

UNRAVELING THE DISCUSSION ENTRE LES CARULISTES ET LES MOLINISTES (PARIS, 1828)

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In 1828, the French guitarist Charles de Marescot published a small booklet called *La Guitaromanie*,¹ a collection of short, unpretentious pieces for the guitar that contains, among other things, a caricature showing two bands of guitarists fighting savagely, using their instruments as weapons.² This well-known scene bears the legend *Discussion entre les Carulistes et les Molinistes* (see **figure 1**), referring to two of the most celebrated guitarists in Paris at that time: Ferdinando Carulli and Francesco Molino.



Figure 1. “Discussion entre les Carulistes et les Molinistes,” in Charles de Marescot, *La Guitaromanie* (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1828), 33.

This alleged antagonism has been touched upon by several guitar scholars, who have pointed to various possible causes; yet this topic appears never to have been subjected to a close examination. In this article, I shall revisit the existing theories and propose new ones by focusing on the differing methodologies and techniques the two guitarists employed in their tutor books, thus hoping to shed more light on this famous dispute.

I. The Time of *La Guitaromanie*

Around 1810, according to the critic Henri Blanchard, the guitar had become “fashionable in every social class” in Paris, which was experiencing what he called a “fanaticism for the cult of the guitar.”³ This enthusiasm can be seen in the impressive output of music for this instrument, which included more than thirty periodicals and around eighty method books, all published in the French capital in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.⁴

One of the many minor guitar composers who rode this wave of popularity was the author and publisher of *La Guitaromanie*, Charles de Marescot (b. Douai, 1790; d. London, 1842). Marescot settled in Paris in 1817 and pursued a career as a guitar teacher and music publisher there until 1834, when he emigrated to England.⁵ *La Guitaromanie* was listed as his opus 46 in *Bibliographie de la France* on November 21, 1829, and advertised as sold at Rue du Cimetière-St-André No. 13. However, there is good reason to believe that the booklet had been published or prepared for publication over a year before, as its title page bears a different address, Rue Saint-Jacques No. 42, where Marescot had his business only until October 1828.

Even though it is the name of Marescot that is remembered in connection with the famous caricature, it was the artist Étienne Mantoux, active in Paris from 1824 on, who created the lithographs included in *La Guitaromanie*.⁶ Certainly following Marescot’s instructions, Mantoux depicted the guitar in a variety of settings: the salon, *al fresco*, even the privacy of the boudoir.

The two guitarists referred to in the *Discussion* were Italian emigrants seeking a better fortune in Paris, a city where a musician would find many opportunities, and where the guitar was already very much *à la mode*. Ferdinando Carulli (b. Naples, 1770; d. Paris, 1841) arrived in 1808 and was soon considered the most important guitar professor in the French capital.⁷ He was a prolific composer

¹ A bibliography to accompany the notes to this paper can be found online at <https://soundboardscholar.org>, in the section “Soundboard Scholar Online.”

² An early version of this study was presented as a paper at a meeting in April 2017 of the Cohort attached to the Consortium for Guitar Research, Cambridge. I am grateful for the many ideas that were brought forward during the ensuing discussion. I would also like to express my most sincere gratitude to Erik Stenstadvold for advice during the preparation of this article.

³ “La guitare devint l’instrument à la mode dans toutes les classes de la société, il y a quelque trente ans ... fanatisme pour le culte de la guitare,” Henri Blanchard, “Les Guitaristes,” *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 40 (1842): 395–96. All translations are by the author.

⁴ In 1825 alone, some thirteen guitar methods were published in Paris. Erik Stenstadvold, *An Annotated Bibliography of Guitar Methods, 1760–1860* (Hillsdale NY and London: Pendragon Press, 2010), 5.

⁵ For a full account of Marescot’s life and career, see Damián Martín Gil, “The Guitarist behind *La Guitaromanie*: Charles de Marescot,” *Soundboard Scholar* 4 (2018): 4–16.

⁶ Three of the six lithographs bear his name. For more information on Mantoux see *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs-lithographes du XIXe siècle*, online edition of *L’École des chartes*, <http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/imprimeurs/node/22774>.

⁷ “He was the man in fashion as a virtuoso and professor” (Il fut l’homme à la mode, comme virtuose et comme professeur), François Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et Bibliographie générale de la musique*, vol. 3 (Brussels, 1837), 60.

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of music for guitar (more than 360 opus numbers appeared with Paris publishers, mainly Carli), and his *Méthode complète de guitare ou lyre*, op. 27, first published in 1810,⁸ became a huge success, with six Paris editions published during his own lifetime.⁹ Francesco Molino (b. Ivrea, 1768; d. Paris, 1847) established himself in the city ten years after Carulli, in late 1818 or more probably in early 1819, by which time he was already known there. Two bilingual Molino guitar methods, one in French and Italian and the other in French and German, had been published in Leipzig in 1813, and they may have helped pave his way in France; furthermore, in 1817—that is, still before settling there—his first method actually published in Paris, *Méthode de guitare*, contained a list of more than 350 subscribers from all over France.¹⁰ This shows that, by that time, Molino had already made a name for himself as an important guitar professor.

But why did these two figures appear in the *Discussion*? When analyzing the reasons that led Marescot to set a quarrel between the partisans of Carulli and Molino, we may ask why no other important guitar masters had that “privilege”; for example, why not Carulli and Fernando Sor? Sor, after all, had returned to Paris in 1827 and had the highest reputation in the city and abroad. In fact, if the *Discussion* had been a battle over who was the best composer, it seems clear that Sor should have been one of the contenders, since even Molino refers to him as the finest composer for guitar of his time.¹¹ Finally, if the rivals were trying to establish who was the most eminent guitar virtuoso at that time, probably neither of these two would have appeared in the lithograph. With Sor, Dionisio Aguado, and Matteo Carcassi also in the city, Carulli and Molino would have faced serious competition.

It seems that by selecting Carulli and Molino, Marescot was referring to a disagreement between the two best-established and most influential professors of the guitar in Paris. Both of them had been in the city for several years—Carulli for twenty-one and Molino for about nine—and both had invested considerable effort in authoring methods for guitar. In fact, no other guitarist published more methods than they did in the French capital or any other part of Europe, and, taking into account the number of re-editions these pedagogical works had and

the different approaches to methodology and technique they promulgated, it is quite likely that the two guitarists represented the main schools on how to play and learn the instrument at that time.

II. Revisiting the Existing Theories

Liberals versus Conservatives?

In an article on Francesco Molino from 1985, Mario Dell’Ara presented various factors that could have led to the alleged dispute between the followers of Carulli and Molino.¹² He proposed that there were serious ideological and political differences between them, with Carulli being a liberal associated with the bourgeoisie and Molino a convinced royalist.¹³ This idea of Carulli being a liberal was largely founded on the publication of his opus 331, *Les Trois Jours—Pièce analogue aux événements des trois mémorables journées: 27, 28 et 29 juillet 1830* (Paris, 1831), a work praising the revolution that caused the fall of Charles X.¹⁴ But it seems that Dell’Ara’s conclusion on this was premature. Richard Long, who, in an article also from 1985, analyzed various compositions of programmatic nature by the Neapolitan guitarist, came to the conclusion that Carulli changed “his allegiance with each new regime,” describing him as “an apolitical being, an artist seeking patronage.”¹⁵ Long based this notion on three particular works with different dedicatees: the *Napoléon le Grand Temple de la Gloire: Sonate sentimentale*, op. 33, dedicated to Napoleon in 1810; the *Air nationaux de tous les peuples d’Europe*, op. 73, published in 1814 as a tribute to Louis XVIII and Charles X; and *Les Trois Jours* of 1830, mentioned above. In fact, after his arrival in Paris, Carulli dedicated his music to aristocrats such as Count Constantin de Benocé, Count Léopold de Bohm, and Countess Tolstoy, in addition to bourgeois, military men, and friends.¹⁶

The theory that Molino was a partisan of the Bourbon monarchy and the aristocracy does not seem tenable either. Dell’Ara’s claim was based on the dedications of some Molino methods to the Duchess of Dalberg, the Countess of Tourdonnet, and the Duchess of Berry, but a more exhaustive analysis of his works shows that Molino had the same commercial sense as Carulli—not to take any of the two sides, aristocracy or bourgeoisie, but to maintain a

⁸ Publication dates of all the guitar methods discussed throughout this article are taken from Stenstadvoll, *Guitar Methods*.

⁹ “It was considered the best [guitar method] there was” (elle a été considérée comme la meilleure qui existait), Fétis, *Biographie universelle*, 60.

¹⁰ Stenstadvoll, *Guitar Methods*, 144.

¹¹ Francesco Molino, *Grande Méthode complète pour guitare ou lyre*, op. 33 (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1823), 11.

¹² Mario Dell’Ara, “Luigi, Valentino e Francesco Molino,” *Il Fronimo* 50 (1985): 14–42. In his more recent book *Francesco Molino: Vita e opere*, vol. 1 (Savigliano: Rosa Sonora, 2014), 34–35, Dell’Ara maintains the same theories, adding some information that did not appear in his 1985 article.

¹³ Dell’Ara, “Luigi, Valentino e Francesco Molino,” 33.

¹⁴ This theory still appears in 2014 in Dell’Ara, *Francesco Molino: Vita e opere*, 35. In fact, to support it, Dell’Ara attributes erroneously to Ferdinando Carulli a cantata dedicated to Lafayette, not noticing that, in fact, it was Carulli’s son, Gustave, who composed that work (see F-Pn: RES-44).

¹⁵ Richard M. Long, “The Program Music of Ferdinando Carulli,” *Soundboard* 12, no. 2 (1985): 180.

¹⁶ Mario Torta, *Catalogo tematico delle opere di Ferdinando Carulli*, vol. 2 (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1993), 764–65.

balance that would not harm his livelihood as a composer. Molino dedicated twenty works to aristocrats and thirty-eight to members of the bourgeoisie. This neutrality can also be deduced by the fact that Molino composed variations on the theme *Le Bon Roi Dagobert*, op. 63 (ca. 1826), where the king is ridiculed (precisely when the Bourbon King Charles X was in power), as well as “Vive Henry IV” that appears in opp. 33 (1823) and 46 (1826–27), the quasi-official national anthem during the Bourbon restoration.¹⁷

With or Without the Thumb

According to Dell’Ara, some differences in their techniques may also have been a reason for a dispute. He mentions as one of the most evident discrepancies the use of the left-hand thumb to stop notes on the sixth string.¹⁸ Carulli was an advocate of this technique, arguing that four fingers are not enough to execute both melody and basses and inviting all who wished to play the instrument “with more ease” to use the left-hand thumb.¹⁹ **Figure 2** (m. 3, “pouce”) shows an example of such use. Many other important guitarists in Europe also championed this technique, including Federico Moretti, Mauro Giuliani, Matteo Carcassi, Luigi Legnani, and Josef Kaspar Mertz, to mention but a few.



Figure 2. Excerpt from Carulli, *Méthode complete de guitare ou lyre*, op. 27 (Paris: Carli, 1810), 18.

Molino, on the other hand, was one of the first guitarists to reject this technique in print, a view other important guitarists such as Sor and Aguado also held. In a footnote in his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), he wrote:

I advise students never to use the thumb of the left hand: for we can produce on the guitar all the harmony of which it is capable without this digit, [especially] because to place it, it

is necessary to disturb the hand altogether from its position. The use of the thumb is also very uncomfortable for small hands.²⁰

Molino may be implying that the masters in favor of this technique—Carulli certainly being the most prominent of them—may actually harm amateurs with small hands, with female players being particularly at risk; we should remember that the majority of guitar amateurs were probably young women, who often would have had smaller hands.²¹

Denoting the Left-Hand Positions

Dell’Ara points to another apparent difference between the two guitarists: how they defined the positions of the left hand on the fingerboard.²² Possibly due to his parallel training as a cellist, Carulli used in his first methods a system of positions similar to that employed by other string instruments such as the cello or violin. In this system, the positions are determined by each tone of the diatonic scale of C major on the first string, thus yielding only five positions along the neck of the guitar.²³ Carulli explained his preference in these terms:

I have noticed that several authors in their methods count a position at each fret, that is to say, at each semitone. I cannot approve of this system, because in all the instruments with a neck, such as the violin, the viola, the cello, the mandolin, the lute, etc., we count a position [only] at each whole tone [i.e., each diatonic step], and it should not be done differently [for the guitar].²⁴

Conversely, Molino showed his predilection as early as 1813 for a system that associated a position to each fret, referring to twelve positions for the left hand,²⁵ as we do today. In fact, in his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), he seems to point at Carulli’s words in a somewhat condescending tone:

There are teachers who number only five positions on the guitar, saying that on the instruments that have a neck, such

¹⁷ I am grateful to Jan Burgers for providing me with this information.

¹⁸ Dell’Ara, “Luigi, Valentino e Francesco Molino,” 32.

¹⁹ “Quatre doigts ne suffisant pas pour exécuter, en même temps, un chant et des basses raisonnées en différents tons, il fait nécessairement employer le pouce; ainsi que j’invite tous ceux qui veulent jouer avec plus de facilité, à s’en servir,” Ferdinando Carulli, *Méthode complete de guitare ou lyre*, op. 27 (Paris: Carli, 1810), 4.

²⁰ “Je conseille aux Éléves de ne se servir jamais du pouce de la main gauche: car on peut produire sur la Guitare toute l’harmonie dont elle est susceptible, sans employer ce doigt, puisque pour le placer, il faut déranger entièrement la main de sa position; l’usage du pouce est d’ailleurs très-incommode pour les petites mains.” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 11.

²¹ On the subject of gender and the guitar in this period, see Erik Stenstadvold, “‘We Hate the Guitar’: Prejudice and Polemic in the Music Press in Early 19th-Century Europe,” *Early Music* 41, no. 4 (2013): 595–604.

²² Dell’Ara, “Luigi, Valentino e Francesco Molino,” 32.

²³ Carulli shows in a table the five main positions with which he operates: the first being located at the first fret, the second at the third fret; the third at the fifth fret; the fourth at the seventh fret; and the fifth position located at the eighth fret. Carulli, *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (1810), 29.

²⁴ “J’ai remarqué que plusieurs auteurs dans leurs Méthodes comptent à chaque touche une position, c’est-à-dire, à chaque demi ton; je ne puis pas approuver cette manière, car sur tous les instruments qui ont un manche, tels que le Violon, l’Alto, Basse, la Mandoline, le Luth, etc., on compte à chaque ton entier une position, et on ne le pourroit pas autrement.” Carulli, *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (1810), 28. Carulli used the exact same words in his second, third, and fourth editions. There were other guitarists at that time also using this system such as Antonio Nava. I am indebted to Thomas Heck for providing me with this information.

²⁵ “Dodeci sono le posizioni della mano sinistra,” Francesco Molino, *Nouvelle Méthode pour guitare* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1813), 7.

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as the violin, the viola, etc ... the positions change only by every whole-tone. As I also play the violin, I can say that this instrument does not have any relation with the guitar ... So the method I have just indicated is the clearest.²⁶

The system Carulli had proposed was unsuccessful. By 1825 he realized that it did not have any future and modified it:

The guitar undoubtedly has [only] five positions on the neck, but since the composers and professors have not agreed on this number of positions, I will limit myself to naming the frets or “boxes” where we do most of the scales, and passages, and these boxes are the 4th, 5th, 7th and 9th...²⁷

As a matter of fact, Carulli met his adversaries only halfway; he did not actually yield to a system of one position per fret, he just avoided the term “position” by instead employing the French word “case” (literally “box,” signifying the part of the fingerboard between two frets). He would thus write “5me Case” where Molino and others would have indicated “5me Pos.” The point remains that, by the time *La Guitaromanie* was published, Carulli was no longer using the violinistic position system as claimed by Dell’Ara. The word “case” instead of “pos.” could hardly have caused the damaging of all the guitars pictured in the *Discussion*.

A Case of Plagiarism?

Sometime between 1829 and 1833, Molino published his *Grand Concerto pour la guitare*, op. 56, dedicated to Madame La Baronne Gros.²⁸ As Richard Long has observed, this work brings to mind Carulli’s *Petit Concerto de société*, op. 140, published in 1820.²⁹ Both concertos are in E minor, and in the first movement Molino used a very

similar opening motif as Carulli did: a falling triad landing on the supertonic on the first beat of the second measure, resolving to the tonic. We even find that the grace note in the second measure of Molino’s guitar part matches a similar ornament in Carulli’s violin part (see **figures 3** and **4**). Yet we cannot say for certain if this is an indication of an intended imitation by Molino. The falling triad as a musical opening motif was a typical topos of the period, used in music for many instruments. In the two concertos here discussed, the opening themes continue differently after that brief statement and there are no other noticeable resemblances.



Figure 3. Excerpt from Ferdinando Carulli, *Concerto pour guitare ou lyre*, op. 140 (Paris: Carli, 1820), first violin, 2.



Figure 4. Excerpt from Francesco Molino, *Grand Concerto pour la guitare*, op. 56 (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1829–32), guitar part, 2.

On the other hand, only a handful of guitar concertos had been written before 1829, so it is scarcely believable that Molino would not have known Carulli’s work. It is possible that Molino quoted the opening because he wanted to show that he could make a better work than Carulli, thereby proving his superiority as a composer. But we should not exclude the possibility that he made the quotation as a tribute to his famous colleague, even if this does not concur with the theories of their rivalry. Whatever the case, since *La Guitaromanie* was printed before October 1828, and Molino’s concerto was published one year later at the earliest, it is hard to imagine that the quarrel of the *Discussion* was fueled by Molino imitating the beginning of Carulli’s concerto.

²⁶ “Il y a des Maîtres, qui comptent seulement cinq positions sur la Guitare, disant que sur les Instrumens qui ont un manche, tels que le Violon, l’Alto, etc... les positions ne changent qu’à chaque Note d’un Ton entier. Comme je joue aussi du Violon, je peux dire que cet Instrument n’a aucun rapport avec la Guitare ... Ainsi la méthode que je viens d’indiquer est la plus claire.” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 12.

²⁷ “La Guitare a positivement cinq positions sur le manche, mais comme les compositeurs et les professeurs ne sont point d’accord sur ce nombre des positions, je me bornerai à nommer les touches ou cases ou l’on fait le plus de gammes, de traits et ces cases sont 4.^e, 5.^e, 7.^e et 9.^e” Ferdinando Carulli, *Méthode complète pour parvenir à pincer de la guitare*, op. 241 (Paris: Carli, 1825), 51.

²⁸ Dell’Ara, *Francesco Molino: Vita e opere*, 99.

²⁹ See Richard Long, “Guitar Mania in Paris,” sleeve notes to *Carulli/Molino: Guitar Concertos*, Philips CD, 426 263–2 (1990), 5. I am indebted to Gerhard Penn for calling this work to my attention.

Inventing New Guitars

The fact that Carulli and Molino used different guitars may have been a relevant factor in the *querelle*.³⁰ Molino used a standard guitar, but at least from the publication of his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), he began to promote an altogether different instrument, which he called *nouvelle guitare* (see **figure 5**). He presented it saying that in order “to obtain a greater volume of sound, I use a new guitar of my invention, where the soundboard is slightly convex, thus making the instrument more resonant.”³¹ The only models preserved from that time with the shape seen in the lithographs in Molino’s methods were made in Mirecourt by Jean-Joseph Coffé, Cabasse-Visnaire, and the Mauchant brothers. These guitars have a body size larger than usual, an arched soundboard, three resonance holes (including two C-shape holes like the violin), and a curved fingerboard.³²

Carulli is reported to have used a standard guitar of unknown Italian origin,³³ although soon after his arrival in Paris he most probably converted to using French guitars,

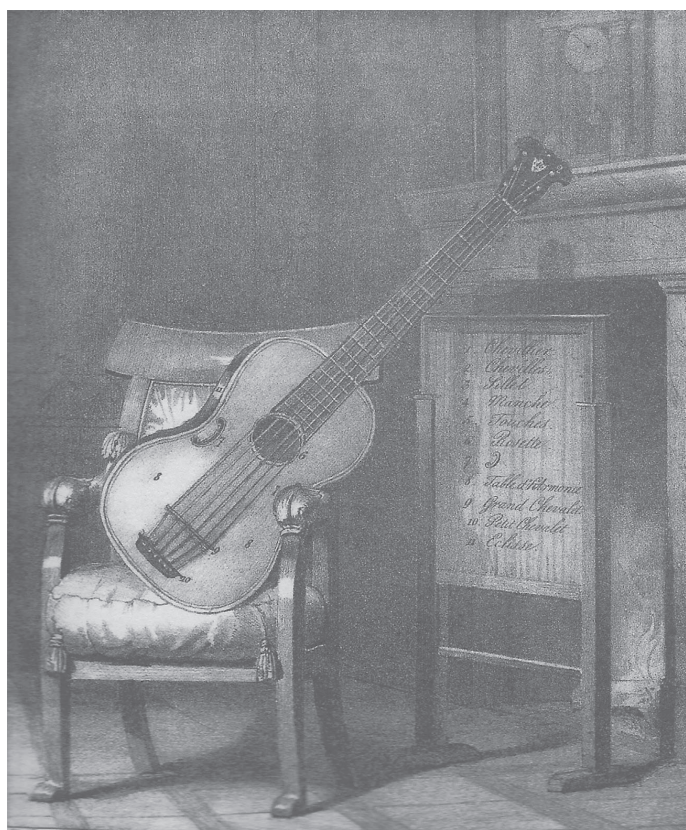


Figure 5. Illustration from Molino, *Grande Méthode complète pour guitare ou lyre*, op. 33 (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1823), pl. 13.



Figure 6. Drawing of the *décaorde*, extracted from Carulli and Lacôte’s patent document (November 16, 1826), Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle.

most likely by the luthier Pierre René Lacôte. In 1826, three years after the invention of Molino’s *nouvelle guitare*, Carulli, in cooperation with Lacôte, created the *décaorde*, a guitar with ten strings whose design was registered at the *Secrétariat de la Préfecture de la Seine* on October 31, 1826 (see **figure 6**). This was a guitar with only five strings on the fingerboard, the other five being free-floating bass strings. Carulli published for this new instrument his *Méthode complète pour le décaorde*, op. 293, in August 1826. It is noteworthy that when referring to his new invention, Carulli used the same two concepts employed by Molino, that is to say, volume and resonance, even claiming that the guitar’s volume had increased by almost a half!³⁴

³⁰ I am grateful to Erik Stenstadvoll for drawing my attention to this possibility.

³¹ “Pour obtenir un plus grand volume de Son, je me sers d’une nouvelle guitare de mon invention, dont la table d’harmonie est un peu bombée, ce qui rend l’instrument plus sonore,” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 12.

³² On this instrument see Panagiotis Pouloupoulos, “The Impact of François Chanut’s Experimental Violins on the Development of the Earliest Guitar with an Arched Soundboard by Francesco Molino in the 1820s,” *Early Music* 46, no. 1 (2018): 67–86.

³³ James Westbrook, *The Century that Shaped the Guitar* (London: The Guitar Museum, 2005), 170.

³⁴ “... qui augmente presque de la moitié le son de l’instrument, et le rend en même temps plus harmonieux et plus moelleux que celui de la Guitare ordinaire.” Ferdinando Carulli, *Méthode complète pour le décaorde*, op. 293 (Paris: Carli, 1826), 1.

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Like many other experiments with musical instruments at that time, the *décacorde* appears not to have become successful, and apart from the *Méthode* op. 293, Carulli never published any music for it. It is therefore not very likely that this instrument would have been the cause for the confrontation in the *Discussion*. None of the instruments flying in the hands of the contenders display any of the characteristics of the Mirecourt guitars or the *décacorde*, although a possible explanation could be that Maescot had not instructed the lithographer in this regard (in addition, most of the guitars are seen only from the side, with very few details). So, if the caricature reflects a battle over instruments it is perhaps more likely that it was over the merits of the standard Lacôte guitar versus the Mirecourt type, the latter being promoted by Molino.

Nail versus Flesh

In 2014, Dell’Ara proposed two new theories, this time related to the character of the two guitarists’ music and the use of nails to pluck the string:

Another cause for dispute could be the nature of the music of the two masters—Carulli’s brilliant and virtuosic, Molino’s sweeter and more meditative (although in both composers there are significant examples of the opposite character); or it could be the different way in which the strings were plucked: with the flesh according to Molino, with the nail according to Carulli’s preference.³⁵

The idea that Carulli’s music was “brilliant and virtuosic” and Molino’s “sweeter and meditative” seems to be Dell’Ara’s subjective opinion—even he states that both composers offer counterexamples. But the theory that Molino plucked the strings with the flesh of the right-hand fingers and Carulli with the nails appears to be unfounded. After a thorough examination of all the guitar methods by both authors, I have not found a single reference on this matter by either of them. Furthermore, none of the doctoral dissertations devoted to guitar technique in this period have recorded any such reference.³⁶ Most certainly both these guitarists played with the flesh like the great majority of their colleagues at that time; if not, it would surely have been mentioned in one of their methods.

III. Other Differences in Their Teaching

In the remaining part of this article, we shall examine some differences in the teachings of Carulli and Molino not commented upon by other scholars. The most important documents in this regard are the first four editions of Carulli’s *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (1810, 1819, 1822 and ca. 1824), his new edition of the *Méthode complete*, op. 241 (1825), and Molino’s *Grande Méthode complète*, op. 33 (1823). As we shall see, in some of his statements Molino seems to point to Carulli without explicitly saying so; several of them match precisely the profile of this guitarist.³⁷

On Positioning the Instrument

Around 1825, Prudent-Louis Aubéry du Bouley, a student of Carulli, described in his *Méthode complete*, op. 42, the three most common ways of holding the guitar at that time: (1) the lower bout on the right thigh (without a footstool); (2) the waist of the guitar on the left thigh with a stool under the left foot; and (3) the waist on the right thigh with the right leg raised on a stool.³⁸ In the first edition of the *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (1810), Carulli recommends a position of the instrument where “the lower bout of the guitar must rest on the [two] thighs, which must be slightly apart, and with the neck very elevated, so that the instrument is held almost perpendicularly.”³⁹ This way of holding the guitar implies that the instrument’s waist does not have any contact with the thigh and the fact that the instrument is almost perpendicular is a key factor to setting the left hand “free.” However, Carulli changed this position completely in the second edition of his method in 1819, saying that the student should “support the instrument on the left thigh [with] the neck [of the guitar] higher than the lower bout,” and adding that ladies “can use a stool under the left foot.”⁴⁰



Figure 7. Illustration from Ferdinando Carulli, *Étrennes aux amateurs*, op. 136 (Paris: Carli, ca. 1820), title page.

³⁵ “Altro motivo polemico poteva essere la qualità della musica dei due maestri: brillante e virtuosistica quella di Carulli, più dolce e meditativa quella di Molino (sebbene in entrambi i compositori non manchino significativi esempi di carattere opposto), oppure poteva essere il diverso modo nel tocco delle corde: con il polpastrello secondo Molino, con l’unghia secondo le preferenze di Carulli.” Dell’Ara, *Francesco Molino: Vita e opere*, 34.

³⁶ Paul Cox, *Classic Guitar Technique and its Evolution as Reflected in the Method Books ca. 1770–1850* (PhD diss., Indiana University Bloomington, 1978); Danielle Ribouillault, *La Technique de guitare en France dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle* (PhD diss., Université de Paris Sorbonne, 1980); Pascal Valois, *Les Guitaristes français entre 1770 et 1830: Pratiques d’exécution et catalogue des méthodes* (PhD diss., Université Laval, 2009).

³⁷ This may also be seen in the sections related to the use of the left-hand thumb and the indication of the left-hand positions discussed above.

³⁸ Prudent-Louis Aubéry du Bouley, *Méthode complete et extrêmement simplifiée pour la guitare*, op. 42 (Paris: ca. 1825), 3.

³⁹ “La partie inférieure du corps de la Guitare doit être appuyer sur les cuisses qui doivent être tant soit peu ouvertes, en tenant le manche bien élevé, afin que l’instrument se trouve presque perpendiculaire.” Carulli, *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (1810), 3.

⁴⁰ “On doit appuyer l’instrument sur la cuisse gauche le manche plus élevé que la partie inférieure du corps. Les dames peuvent placer un tabouret sous le pied gauche.” Carulli, *Méthode complete*, op. 27 (Paris, 1819), 3.

This position can be seen on the title page of his *Étrennes aux amateurs*, op. 136 (see **figure 7**), a posture in which the guitar comes into complete contact with the left thigh of the guitarist.

Carulli would refine his idea of how to position the instrument yet a third time. In his new edition of the *Méthode complete*, op. 241, from 1825, he proposed that both men and women should use a footstool under the left foot,⁴¹ a position we already see used by the man in 1820, as shown in figure 7.

In his early methods from 1813, Molino advised the student to make use of a ribbon for holding the guitar during the first months, in order to obtain “more ease in all the movements of the left hand.”⁴² In an accompanying illustration, this ribbon is clearly seen, but the placement of the guitar in relation to the player’s thighs is more indistinct.⁴³



Figure 8. Illustration from Francesco Molino, *Méthode de guitare* (Paris: Gambaro, 1817), pl. 12.

From 1817 on, Molino shows in several of his tutor books women using a footstool under the left foot, but the waist of the guitar never touches the left thigh in any

of these drawings (see **figure 8**).⁴⁴ He does not, however, explain the positions in the text.

In fact, Molino shows precisely the same position in figure 8 as that explained by another French author, Jean Baptiste Lintant, who states in his *Petite Méthode* (1822) that “the guitar must be placed transversally on the right thigh, so that the left [thigh] feels it slightly.”⁴⁵ To conclude we can say that Molino used a modified version of the first position mentioned by Aubéry du Bouley (the lower bout on the right thigh) with a footstool under the left leg, while Carulli in the 1820s employed the second Bouley position (the waist of the guitar on the left thigh with a stool). Certainly, something as fundamental as the manner of holding the guitar would be a significant difference between the two schools.

Contrasting Methodologies

Carulli’s *Méthode complete*, op. 27, from 1810, was conceived, according to the author, “expressément pour l’enseignement de son fils Gustave” (specifically for the teaching of his son Gustave), who was nine years old at that time. It is perhaps unlikely that the young boy would have been able to follow the method proposed by his father unless he was an exceptionally talented pupil for his age; this notwithstanding, for the very first time there was a method offering a well-considered progression, from simple one-voice pieces to more elaborated compositions. Contrary to this, in his methods, Molino started almost immediately with two-voice pieces with a higher level of difficulty and focused more on the knowledge of common arpeggio patterns, so that the early stage for absolute beginners was rather poorly covered.

In the third part of the first edition of his opus 27, Carulli had also introduced twenty-four lessons in the form of duets “pour l’élève et le maître” (for pupil and teacher), a section occupying forty-five pages of a total number of ninety. In fact, this pupil-teacher concept, with a much simpler part for the pupil, seems to be new in guitar methodology, and it may have been one of the keys to the success of this method.⁴⁶ It is quite likely that Carulli got the idea from some method books for other instruments authored expressly for use at the Paris Conservatoire from 1800 on; several of these included duets where the teacher accompanied the student such as, for example,

⁴¹ Carulli, *Méthode complete*, op. 241 (1825), 6.

⁴² “On n’oubliera pas surtout de faire usage d’un ruban pendant les premiers mois, afin de soutenir la Guitare, ainsi qu’on peut le voir par la susdite planche. Par ce moyen l’Amateur aura plus de facilité dans tous les mouvemens de la main gauche.” Molino, *Nouvelle Méthode* (1813), 9.

⁴³ Molino, *Nouvelle Méthode* (1813), pl. II. With no text explaining precisely this illustration, it is impossible to ascertain the exact position.

⁴⁴ This position can be seen in Molino’s *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), pl. 16; and *Grande Méthode complete pour la guitare*, op. 46 (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1826–27), s.n. In *Les Guitaristes*, 126, Valois incorrectly asserts that Molino used Carulli’s position. Ribouillault, *La Technique de guitare*, 100, also gives an incorrect position.

⁴⁵ “Il faut poser la Guitare transversalement sur la cuisse droite, de manière que la gauche la sente légèrement.” Jean Baptiste Lintant, *Petite Méthode de guitare ou lyre* (Paris: Petit, 1822), 3. Since Molino never explains his position, but simply shows pictures, Lintant’s explanation is enlightening on this particular way of holding the instrument.

⁴⁶ Occasionally, guitar methods prior to 1810 contained guitar duets of equal difficulty. One such example is Jean Baptiste Phillis, *Nouvelle Méthode pour la lyre ou guitare à six cordes* (Paris: Pleyel, 1802).

UNRAVELING THE DISCUSSION

the violoncello method by Baillot, Levasseur, Catel, and Baudiot, published in 1804.

The section with the teacher-student duets was kept throughout the first four editions of Carulli's opus 27, that is, from 1810 to ca. 1824, but removed from the *nouvelle édition*, op. 241, from 1825. It is not clear why Carulli omitted it from the new edition,⁴⁷ but perhaps it had something to do with a comment Molino had made in 1823, in the introduction to his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33, about the importance of including a section with the elementary principles of music, so that "amateurs, who are in towns where there are no teachers, will be able, with the help of this method, to learn music and the guitar at the same time."⁴⁸ Even the earlier German methods by Molino included such a section, while none of the first four editions of Carulli's opus 27 method did. This lack, combined with the fact that they contained almost fifty pages of duets for students and teachers, made Carulli's method much less useful for an amateur without a teacher. Perhaps influenced by Molino's statement from two years before, Carulli, in his opus 241 of 1825, omitted the duet section and added an introduction with the general principles of music, with this explanation:

I also thought that a method for the guitar, or for any other instrument, could not be truly complete, unless it was preceded by a brief but clear summary of the elementary principles of music. The first four editions of my method did not offer this benefit, but I have remedied this in the fifth edition, both to follow my personal opinion, and to conform to the usage adopted by the great masters, in the theoretical works they have published.⁴⁹

There was yet another important difference regarding the methodological approaches of these two guitarists in their methods. Molino advocated the practice of arpeggio patterns in the shape of theme and variations as essential to the process of learning to play the instrument, while Carulli did not share that vision to the same degree. In this regard, Molino's approach was not new: it seems clear that he was continuing a method of learning the instrument embedded in the guitar tradition of the second half of the eighteenth century, although he clearly magnified it.⁵⁰ In his *Nouvelle*

Méthode (1813) and *Méthode de guitare* (1817), Molino introduces a theme with variations, each with a specific arpeggio pattern, over a total of fourteen pages. In *Le Maître de guitare*, op. 24 (1822), he again uses this formula, now over sixteen pages, while in his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823) and op. 46 (1826–27), he includes a theme with twenty-two pages of arpeggio variations! He even proudly drew attention to this system by stating that other authors ignored it:

They [the amateurs] will also find ... 50 variations on a theme for [practicing] the plucking [i.e., agility of the right-hand fingers], which is very necessary to acquire a brilliant way of playing, and which other authors have almost completely neglected in their methods.⁵¹

Needless to say, there were other methods that did not include this type of theme and variations, but the method by Carulli was the most important of them. The first edition (1810) and second edition (1819) of Carulli's method contained one page with thirteen brief arpeggio patterns, but no extended exercises for their practice. In the third edition, published in April 1822, he introduced an additional table with eight new "arpèges difficiles" (difficult arpeggios). Perhaps the success of Molino's first method, which had been published in France in 1817 and included a theme and variations with thirty-six arpeggio patterns, had something to do with Carulli's urge to explore more finger combinations in his 1822 method. Perhaps it was just a coincidence, but just three months earlier, in February of that year, Molino had published *Le Maître de guitare*, op. 24, with forty arpeggio patterns. Moreover, in the *Méthode complète*, op. 241, of 1825, Carulli acknowledged his fault in the previous editions for having expected the students to practice all the different arpeggio patterns on one sequence of chords ("lesson") only, now introducing lessons in various keys for this purpose. By stating that this would also exercise the left hand, he was in a way criticizing those (such as Molino?) who proposed the practice of a multitude of arpeggios on only one chord sequence (theme):

In my first method, in order to facilitate the study of 22 types of arpeggios that are noted there, I had included only

⁴⁷ Carulli states that he had "removed everything that seemed useless [and] added many essential things." ("J'ai retranché à cet effet tout ce qui me paraissait inutile [et] ajouté beaucoup de choses essentielles"), Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 241 (1825), ii.

⁴⁸ "Enfin, comme j'ai donné aussi tous les principes élémentaires de musique, bien expliqués, les Amateurs, qui sont dans les Villes où il n'y a pas de Maîtres, pourront, à l'aide de cette Méthode, apprendre la musique et la Guitare en même temps." Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 1.

⁴⁹ "J'ai cru en outre qu'une méthode pour la Guitare, ou pour tout autre instrument, ne pouvait être réellement complète, si elle n'était précédée d'un abrégé succinct mais clair, des principes élémentaires de la musique. Les quatre premières éditions de ma méthode n'offrant pas cet avantage, j'y ai remédié dans la cinquième édition, tant pour suivre mon sentiment personnel, que pour me conformer à l'usage adopté par les grands maîtres, dans les théories qu'ils ont publiées." Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 241 (1825), iii.

⁵⁰ Eighteenth-century authors such as Giacomo Merchi, Pierre Jean Baillon, and Vidal had included themes with arpeggio variations in their methods, and this practice continued among many early nineteenth-century guitar composers such as Antoine Lemoine, J.B. Bedard, and Antoine Meissonnier to name a few. *Les Folies d'Espagne* was a popular tune used for this purpose, although there were several others as well.

⁵¹ "Ils y trouveront aussi ... 50 variations sur un Thème pour le pincé, ce qui est très nécessaire pour acquérir un jeu brillant, et ce dont les autres auteurs ne se sont presque point occupés dans leurs méthodes." Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 1.

one small lesson, which in my experience ended up boring students, and made them totally neglect the arpeggios, whose regular exercise is extremely essential on the guitar and even always indispensable. So in order not to repeat the same lesson over and over again, I have composed nine others, each with an arpeggio in a different key: thus the student, by exercising the right hand on these arpeggios, will also exercise the left hand, making it easy for him to execute chords in all the most common keys.⁵²

Apart from these differences in methodology, Molino included in his opus 33 an intriguing critique in which he accused several masters of composing music for guitar that was either “very difficult” or lacked harmony, “as if it were to be played on the violin.”⁵³ It is impossible to know if Molino was referring here to Carulli. Certainly, some of the music in Carulli’s Method op. 27 was written in a monodic manner, with little use of bass notes; the duets in particular—even the teacher’s part—may be considered quite violin-like, although his solo music was not normally like that. On the contrary, Carulli had been hailed as the man destined to “elevate the guitar to the rank of a harmony instrument.”⁵⁴ In addition, it was said that, when he arrived in Paris in 1808, his music was considered “too difficult,” so that publishers did not dare invest in it, and as a consequence, he “had to put a part of his talent to one side, and his reputation increased in proportion as he deserved it less in his own eyes”.⁵⁵

Slurs en Miniature

A left-hand technique often used in the second half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was the *écho* or *vibration*. This technique implied plucking in a normal way a note on one string while a succeeding note on the next, lower string is produced by a hammering-on with a left-hand finger alone, thus creating the sensation of technical slur (see **figure 9**). Carulli explained this in his opus 27 of 1810:



Figure 9. Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 27 (1810), 22.

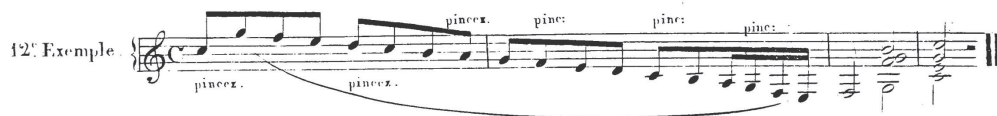


Figure 10. Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 25.

When slurring notes in pairs, it is often found, descending, that a plucked note on one string must be slurred to another note on the next string, and we do it by the *écho*. The *écho* is made by setting a string in vibration, and pressing the finger forcefully on the next string, without plucking it.⁵⁶

Molino had never recommended this technique in his methods,⁵⁷ and in his *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), he strongly opposed it (see **figure 10**):

To execute this descending scale, the other masters pluck only the first note G of the first string and slur all the others with the left hand. But it is not possible to slur the notes well and to give them [sufficient] strength if we do not pluck the notes on each string to set this string in vibration; otherwise these are slurs that we might call slurs in miniature.⁵⁸

Molino seems to mock those employing this technique by using the expression *coulés en miniature* (slurs in miniature). Indeed, he underscored his opposition by saying that “good taste requires that the two notes [of a slur] are always played on the same string, so that their sound is equal,”⁵⁹ implying that those using the *écho*, Carulli being a principal advocate, had no taste; again a serious allegation.

⁵² “Dans ma première méthode, pour faciliter l’étude de 22 arpèges qui y sont notés, je n’avais tracé qu’une seule petite leçon, qui d’après l’expérience que j’en ai faite finissait par ennuyer les élèves, et leur faisait totalement négliger les arpèges, dont l’exercice familier est extrêmement essentiel sur la Guitare, et même toujours indispensable: ainsi pour ne pas répéter à l’infini la même leçon, j’en ai composé neuf autres, chacune avec un arpège et dans un ton différent: ainsi l’élève, en exerçant la main droite sur ces arpèges, exercera aussi la main gauche, et se rendra facile l’exécution des accords dans tous les tons les plus usités.” Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 241 (1825), ii.

⁵³ “Mais il y a très-peu d’auteurs qui composent de la musique agréable, et qui soit bien propre à cet instrument: les uns la font trop difficile; les autres le composent avec très-peu d’harmonie, comme si elle devait être jouée sur le violon.” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 1.

⁵⁴ “D’élever la guitare au rang des instruments d’harmonie,” *Revue musicale*, February 12, 1831: 12.

⁵⁵ “Tout ce qu’il [Carulli] écrivait était trouvé trop difficile; les marchands de musique n’osaient se charger de ses ouvrages: il fallut bien qu’il renonçât à montrer une partie de son talent, et sa réputation s’augmenta à mesure qu’il la méritait moins à ses propres yeux.” *Revue musicale*, February 12, 1831: 12. I am grateful to Erik Stenstadvold for bringing this to my attention.

⁵⁶ “En liant les notes deux par deux, si se rencontre souvent, en descendant, qu’ayant pincé une note sur une corde, elle doit être liée avec une autre note sur la corde suivante, alors on la fait par écho. L’écho se fait en donnant la vibration à une corde, et en appuyant le doigt avec force sur la corde qui suit, sans l’avoir pincée.” Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 27 (1810), 21. Carulli will call it *vibration* in his op. 241 (1825).

⁵⁷ Molino, *Nouvelle Méthode* (1813), 30.

⁵⁸ “Les autres maîtres pour exécuter cette gamme en descendant, pincant seulement la premier note Sol de la chanterelle, et lient toutes les autres avec la main gauche mais il n’est pas possible de bien lier les notes, et de leur donner de la force, si on ne pince pas une note à chaque corde pour mettre cette corde en vibration; autrement ce sont de coulés qu’on peut appeler coulés en miniature,” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 25.

⁵⁹ “Le bon goût exige que les deux notes s’exécutent toujours jouées sur la même corde, pour que leur son soit bien égal,” Molino, *Grande Méthode*, op. 33 (1823), 24.



Figure 15. Excerpt from “La Discussion, rondeau,” in Marescot, *La Guitaromanie*, 34.

In conclusion, we see that Molino and Carulli proposed different systems in moderate tempos. By the time *La Guitaromanie* was published, Carulli was using a system alternating the middle and index fingers, while Molino advocated a system with finger repetitions.⁶⁵ We may assume, however, that they agreed on the way to play rapid scales. It is also noticeable that the two guitarists used different symbols for the right-hand fingers; Carulli used letters while Molino employed numbers, a peculiar inconvenience to those Carullists wanting to read Molino’s method and vice versa.

A Question without Answers: Conclusions

We have seen that there were considerable dissimilarities in the teachings of Carulli and Molino, and further that some statements by Molino may have been a veiled criticism of his illustrious colleague. Whatever the reasons for the alleged friction between them, Marescot may have regarded it as rather hilarious: to accompany the caricature, he

even included a simple two-page piece with the name “La Discussion, rondeau.” The piece has two distinct voices—perhaps signifying the two guitarists—and it resembles comical chasings, as if alluding to two different factions (see **figure 15**). And so even the music reflects the famous quarrel!

La Guitaromanie was certainly a ploy by Marescot in order to gain rich profits, something at which he seems to have been an expert. It definitely had all the necessary ingredients to sell well: easy music, jocosely caricatures, and even a tantalizing backstory. In the end we do not know to what extent the disagreements between Carulli and Molino really resulted in a heated conflict, or if their rivalry was in fact an amicable debate between respected colleagues; Sor and Aguado propagated utterly dissimilar guitar techniques, and yet they were close friends. Marescot’s caricature, the *Discussion*, was after all precisely that: a caricature.

⁶⁵ Carulli made a point of practicing scales with different fingers (either m–i or i–m) in order to overcome the possible obstacles of cross-fingering. Carulli, *Méthode complète*, op. 27 (1819), 29. See also Ferdinando Carulli, *Supplément à la méthode*, op. 192 (Paris: Carli, 1822), 37–40.