ANDRES SEGOVIA
and his Contemporaries
Vol. 12

El Círculo Musical

Tárrega, His Disciples & Their Students

Legendary Treasures
Sort Estudio
para Guitarra
por S. Ramirez

Elegia a Tárrega
(Daniel Fortea)
(Solo de guitarra)

DOS CANCIONES MERCANAS
(Ponce)
Solo de guitarra
Miguel Llobet

Segovia, Fortea, Llobet and Pujol

Special thanks to carlosmb
78 rpm Records & Cylinders
many students, some of whom have already been heard on other CDs in this series—Maria Luisa Anido, Nelly Ezcaray, Maria Angelica Funes, and Lalyta Almiron (vol. 11). Pujol’s gifted pupil Francisco Alfonso, who died tragically in Havana, will be heard on a forthcoming release.

It can truly be said that the musical genealogy of most classical guitar performers of the 20th and now 21st centuries can be traced back to the modest and saintly pioneering figure of Francisco Tárrega.

**Simon Ramirez and Romance d’Amour**

In addition to documenting artists directly related to Tárrega, we also present what is in all likelihood—one can never be absolutely certain—perhaps the very first classical guitar recording ever made, arguably sometime between 1897 and 1901. It comes from a set of cylinders produced by the Viuda de Aramburo label, consisting of solo and duo performances by the brothers Simon and Luis Ramirez. I refer the reader to Carlos Martin’s excellent notes below for more background on the label and the nature of the recording. The work performed by Simon Ramirez (about whom we have learned nothing), is identified on the cylinder container as *Estudio para Guitarra de F. Sort* [sic]. When I first heard this faint, scratchy recording, I was astonished to discover that the piece was actually the ubiquitous *Romance d’Amour*, learned by pretty much every classical guitarist early in their studies.

Herein lies a mystery: “Who wrote it?” The debate has raged fast and furious for quite a few years. For a detailed summary, see Francisco Herrera’s article in his *Enciclopedia de la Guitarra* (Piles, 1996), Santiago Porras’ excellent analysis in the forums of www.guitarra.artepulsado.com, and Rico Stover’s article in *Soundboard*. For now, it is enough to note that there have been a number of claimants. Narciso Yepes, who used the piece in a 1951 French film *Jeux Interdits*, claimed he had composed it as a boy. Vicente Gomez used it in the film *Blood and Sand*, and
recorded it in 1934 (see vol. 5 of this series). It was published by Daniel Fortea’s publishing company before that, and versions appeared in South America. It has been attributed to the 19th century guitarist Rubira. There are theories that it was connected with Glinka when he visited Spain and was learned by the flamenco “El Murcián,” that the melody is originally Ukrainian, and so on. The speculations are endless. What we do know is that nowhere in Fernando Sor’s compositions is this work to be found as a study.

Perhaps the main value of the discovery of the Ramírez cylinder lies in our definitely being able to push back the date of composition to the late nineteenth century. The performance is not distinguished, but it is notable for its use of an “AIM” arpeggio pattern [ring-index-middle] rather than the more usual “AMI”, and for several glissandi no longer used. The cylinder contains some non-musical material that has been well-deciphered by Javier Galan:

Voice 1: Estudio de Sor para Guitarra, interpretado por Simón Ramírez, a la petición de Don Manuel Delgado. ¡Vamos allá!
Voice 2: no se voy, se cae el lacayo; ¡Miguel…! Voz 2: Si
Voice 3: ¡Ole!

Sound of one person clapping, at end.

The first voice speaks with an accent from the south or south-east of Spain with a marked accent ('paa' for 'para'. 'Simó' for 'Simón', 'Ramire' for 'Ramírez', 'Vamo' for 'Vamos'). The name “Manuel”, which is heard as 'Manue', is especially difficult to discern, and could be another name that resembles it phonetically.

**Early Spanish Cylinders and the Viuda de Aramburo Company** (by Carlos Martin) The early history of the Spanish phonographic industry is still little known, although in the course of its brief existence, it had a number of very interesting features. The present study will address these and in particular the group of
phonographic recordings made by the Ramirez brothers.

In 1877, Thomas Alva Edison developed the phonograph as a recording and playback device. From its creation in the nineteenth century until the late twentieth century, the great potential of the invention developed slowly in Spain. People were, however, very much in touch with the latest scientific advances. These included Armando Hugens and the laboratories of the Viuda de Aramburo, who began to take the first steps in developing the medium. Surprisingly, the beginnings of these commercial houses had two very special features: on one hand, the level of the interpreters they recorded was very high, and on the other, the nature of the setup used for recording was very interesting, including Bettini reproducers and special rooms equipped for recording. Most commercial recordings were made with brown wax cylinders, of high quality, but much more delicate than those made with other materials. Similarly, many of the artists who recorded were leading figures in their respective genres. It should be noted that in Spain the recordings were produced using the direct system of recording. The artist was placed in front of a group of recording machines which picked up the performance and pressed them onto the blank cylinders loaded onto each recorder. Because of this, each piece of music thus recorded had a very small number of cylinders available for sale, a clear indication of the exclusivity of the genre, and a key factor in the great difficulty of locating these pieces today.

This fledgling industry came onto the Spanish scene in just six years, and quickly disappeared with the rise of the flat disc roundabout 1905. Parallel to its development, the commercial houses made available to its clients blank wax cylinders for home recording, using a membrane recorder. Many customers were interested in the possibility of recording a particular artist in their own homes, preserving the first cries of a child, or, without leaving home, spending an afternoon setting down enjoyable musical performances that could be cherished again and again. And here
is where the cylinders on the present recording come in.

This is a small collection of private recordings (presently part of the personal collection of the author of these notes) which were brought together for a group of aficionados, in which we can see an interesting range of most interesting works. It would appear that this set of cylinders was purchased at the establishment of the Viuda de Aramburo, which was located at the address printed on the labels, namely 12 Principe in Madrid. These cylinders were either completely blank or originally had commercial recordings on them that were subsequently erased in order to record this set of guitar-focused recordings.

The establishment “Viuda de Aramburo” was a fixture in the Madrid of the late 19th century owing to the wide variety of scientific equipment and instruments that was offered for sale. These included the latest inventions, such as cameras and accessories, telephones, laboratory equipment, and, of course, the phonograph, with all imaginable paraphernalia (speakers, reproducers, headphones, blank and recorded cylinders).

After careful listening, we can hear a small number of individuals using a phonograph (an Edison Spring Motor phonograph with a Bettini reproducer would have been used) to create a record of a playing session involving, frankly, amateur performances. It includes congratulations in a relaxed atmosphere. Clearly, the main interest lies not in the fidelity or the quality of the performances, but in the extraordinary voyage in time that we are making when we listen. They constitute without doubt the very oldest recordings known in which the guitar figures as the musical hero. It is exciting to be able to enjoy, 110 years after these recordings were made, a gathering of guitar fans in front of the new “toy” that came to Spain from beyond the seas.
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*Segovia and Llobet at the exhumation of Francisco Tárrega, 1915*