

NAPOLÉON COSTE 1805 - 1883

GITARRE: HEPTACORDE LACOTE / COSTE, PARIS 1855

Brigitte Zaczek
romantische Gitarre II



NAPOLÉON COSTE (1805 - 1883)

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Souvenir du Jura: Andante et Polonaise op. 44 | 7:16 |
| 2 | Rêverie op. 53 Nr. 1 | 5:42 |
| 3 | Fantaisie sur deux motifs de »La Norma« op. 16 | 7:36 |
| 4 | <i>Aus »Souvenirs, sept Morceaux Episodiques«</i>
Le Zuyderzée (Ballade) op. 20 | 6:13 |
| 5 | Caprice sur l'Air Espagnol »La Cachucha« op. 13 | 7:18 |
| 6 | Grande Sérénade op. 30
<i>Largo - Marche et Chœur de Pèlerins</i>
<i>Boléro - Chœur - Final</i> | 12:31 |
| 7 | Valse Favorite op. 46 | 9:16 |
| 8 | 8 Walzer aus »16 Walses favorites de Johann Strauss op. 7« | 8:02 |

Brigitte Zaczek, *romantische Gitarre*

Instrumente:

R. Lacote, Paris 1855, Sammlung Bernhard Kresse (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

J.A.Stauffer & Comp., Wien 1837 (6, 7, 8)

Recorded: July 2005 at Neuer Konzertsaal am Rennweg 8, Vienna (Austria)

Recording & editing engineer > Thomas Lang

Recording supervision > Melitta Heinzmann

Booklet Essays > Alfred Komarek > www.Alfred-Komarek.at > Bruno Marlat

Translations > English: Steven Edminster > Deutsch: Erik Hofmann & Marion Zaczek

© 2005 > Brigitte Zaczek > www.spinnt.at/BZ

ALFRED KOMAREK **One Century and Seven Strings**

Vive l'Empereur!

France, 27 June 1805 – A newcomer in the house of Coste: the father, formerly an officer in the army, didn't need to think twice about the name he would give his son. Only a Napoléon would be properly equipped – not only in name – for the struggle that is life.

The year before, a certain Napoléon Bonaparte had crowned himself with his own hands as emperor in Notre-Dame and had thereafter pursued a vigorous course designed to increase his power and fame yet further. It was obvious that Napoléon Coste at some time in his life would also have to don military garb. Yet the history of the family took a different course. The young Coste fell seriously ill, and, whether he wanted to or not, had to turn his mind to peaceful pursuits. He took up the guitar.

The warlike Napoléon had already been dead for two years when his musical namesake caused a stir in Valenciennes. Coste was 18 years old at the time and eager to make a name for himself as a teacher and performer. Napoléon II, Duke of Reichstadt, was approaching the end of a short life dogged by illness at the Imperial Court in Vienna when Coste, at the time of the 1830 revolution, was avidly pursuing his career in Paris. He studied music theory and composition, and, perhaps most important of all, he became a pupil of the famous Fernando Sor.

Two decades later, however, Napoléon Coste had, in the most distressing sense of the expression, played his last, whereas Napoléon III, having seized power through a coup d'état, let Paris and then Europe as a whole see and feel very emphatically what a ruler

of his name could do. Coste had broken his right hand in an accident and had to give up his concert career. In old age he worked as a public official in Paris whose depressingly uncreative task was to issue receipts. But when Coste died on 14 January 1883 he had left his power-hungry namesakes well behind: Napoléon III had then been dead for 13 years.

Worlds at odds

Not only in its »Napoléonic« aspect Coste's life as an artist is seen, against the background of massive political and social upheavals, as having no obvious drama and as being anything but revolutionary. Developments which in reality were bound to interest him or disturb him concerned his instrument, the guitar.

When Coste established himself in the musical life of France during the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century the whole of Europe was in the grip of a guitar craze, and Paris was a pulsating centre of this enthusiasm. However, the most famous virtuosos and composers, such as Ferdinando Carulli, Matteo Carcassi, Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado, came from Italy or Spain. Napoléon Coste was one of the few French musicians who may be considered as important and significant in the development of style. Very soon he won numerous devotees and had his compositions published by the well-known music publisher Richault. Yet his rise to fame had begun years too late, and they were decisive years. As early as 1840 the subdued, classic-romantic world of sounds produced by the guitar was beginning to be drowned out by the piano, and dismayingly fast Coste fell out of fashion. Subsequently he was forced to publish his works by himself, and after his accident he was also unable to give concerts. Even so, in these depressing circumstances he managed to mature further. The

commercial dictates of the publisher were no longer there to bother him, and for a man who could in any event no longer play himself the problems of guitar technique had become meaningless. Coste could now live without inhibition in the world of his fantasy and indulge his power of expression and his joy in mastering difficult tasks.

Napoléon Coste's Paris

When Coste became a Parisian in the early thirties he came to a city that had been profoundly changed by Napoléon I. There were new squares and streets, an improved sewage system and reasonably clean drinking water. One of the most important developments, however, was the construction of two triumphal arches celebrating the commander's victories. The Arc de Triomphe is still today the largest structure of its kind. When Napoléon finally had the privilege of passing under that arch he was lying in his coffin. Coste, however, came to a city in which not only art and the life of the mind shone brilliantly: since 1829 Paris had been sparkling in the light of thousands of gas lanterns – the first city in the world to do so – and this light illuminated among other things splendid new worlds of art, namely the arcades.

During the period between the revolution and the World War, 19th-century Paris society presented a colourful blend of fortune-seekers and defaulter, technocrats and aesthetes, speculators and artists, manufacturers and dreamers who lived together in a kind of all-pervading euphoria mingled with considerable recklessness, and it was at this time that the familiar glass-covered passages between busy streets with shops on the ground floor and offices and business premises at the first-floor level were built. Their architecture evolved in parallel with other nineteenth-

century structures – railway stations, exhibition halls, department stores, greenhouses and prisons. The miracle of progress insistently demanded striking display. Iron and glass, new construction materials, dominated the scene. The arcades arose as delightful alternatives to the world outside, unaffected by the weather or the time of day, bright profane temples dedicated to a life of unmitigated pleasure.

In Emile Zola's »Nana« we read about the brilliant but now vanished world of the arcades: »Under the glass panels glittering with reflections lay a blinding light, a flood of brilliance emanating from white globes of glass, red lanterns, blue banners, rows of gas lamps, luminous clocks and watches and giant sheets of darting flames. Then there was the colourful charm of the shop window displays, the gold of the jewellers, the crystal jars of the confectioners, the bright silken wares of the fashion shops all glistening behind clear show windows in the gaudy glow of the reflectors...«.

Coste also experienced the manner in which, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Napoléon III and his rogue for shady dealings, Baron Haussman, modernized Paris with a heavy hand. Small streets dating back to mediaeval times were replaced by boulevards where bourgeois luxury could be celebrated and Jacques Offenbach wrote just the right accompaniment. During the 17 years of his period in office Haussman remodelled half the city, including the large parks on the right bank of the Seine and last but not least »Les Halles«, the underbelly of Paris. We have Zola to thank for this delightful metaphor for the large market halls that no longer exist today. Those who had money could live well, very well, in this new Paris. It is said that Balzac, at the Restaurant Véry, consumed a hundred oysters, twelve cutlets, a young duckling with turnips, two roast partridges, a

Normandy sole along with desserts and a number of bottles of wine. His publisher took the bill with a sigh and contented himself with a soup and a morsel of roast chicken.

Contacts

Even in better times Napoléon Coste's income would probably not have been adequate for luxurious excesses. However, the seductive feeling of living in one of the most exciting and stimulating cities of Europe is nevertheless reflected in his work. Throughout his life he sought creative contact and exchange of artistic ideas with his colleagues in the world of music; he reacted to new developments, aspired to ideals, followed suggestions and pursued worthy sources of inspiration.

It was naturally, above all, great guitarists whose company he sought. As early as 1828 he gave a concert with the then celebrated Italian guitar virtuoso Luigi Sagrini. In Paris he later met other masters of the art: Carulli, Carcassi, Aguado and Castellacci. His most important and intensive relationship, however, was with his teacher, Fernando Sor. He soon became Sor's best pupil and appeared with him in concerts. Coste's highly developed musical language was also influenced, however, by composers such as Beethoven and Hector Berlioz. To the latter he in fact dedicated one of his pieces, though it is impossible to say whether he did so simply out of reverence for the man or for reasons of self-interest. At all events Coste's *Le Tournoi*- *Fantasie chevaleresque*, opus 15 lies entirely in the spirit of romantically imbued admiration of the Middle Ages against the background of the industrial revolution and the concomitant social upheavals. Finally, the year 1837 brought a musical event which put even the Paris music scene – accustomed as it

was to being spoiled by grand events – in a state of astonished excitement: Johann Strauss performed with his orchestra in the *Gymnase Musical*, in the *Tuileries* and before the *Citizen King Louis Philippe*. In the *Salle Vivienne* he competed with the *Master of the Quadrille*, *Philippe Musard*, and won. Musicians such as *Cherubini* and *Auber*, *Adam*, *Meyerbeer*, *Paganini* and *Berlioz* admired the tempestuous visitor from Vienna and Napoléon Coste, too, was all ears. As *Waltz King* Strauss remained unassailed by the critics too, but other parts of his programme were not applauded so heartily. The so-called »*Potpourri*« – randomly linked series of operatic melodies, folk songs and waltz fragments – which were well received by the general public were described by the critics as »disgusting« and »repulsive«. The community of admirers were unimpressed, however, and Coste exploited his musical contacts with *Johann Strauss* for his own compositions.

Finale

Napoléon Coste, almost completely forgotten and even today known only to a few initiates, was a very special witness of the age. The Revolution, victories and defeats on the field of battle, the vehement march forward into a deceptively bright, pleasure-loving, progress-oriented future – all these things were, for Coste's life, centred as it was on music, important only in small ways. His form of expression, demanding and precisely nuanced, did in fact push the dynamic possibilities of the guitar to their limits; it was exuberant, luxuriant and dramatic – even marked by pathos; but it could not compete with the fullness of sound produced by a piano. Coste found admirers only for a few years. During the decades that followed he went on, practically unnoticed, trying to

create an intimate, profound, intense musical counter-world of his own. One may well think that, had he been spoilt by applause and driven by success throughout his life, he might never have found the path to his innermost feelings.

As part of a loud, shrill era, Coste had little to say. Perhaps that is precisely why he has so much to say to us now. Brigitte Zaczek's new CD offers us an opportunity to listen to him once again.

© 2005 by Alfred Komarek

Translated from the German by Steven Edminster



ALFRED KOMAREK, born 1945 in BadAussee, Austria, Matura. His first efforts in writing help to finance his study of law. Two state examinations, after which writing became his priority: reports, feuilletons, essays, nonfiction, stories, children's books, film scripts. Six novels have so far been filmed for television. Alfred Komarek lives as an independent writer in Vienna.

Komarek lives as an

BRUNO MARLAT The LACOTE-COSTE Guitar

During the nineteenth century, especially the first half of the century, the salons and concert halls of Paris welcomed many virtuoso guitarists. Pierre René LACOTE, a guitar-maker, who had been established in Paris from 1819 onwards, was called upon on a number of occasions to meet requests submitted by some of these performers. Together with Ferdinando CARULLI he took out, in 1826, a patent on the »décacorde« guitar with ten strings; for Fernando SOR he created a guitar which satisfied the requirements of flexibility and sonority desired by the performer and for Dionosio AGUADO an instrument with a double soundboard. On all such occasions LACOTE displayed a breadth of understanding and innovative capacities which, combined with a remarkable mastery of his craft, fully met the requirements of guitarists.

A long and fruitful collaboration was to be established between LACOTE and COSTE. In 1835, LACOTE

supported COSTE in publishing his opus 5, »Souvenirs de Flandres«, the first work of COSTE in which the use of a seventh string puts in an appearance. No doubt COSTE was already playing on a LACOTE guitar with an additional string. Even though this may simply have involved the exploitation of an older idea, people referred to it as an »invention«. And the period was partial to this sort of thing. The National Fair of Industrial Products had since 1798 been giving encouragement to technical progress and fine craftsmanship. A number of stringed instrument builders took part in them, notably LACOTE who received a prize in 1839 for a seven-string guitar which was described as »perfectly crafted, having in addition a very beautiful tone quality«. At the next fair, in 1844, he presented »several heptacorde guitars which are perfectly crafted and have a beautiful quality of tone, instruments which were awarded top ranking positions in the contest«. If there could be any doubt about it, the name heptacorde is sufficient to confirm that COSTE was

involved in the origin of these instruments. As it happens, we read in the appendix on the seventh string which he added to his »N. COSTE'S New and Enlarged edition of SOR'S Guitar Method« (see page 10) the following statement: »Some years ago I arranged to have built in the workshop of Mr. Lacote, a maker of stringed instruments in Paris, a guitar designed to yield a larger volume of tone and, above all, a more beautiful quality of tone. [...] I called this new type of guitar a Heptacorde«. Later on, in the introduction to his 25 Etudes de genre pour la guitare, opus 38, COSTE writes in connection with the seventh string: »This improvement was immediately adopted and taken further in Vienna, Austria«. Here he is doubtless referring to the Viennese stringed instrument makers J.G and J.A. STAUFFER who left marvellous seven-stringed guitars to posterity, and to one of their pupils. J.G. SCHERZER, who »took the improvement further« by adding a number of bass strings and who in 1856 won the instrument building competition organized in Brussels by N. MAKAROFF. However, we shall leave to COSTE the responsibility for this statement, especially as the idea was taken up and used by other stringed instrument makers during the same period – in Turin by G. GUADAGNINI and in London by the brothers D. and A. ROUDLHOFF. In fact, we find quite frequently in the history of the guitar instruments that illustrate this urge to strengthen the bass register by adding further strings.

The first seven-string guitars of LACOTE differ little from his six-string models. The additional string is fitted in the theorbo manner as described by COSTE: »The seventh string, much longer than the others, is fitted at a certain distance outside the neck of the instrument and requires no change in playing technique«. In two of the three instruments we are familiar with, the fingerboard has five additional

frets – 22 instead of the usual 17 – and reaches over the edge of the sound hole, extending the range to D5. An instrument of this kind, held gracefully by an elegant young woman, provides the frontispiece for the SOR/COSTE method (see page 10). A photograph of COSTE, earlier than the one reproduced on the cover of this CD, shows him posing with exactly the same model (see page 18).

But the 1855 guitar chosen for this recording has other interesting characteristics as well. The shape of the body is broader with a less narrow waist than the usual LACOTE designs; the fingerboard has 24 frets, covering four octaves, and the lower part rests on setting sticks and is not in direct contact with the soundboard; the strings pass over the bridge and are fastened to a tailpiece at the end of the body; a bar of maple is glued on at two contact points parallel to the first string, perhaps as a kind of support for the little finger. The whole instrument seems to be designed with a view to allowing its soundboard to vibrate as freely as possible.

This description could well apply also to a LACOTE heptacorde kept in the Paris Museum of Music where a handwritten note tells us that this is »the favourite guitar of Mr. Napoléon Coste. The bridge has been applied by the remarkable composer and professor himself«. It would thus seem that COSTE was not only the inventor and designer of this bridge/tailpiece system but actually built it himself. How can we then explain the fact that there remain a fairly large number of guitars with six, seven or more strings which use this system? Apart from these two heptacordes we have examined three others that display essentially the same characteristics. While it may seem unlikely that all these modified instruments actually belonged to COSTE, one might well imagine that the teacher had a hand in modifying guitars intended for the use

of his pupils. Thus, among the names of the many pupils to whom works were dedicated by COSTE, that of the first guitarist to have owned the heptacorde selected for this recording may well appear.

© 2005 by Bruno Marlat
Translated from the French by Steven Edminster

NAPOLÉON COSTE'S 200th BIRTHDAY

Bon Anniversaire, Monsieur Coste!

Thanks to the shrewd detective work of Simon Wynberg we have today a treasure consisting of more than 600 pages of wonderful romantic guitar music by Napoléon Coste, some of which would meet the demands of the most exacting virtuoso players. Since the Coste/Lacote Heptacorde is ready to be played again (many thanks to Bernd Kresse for the long-term loan), the time would seem to be ripe for a birthday serenade, a show of homage to the master and his compositions.

In Coste's œuvre we find »hits« of the day (La Cachucha, Strauss waltzes) as well as descriptions of landscapes (Souvenir du Jura, Zuyderzee), paraphrases of opera (Norma) and the miniatures of his last work (Rêverie) set virtually in pianistic style. On the one hand his extensive introductions, cadenza-like interludes and bold (in the best sense of the word) harmonic modulations offer plenty of scope for liberal interpretation and ample opportunity to savour the tonal possibilities of the guitar without restraint. On the other hand, his meticulous notation of dynamics and articulation - in some cases unusual fingerings as well - invite us to experiment with historic

Bruno MARLAT, a French concertist and guitar teacher, has been gathering documentation on guitar-making for many years. He wrote essays and gave lectures on the subject. His research on nineteenth-century music resulted in the creation of l'Ensemble Adélaïde devoted to romantic chamber music with guitar.

performance practice.

The pieces chosen for this CD not only display the special charm of Coste's subtle and highly individual art, they also provide interesting examples of his musical development and the influences to which it was exposed. Many of his compositions are inspired by memories of the mountainous landscape in which he spent his youth. Thus the first motif of »Souvenir de Jura« in harmonics has an unmistakably alpine spirit. The polonaise then brings an exuberant dance on the village square.

»Le Zuyderzee«, too, describes a landscape and nature in a romantic vein. The Zuiderzee - today an inland sea called IJsselmeer - was in Coste's time notorious for dangerous storms. The piece accordingly begins in a stormy mood, to the extent this can be conveyed by the discrete resources of the guitar. But soon the waves subside. The composition moves on in pastoral atmosphere to a cheerful dance of country folk (just like the more famous musical storms of Vivaldi, Haydn and Beethoven). The »Rêverie«, a dream piece which in its central part proves to be a sombre, dramatic nightmare sequence, is to be found in Coste's last work for guitar, opus 53. With this uncommonly dense texture, which calls to mind a piano rather than a guitar composition, Napoléon Coste is more in

the realm of Hector Berlioz with his rêverie from the *Symphonie Fantastique* than in that of Schumann's *Träumerei*.

Like all virtuosos and composers of his time, Napoléon Coste had no reservations when it came to participating in the success of others. He was only too willing to delight his public with fantasies on popular operas or current »hits«. Examples of these are his »Caprice sur l'air espagnol La Cachucha«, opus 13, and the »Fantaisie sur deux motifs de la Norma« opus 16. In 1836 the Viennese ballerina Fanny Elssler had found an enthusiastic reception for »her« Cachucha with opera-goers in Paris. Franz Liszt allowed himself to be inspired at the time, Johann Strauss was happy to take on loans, and Coste too found himself musically enriched. Bellini's *Norma* was favoured with long-lasting popularity, and hasty bows from one composer to another were thus not really necessary. When Coste's particularly enchanting *Norma Fantasy* appeared in 1843, Bellini had already been dead seven years.

The atmosphere of Grand Opera comes alive in the »Grande Sérénade«, opus 30. The exuberant introduction, for a start, is a creative challenge for any interpreter. The march and Chorus of Pilgrims, which is heard repeatedly, suggests links to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. First we hear the solemn dignity of older gentlemen, followed by impish-playful passages in the high register – quite possibly these are called sternly to order by the dotted bass. Then we have all the rest, who at the end move off in the decrescendo. The ballet in the *Bolero* is also operatic in character. The pious chorus returns twice more in brief appearances, showing increasingly plain evidence of the strain.

The Strauss transcriptions of the 16 Waltzes op. 7 were very probably written under the impression of the Waltz King's first tour of France with his orchestra.

In Paris as elsewhere Strauss mania was the order of the day. Coste took up this theme in a surprisingly sparing way. His transcriptions, for the most part simply a melody line with bass, offer waltz felicity in what one might call a homeopathic dose, but recognizable all the same. A higher concentration, in many respects, can be found in the »Valse favorite op.46«. This one could suspect simply from reading the subtitle, namely »Morceaux de Bravoure«. But here, too, the proximity to Strauss is hard to miss: it is clearly perceived in one part of the grand introduction through the use of 2(!)/4 time, and likewise in the second waltz theme, the beginning of which is very similar to the first Strauss waltz in opus 7.

It only remains for us now to try to find some memorable epithet, as seems to be common practice nowadays, for Coste and his work. Fastidious daydreaming? Calculating romanticism? Boundless precision? All this is true, but somehow wrong at the same time. Let's just grant him the freedom to live in his music, and grant ourselves the pleasure of steeping ourselves in it.

Bon Anniversaire, Monsieur Coste!

© 2005 by Brigitte Zaczek

Translated from the German by Steven Edminster



MÉTHODE DE GUITARE

par
F^{do} SOR

révisée et augmentée par

N. COSTE.





EXTRAPLATTE
Musikproduktions-und Verlags GmbH
Postfach 2, A-1094 Wien
Tel + 43 (1) 31 01 084 Fax + 43 (1) 31 00 324
info@extraplatte.at
www.extraplatte.at

ISBN 3-221-16522-6

Credits:

Photos (Page 10 and 18) as well as the photographic source for the coverdesign were provided by courtesy of Det Kongelige Bibliotek, billedsamlingen, Copenhagen (Denmark). My very special thanks to Alex Timmerman and Bruno Marlat for drawing my attention to the photo of Napoléon Coste with his Heptacorde on page 18.