisfy and to dazzle in regard to music. I do not believe that my compositions for this instrument can be executed on different principles; I write therefore only for those who, believing the execution to be almost unattainable, have the goodness to consider me as a phenomenon, whilst I possess no greater means than another person. Music, reasoning, and the preference which I give in general to results before a display of difficulty, constitute my whole secret. Their astonishment arises only from the manner in which they consider the guitar: while they say that this instrument is principally intended for accompaniment, classing it therefore among the instruments of harmony, they always begin by treating it as an instrument of melody; for their first lessons are always scales, to which they accustom the fingering. This fingering habituating them from the first to employ all the powers of the left hand for the melody, causes them to experience great difficulties when it becomes requisite to add a correct base, unless it be afforded by the open strings (*a*), and still much greater difficulties when one or two intermediate parts are to be added besides. For them the fingering in this case is only a continual deviation from the rules which habit has established as a law; and to this let us add the inconveniency of finding themselves without the least support for the guitar, because being obliged to place the whole hand on the strings to make a chord, they cannot of course leave one half behind the neck, as they do for supporting it. It is therefore quite natural that, by extending results to which not only their fingering has no tendency, but from which it misleads them, I am gratified with the title of extraordinary; and that persons, who have never heard me, say it is impossible that I can play all that I write; but in reality I am far from being a wonder. I love music, I feel it: the study of harmony and counterpoint having familiarized me with the progression and nature of chords and their inversions, with the manner of throwing the melody or air into the base or into one of the intermediate parts, of increasing the number of notes of one or two parts, whilst the others continue their slower progression, I have required things of this kind from the instrument, and I have found that it yields them better than a continual jumble of semi and demisemi-quavers, in diatonic and chromatic scales.

At first I took up this instrument merely as an instrument of accompaniment; but, from the age of sixteen years, I was shocked to hear it said by those who professed to have but little talent, "I only play to accompany". I knew that a good accompaniment supposes in the first place a good base, chords adapted to it, and movements as much as possible approximating those of an orchestral score or those of a pianoforte; things which, in my opinion, afforded a much greater proof of mastery on the instrument than all those sonatas which I heard with long violin

(*a*) Some have thought to remedy this inconvenience by adding a number of covered strings to the guitar; but, would it not be simpler to learn to employ the six?—Add resources to an instrument when you have drawn every possible advantage from those which it offers; but do not attribute to the instrument what you should impute to yourselves.