

# Makaroff's Memoirs

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This time the subject of the *Guitarity* is not one of my own adventures with the guitar, but the ones described by the Russian Nicolai Petrovich Makaroff (1810-1890) in his *Memoirs*.

This guitar enthusiast taught himself to play the guitar and violin during his training to become an officer in a Russian regiment in Warsaw. According to himself, he developed a virtuoso style of playing. After he retired from the Army (which was a fairly young age) he dedicated himself to the good life and the guitar.

During his travels across Europe, he met many guitar virtuosos from his day, amongst them Johann Kaspar Mertz, whose work he liked particularly well.

One of the highlights in his career was the Guitar Competition that he organised in Brussels in 1856 for composers, guitarists and luthiers. His intention with this competition was to gain some fame for the guitar, to help it to win its place on the concert stages. Unfortunately his attempt was in vain.

The Memoirs of Makaroff -to be specific the guitar part- are fun to read if you skip the passages which are steeped in over-assessment of his guitaristic capabilities. I guess that the prices of an extensive dinner in Brussels (which he describes in 1856) have been raised quite a bit, specifically because it is the capital of the united Europe, which did not exist in Makaroff's time.

I reformatted the original text file and added some footnotes.

# The Memoirs of Makaroff

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## **Editor's Note**

*These recollections come from the pen of the famous Russian guitar enthusiast Nicolai Petrovich Makaroff (1810-1890), who embodied them upon retirement from military duties in his Fullhearted Confession<sup>1</sup> (Zadushevnyaya Ispoved).*

*In this work, which attracted much attention and underwent many editions, he gives most interesting reports on his contacts with celebrated guitarists and guitar-makers, his own experiences in mastering the instrument and much other information that proved an inexhaustible fount for subsequent Russian writers on the subject.*

*For invaluable assistance in connection with Makaroff, we are indebted to Dr. Boris Perott, President of the Philharmonic Society of Guitarists of London, who met the Russian guitarist at his deathbed.*

## **1 Part One (from Guitar Review no. 1 (1946))**

Ever since I can remember, I passionately loved music. My first musical experience was with a violin, which I started to play by ear when quite young. Later on I studied with the household teacher of my rich aunt. This teaching did not take me far along the path of my earnest endeavor.

Lessons were abandoned for some years during my school days, but when I grew up and was sent to the Imperial Guard Academy in Warsaw, I decided to continue my musical education, despite most adverse conditions.

Although I succeeded in finding a better instrument, it proved impossible for me to find a teacher for my adored violin. Hence I had to study by myself during intervals between classes. While my comrades rested and played, I would go to the attic and sweat over the *Baillot Violin Method*<sup>2</sup>.

My passion for music was fired still more by the following event:

During the festivities connected with the coronation of Emperor Nicholas I in 1829, the celebrated Paganini, king of all past and future violinists, arrived in Warsaw for a concert. He created a tremendous furor among the public by giving nine concerts in the Public Theater, which was filled from top to bottom every time. This, in spite of the tripling of the price of tickets.

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1. It appears that these 'guitaristic' memoirs are only a tiny section of what Mr. Makaroff wrote about his life. I read in a forum that the complete memoirs were published in sequels in a Russian paper and also deals with his many affairs with women and his personal political sympathies and antipathies.

2. Pierre Baillot (1771 - 1842) was the author of *L' Art du Violon* (1834), once the official method of the Paris Conservatoire.

I could neither eat nor sleep because of an overwhelming desire to hear the famous musician, but alas, students were forbidden to appear in any public places of diversion, including theaters and concert-halls. What could I do?

Fortunately, passion overpowered prudence and I got myself civilian clothes and a ticket for the top-most row of the mezzanine, which was frequented by only the lowest class of people. I did this in order to avoid the chance of meeting any of my superiors.

I could never describe the impression this concert made on me. I wept and sobbed, listening to the divine sounds created by the enchanted bow of the magical instrument of that giant of concert music, the equal of which I had never heard and will never hear again. I came home from the concert walking like a drunken man, so overcome was I by emotion. I did not sleep all night, still hearing the heavenly sounds created by this modern Orpheus. For several days thereafter I was like an insane man.

Finally, I decided to go to the famous violinist, fall down on my knees before him, kiss the floor at his feet and beg him to take me into his services.

However, the hard duties of my everyday school life stilled my imagination and I continued my military studies, giving all possible free time to passages and exercises on my violin in the attic. I also played for the students mazurkas, waltzes, galops and popular airs from *The Barber of Seville*, *Semiramide* and other operas by Rossini.

At last I became an officer, and only then was I able to get a good violin teacher from the theatrical orchestra of the town and begin regular lessons. But even so I had bad luck, as our regiment was soon transferred to another city, where lessons were again impossible. Yet I continued to play by myself on my cherished instrument at the same time that I began to play a six-string guitar, not with any serious intention and mostly for accompaniment to my own singing, which was also a part of my musical aspirations.

I continued in this manner until my marriage in 1838, when I retired from military activity and went to live near the city of Tula, in my own country place.

At that time I had almost completely deserted my violin, my attention having been concentrated increasingly on the guitar. This gradually became the impassioned aspiration of my life, on which all of my feelings and thoughts converged. I began to play long hours every day, trying to master the instrument.

I made for myself a list of the various difficulties usually besetting the guitarist, and began to practice for the purpose of overcoming them one by one. I got a metronome and started using it, and it led me on in my exercises slowly but surely, from the slowest tempo to the fastest from ordinary difficulties to the tremendous ones to be encountered in guitar playing. I played every day from ten to twelve hours, holidays included, and sometimes as many as fourteen hours a day, but never less than ten.

There was a reason for my intense devotion to the instrument -- namely, that almost all my relatives and friends reiterated time and again that I was simply wasting my time -- that mine was a fruitless labor. They said the guitar was not an instrument of any real value, that it was too late in my twenty-eighth year to begin any study (let alone such a difficult and unprofitable instrument), that I would never attain to an artistically superior performance nor, in fact, have the satisfaction of becoming a mediocre player.

Although at first I was merely annoyed by these remarks, I soon became impatient and finally resolved to summon all my iron persistence to the fore, so that I might become if not the first, at least one of the foremost guitarists of my time.

At that time I succeeded in buying at Moscow a very good Viennese guitar made by Stauer<sup>1</sup>, who at that time was the best guitar-maker in Europe. I had learned several serious guitar pieces, mostly compositions by Mauro Giuliani. While studying him I nevertheless felt that his style was already outmoded and that something was lacking in his otherwise beautiful music.

Exactly what it was, I could not explain to myself at that time. I only felt that it needed that surpassing brilliance, that glow of concert music -- which I heard in the vehicles used by our virtuosos of the piano, violin and other concert instruments. The guitar works in my possession did not satisfy my musical hunger.

I tried to compose myself, without any knowledge of harmony and not the slightest idea about the rules of composition. Despite this, I succeeded in writing several small and large compositions, among them a mazurka which later on created a veritable furor at one of my concerts in Brussels, and a *Grand Symphonic Fantasy*, which I first entitled *Concerto* and rewrote several times before it became a great success among guitarists during my first visit abroad.

In the spring of 1840 I went to St. Petersburg, and during my stay there I met many artists and music lovers, among them Vieuxtemps<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Emond, Guillieu and Sichra<sup>3</sup>, the dean of the seven-string guitar. I also met Markoff, the guitar devotee who made many transcriptions for the seven-string guitar.

Mr. Sichra, after listening to my *Symphonic Fantasy*, replete with extreme difficulties and brilliant effects (which at that time I could not myself play satisfactorily), said: "Not only playing your *Fantasy*, but even watching it being played, terrifies one. It is so full of musical insolence that may not be forgiven you!"

I played this *Fantasy* afterwards for Guillieu of the Paris Conservatory and the first flute soloist of the Grand Opera, who said to me: "Is it possible that you have never had any lessons in composition or guitar playing!"

"Never," said I.

"In this case," he declared "you must have some rare musical 'bump,' and if you continue at the same rate you will some day become a Paganini of the guitar."

His comment gave me great joy and encouragement and I felt a deep desire to take some very good guitar lessons, so that I could at least become acquainted with the fundamental rules of playing.

With this purpose I went to an Italian teacher who was recommended to me; but after hearing my playing he refused to teach me, saying that I was an abler guitarist than he was himself. But I had received several most valuable suggestions in regard to guitar playing from our celebrated composer A. S. Dargomistky, which proved more useful to me through the rest of my musical career than all of the praises I ever heard.

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1. Johann George Stauer (1778-1853) was a well known luthier of the Viennese School in the 19th century. From Makaroff's Memoirs it shows that he was a smart businessman too, earning a lot of money, 'outsourcing' guitar building to apprentices for much less money than he charged his customers.

2. Henri Vieuxtemps (1820 - 1881), French violinist and composer.

3. Andrei Osipovich Sichra (1772 - 1861), guitarist and composer, and the author of a guitar instruction method which was popular in Russia.

I returned home from that visit full of renewed hope and continued my guitar studies with still greater assiduity. In the winter of 1841 I went to Moscow to take some lessons in harmony from the Director of the Orchestra of the Moscow Theater. His name was Mr. Johannes -- an excellent musician with whom I passed many interesting evenings. At his house I met many Russian celebrities as well as amateurs, among them the composer Alabieff<sup>1</sup>, who was a talented amateur composer, never duly appreciated by musicians.

During Lent of 1841 a concert was organized for the benefit of an orphanage. This was to be given in the great Concert Hall at Tula and I was invited to take part in it. It was my first public appearance. Despite my feeling of great timidity, with which I fought during many years of public performances, I played quite well the first part of the *Third Concerto* by Giuliani.

My guitar was accompanied on the piano by Mrs. D., a sister of the famous author Gribeiedoff, who gained fame by writing a comedy. She was a fine pianist -- the best representative at that time, of the Field<sup>2</sup> school.

In the beginning of 1844 I went to St. Petersburg again. The only reason for my trip was the desire to hear the Italian opera. How well do I remember the first night at the Opera! It was a benefit concert for Villardo.

I felt as if I had been transported alive to heaven. Had it not been for the presence of the brilliant crowd of the elite of the city, I would not have been able to suppress tears of delight.

During that visit I renewed my previous friendships with the musical world and paid a visit to that grandfather of all Russian guitarists -- eighty-year-old Sichra. By that time I could play my guitar quite decently.

After I played several pieces for him, he got up from his chair, bowed down before me, then kissed and embraced me, saying. "I gladly bow before you. You exceeded all my expectations and your *Fantasy* is no longer musical insolence."

But alas, the praises no longer delighted me, for the greater the praise, the less the satisfaction with my performance. I felt deeply convinced that something was wanting -- something other than the technique and velocity which fascinated my listeners. I was imbued with fervent feeling, perhaps to an excessive degree, yet was I painfully aware of the lack of suavity, tenderness and that evenness in rendition that could accentuate its polished, all-around perfection.

In short, I found myself too remote from a really artistic performance and this weighed down my spirits with doubt and despair.

While in St. Petersburg I sent for and received from Stauer of Vienna a new guitar, improved by the addition of two extra strings, which increased tonal power as well as harmonic possibilities. Upon my return to the country I continued my exercises with increased enthusiasm. in an effort to acquire the qualities of performance which I lacked.

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1. Maybe this is Alexander Aleksandrovich Alyabyev (1787 - 1851), Russian composer who composed the tune *The Nightingale* in prison in Siberia.

2. Presumably the Irish pianist and composer John Field (1783 - 1837), who lived in Russia at the end of his life.

My trouble could be explained by the fact that I had started with that which should have completed my studies; in plain words, I was devoid of any schooling. I had advanced, it was true, by slowly overcoming the technical difficulties of the instrument and succeeded in mastering all chromatic exercises and trills.

As a result, the first pieces I had learned were not the exercises so much needed in my case, but the *Grand Quintet* and the *Third Concerto*<sup>1</sup> of Giuliani. After that, I immediately sat down to compose my own music bristling with the greatest technical difficulties, which lay beyond any guitarist's imagination at that time. Incidentally, I also wrote music for several vocal romances, which were published by Goltz in St. Petersburg.

However, soon all of my musical activities centering about the guitar came to a standstill for a long time. Financial affairs were now demanding my whole and undivided attention. For four years I hardly touched my beloved instrument.

When the crisis passed, I returned to my music, but alas, my assurance in performance was gone, giving way to doubts that I would ever succeed in becoming one of the virtuosos of the guitar.

These doubts were intensified by some unfavorable criticisms about my playing, which had reached my ears from some of the "true connoisseurs of music," as well as from my own fellow-players. I heard, for instance, that I did not play, but rather tore strings, that my performances were not satisfactory, that I would be obliged to give up the guitar, etc., etc.

Besides all this, the apathy shown towards the guitar by lovers of music in general was most discouraging to me. I could not understand it. At times I was on the verge of burning my guitar and all my compositions and forever relinquishing my ardent devotion to the instrument.

But such moments of despair passed and my thoughts turned again to improving the guitar, so that it would really acquire a deep tone, as well as sustaining and singing qualities.

I wrote to Stauffer in Vienna, begging him to make such a guitar -- one that would remain a monument to his craftsmanship throughout the world and offering him any price. I asked him to make me two guitars, knowing that not two instruments could be exactly alike and hoping that no matter how good one of them was, the other might be even better. In two months my two guitars arrived. He made them much bigger in size and of much greater sonority. I felt happy not to have spent my money in vain.

With the guitars, I received a letter from him suggesting that I go to London to hear the greatest of all guitarists of that time, Mr. Schultz<sup>2</sup>. This intensified my secret yearning of some time to go and play before foreign guitarists and musicians and hear their opinion of my playing. I began my preparations for going abroad. The visit was to be the determinant "to be or not to be" in regard to my entire musical career.

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1. I wonder which concerto Makaroff had in mind, because Giuliani only wrote two works for guitar and orchestra, Op. 36 and Op. 70. Possibly he uses the term Concerto for a smaller ensemble too.

2. This is the guitarist Leonard Schultz (1814 - 1860) who toured together with his brother and his father. He is considered one of the better guitarists from the early nineteenth century.

## 2 Part Two (from Guitar Review no. 2 (1947))

I shall not tell of my trip, but only of those events that were related to the guitar, the object of my adoration. When my wife's water-cure was completed, I found leisure to start my purely musical trips.

First of all, I went to see Kamberger<sup>1</sup>, a German guitarist who, I had been told, was famous along the shores of the Rhine. He was a young man of thirty, with a kind and frank expression on his tanned face, but negligently dressed.

I told him I was a mere amateur with an intense passion for the guitar and that I greatly desired to take a few lessons on the instrument from him. He took his guitar, a simple instrument not half as good as my own (I mean the six-string one, not any of my last ones with eight strings), and began to play some of his own compositions, along with works by Giuliani.

He played forcefully, spiritedly, displaying a fine technique, but in the manner of all German guitarists<sup>2</sup>, that is to say, without tenderness and sufficient clarity and polish. Thus the buzz of bass strings was constantly heard during his performance. One could sum it up by simply saying his playing was devoid of taste.

With thanks for the pleasure, I invited him to come to my place to hear me play and advise me as to my future. When he came, I played for him my *Symphonic Fantasy*, an extensive composition, divided into three parts. I played well, but not without the timidity that so paralyzes the natural talent of beginners and hinders the skill required by dint of hard study.

Comparing my playing with the music in his hands, Kamberger watched the performance with rapt attention, now and then exclaiming, "Schön, sehr schön."

When I finished, he seemed to be lost in a daze. Released from overwhelming emotion, he grasped my hands, exclaiming heartily: "And you wanted me to give you lessons! Who could ever have the audacity to give you any lessons? It is from you that we have to learn!"

Indeed, he desired to take some lessons from me, being especially interested in the manner I executed the tremolo. I performed it on one or two strings, using four fingers with extreme rapidity and evenness, while accompanying it with bass notes.

He was likewise interested in the way I played chromatic scales, for which I employed not two, but three fingers of the right hand-- a procedure imparting unheard of rapidity and clearness, unknown even to the greatest guitarists at that time.

Kamberger's praise was flattering in the extreme and awoke my old aspirations, long-smothered by the indifference of the musical public as well as by the criticisms of countrymen and friends. (Their sympathies were all directed not to the encouragement of native talent, but to that of foreign musicians, no matter how mediocre.)

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1. TBD

2. Well, I guess that's a bit of arrogance which might be the consequence of the political commonplaces of the day.

From Mainz I went to Brussels, where I met the famous Zani de Ferranti<sup>1</sup>, then Court-Guitarist of the Belgian King. He was a man of fifty, brilliant and well-educated, polite and gracious of manner. I knew that during the last years of the reign of Emperor Alexander I he had visited Russia and that he had dedicated one of his compositions to Empress Elizabeth.

Zani received me with great kindness. His six-string guitar, too, was rather simple and came from Paris.

He told me he had almost given up the guitar completely, to devote his time to musico-literary efforts, but nevertheless played for me the *Rosen-Walzer* by Strauss and did so excellently. His rendition was imbued with delicacy, sonority, expressiveness and a refined taste, such as I had never heard before.

During our conversation, however I discovered he belonged to the old-fashioned school of guitar playing, since he was opposed to the addition of strings to the six-string instrument. Rejecting the thought of any need or value of such addition, he firmly maintained the status quo of the guitar in this respect.

Incidentally, he proudly showed me an interesting and precious document. It was a plain piece of paper, framed and hanging on the wall. But on that paper the following words were written in Italian: "I pronounce Zani de Ferranti one of the greatest guitarists I have ever heard, one who has indescribably delighted me with his superb performance." The signature was simply, "Nicoló Paganini." There, indeed, was something to be proud of and truly deserving envy!

The next day he repaid my visit and, of course, wished to hear me play. I performed for him the same *Symphonic Fantasy* that I had played for Kamberger and this is what he said:

"I thought that you were simply a dilettante, but I see that you are a really great virtuoso and I assure you there is no one who can teach you. You need not go to London to learn from Schulz, or Chibra, as you planned. They cannot teach you anything, and their lessons would only spoil the original method which you have created.

Continue in your own way. If you do not mind, I would like to make a remark about your left hand. I cannot agree with you in regard to certain positions which are the very opposite of the ones I follow, as I never use an open string. As for your right hand, it is the apex of perfection. Nowhere have I seen such a perfect right hand."

In this connection, I must mention that from the very start of my guitar study, I realized that the right hand is the main requisite. Taking for granted that my left hand was sufficiently developed through my previous playing of the violin, I became convinced that force, rapidity, clearness, softness, as well as so-called "style" depended entirely on the right hand.

Therefore, I concentrated all my effort in exercising especially that hand. To this end, I had devised some mechanical formulas, which I pursued constantly, using the metronome, (our best teacher and aid in overcoming the greatest difficulties), in order to acquire great rapidity and clearness, without confusion and fatigue of the fingers.

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1. Marco Aurelio Zani de Ferranti (1801 – 1878), violinist at first, but then guitarist and composer.



I invented a pocket-guitar<sup>1</sup> -- a small board on which were fastened three strings tuned in thirds [?], specially devised for developing the strength of the right hand and more particularly, the little finger, which is always weaker than the others. I had acquired my skill in rendering the tremolo only with the help of that pocket-guitar -- a skill to my best knowledge unequalled by any other guitarist, not to mention thundering crescendos and whispering morendos, to which many players paid their tribute of praise.

The opinion of Zani di Ferranti had, of course, a greater effect on me than Kamberger's compliments. It did my heart good, as doubts were dispelled by reassuring hopes.

From Brussels I went to London in feverish impatience, not so much to take in the International Exposition being held there, as to hear the famous Schulz of whom I heard from Staufer.

The first morning in London, right after breakfast, I visited one of the music shops in order to find out Schulz' address. Nobody knew his whereabouts, but I was directed to his celebrated brother<sup>2</sup>, pianist at the court of the Lord of Devonshire, near Trafalgar Square.

I explained to him the object of my early visit -- my wish to get in touch with his brother.

"Leonardo?" he asked. "Why, I have not seen him in the last three years. He has the greatest talent, but is the worst drunkard in London. We've quarreled and don't see each other any more. Go to his tailor; he ought to know the address."

Keller, his tailor, reluctantly consented to write and ask whether Schulz would be interested in meeting me. I left Keller, dumbfounded by all the mystery surrounding the famous guitarist's life. But later I learned the reason for it. He was sunk in debt and hiding from creditors. Thereafter I visited the tailor every day, expecting to hear from Schulz, but in vain.

At last, five days later, I received a laconic note to the effect that he "could visit Mr. Makaroff at 8:00 P.M. that evening." I am certain no passionate lover awaited the object of his affection with a longing equal to my eagerness to meet Schulz, the man on whom all thoughts converged for the previous eighteen months.

Exactly at eight o'clock, Schulz entered my hotel room. He was a tall, well-built man about thirty-six years old, handsome and of excellent manners. In his fashionable and expensive attire, he looked more like an Englishman than a German.

I cannot be said to have observed much, however, in the joy of finding him in my presence. My heart was thumping wildly and I felt at a loss in opening the conversation. Fortunately, he knew French and spoke first, apologizing for having made me wait so many days. After we sat down, I told him in brief the story of my love for the guitar and of my doubts and despair alternating with hopes and aspirations.

He listened to me with close attention and after I finished, I placed my guitar in his hands. He judged it to be an excellent instrument and much superior to his own, which had been made in London.

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1. Aha, an early version of a Soloette Travel Guitar?

2. Eduard Schulz, who apparently made quite a career on the piano.

Without a trace of either embarrassment or timidity he began to play, even though I could discern that the two extra strings were a source of confusion to him. He played many of his compositions, to my indescribable delight.

I felt as if I were drunk. His playing embodied all I could ever hope for -- an extraordinary rapidity clearness, forcefulness, taste, suavity of touch, brilliance, expression, as well as surprising effects that were quite new. I noticed, moreover, a decided self-assurance during the performance. It seemed, in fact, that playing the instrument was but a light diversion for him, for he showed himself heedless of the tremendous difficulties in which his own compositions abounded.

Among them I particularly liked *Gabriellen-Valse*, *Valse Autrichienne* and *Rondo Savoyard*. To my inquiry as to whether I could get these compositions anywhere, he answered that since they had not been published, he himself would bring them next day. I also requested him to let me have as many of his works as he possibly could.

My turn to play finally came. He handed me the guitar, which I placed on my left knee with great anxiety and pressed it to my heart with the thought, "Do not fail me now, my beloved!"

After striking several chords, I began to play the Giuliani *Concerto*, through which I went with clearness and restraint that surpassed my own expectations. The look of surprise on Schulz' face at the beginning of my playing turned into an expression of extreme pleasure, which he frankly conveyed to me. After that, I performed the *William Tell Overture*<sup>1</sup>, arranged by the well-known guitarist Legnani, then followed my own *Mazurka* and *Symphonic Fantasy* and several Russian songs from my *Potpourri*.

When I finished, he embraced me, saying: "I have been playing the guitar for thirty years. I was scarcely six years old when my father, a noted guitarist of his time, began to teach me. Frankly speaking, I'm not able to play your *Symphonic Fantasy*, and no great guitarist I know could play it in In Paris or Vienna you would be acclaimed the greatest guitarist in the world."

Oh, how these words of sincere admiration made my heart rejoice! We sat down and chatted far into the night, taking no note of the time.

The next day he returned at the same hour, and brought many of his published works, along with the three unpublished ones which I had requested the day before. I selected about fifteen pieces, all of which he had already played for me. For these I paid the fixed price, but for the three manuscripts I paid him ten times as much. Soon I had to bid him good-bye, as my London visit drew to an end

### 3 Part Three (from Guitar Review no. 3 (1947))

I should like to mention one curious fact in connection with Shultz' compositions. He played one delightful Polka for me.

"Is it published?" I asked.

"Yes." he said, "but it is not as nice in print."

"How is that?"

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1. The famous opera by Gioachino Rossini (1792 - 1868).

"Well," he said, "when I publish my compositions, I often have to change them to make them easier and more acceptable for the general player."

I begged him, "Please do not change the manuscript of the last three compositions."

"No, no!" he promised, "I will leave them exactly as they are now."

I understood the meaning of his words much better upon my return home to Russia. When I began to study his manuscripts, I found that they were badly arranged<sup>1</sup> and that they were not at all good for playing. One would think that they had been purposely corrupted, so bad were the basses, melodies and positions. Entire passages were so poorly arranged that they were impossible to play. Finally, I had to put them aside, though they were not half as difficult as my own music.

His published compositions were interesting only when he himself played them. Otherwise they did not stand a chance of attracting anyone. However, I did manage to learn three of his published pieces out of all that I bought. In a word, Shultz had proved himself to be as great a virtuoso of the guitar as he was a poor composer. What a difference in this respect between him and Mertz, whose manuscripts, not in my possession, represent the precious pearls of guitar repertoire!

My meeting with Shultz impressed me so much, that I lost my desire to hunt up two other well-known guitarists in London -- Regondi and Chibra. I decided to go to Paris without seeing them.

In Paris I met Carcassi, who was also known in Russia to the lovers of the guitar through his easy and "thin" musical compositions. I also met a pupil of the famous Sor, Napoleon Coste, who was at the same time the publisher of Sor's music. We became great friends. He was a clever and amiable Frenchman, modest and a most passionate admirer of the guitar.

He often visited me and we used to play duets of various Sor compositions. He played with great clearness, tenderness and purity of tone, but, for some reason, his playing did not excite the listener -- did not awaken the enthusiasm experienced from the playing of Shultz or even Ferranti.

We left Paris in the middle of January and soon arrived in Naples. There, I began immediately to search for the best guitarists. I was recommended to someone by the name of Jordan.

In two days I met him in my hotel, a strange figure, with an unclean scarf wrapped many times about his short neck. I gave him my guitar. He took it with great self-assurance and started playing a *Polka*.

Well! What sort of guitar playing was that? What a performance! Surely, if he was considered a first class guitarist, they must have counted from the bottom up. Ever since then, I have been much more cautious with so-called first-class unknown guitarists.

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1. History states that this was caused by the guitar tuning, used by Schulz. He tuned his guitar in E major (where the G-string is tuned up to A flat), a different tuning from the conventional one. This might have caused problems when playing it in the ordinary tuning: in that case some things do not sound very well.

After our tour about Italy, we finally went to Vienna. I had been drawn to this city by an inexplicable feeling of longing. My instinct did not fail me, for in Vienna I found something I could not find elsewhere.

First, I found a great guitar maker, who, prompted by his own aspiration to improve the instrument, recreated it completely. He was the famous Schertzer<sup>1</sup>. From 1852, the instruments created by him possessed such sonority and force of sound, such deep and tender tones, that, without exception, other instruments sound like woven baskets beside them.

Second, I discovered the greatest guitar composer of modern times. From then on, my entire musical life was influenced by that meeting. His excellent composition were of far more use to my talent than my listening to great guitarists during my trip. They completely changed my life and my musical style.

It was because of this man that I was able to work out my own style and form. It was from him that I learned the "higher art," the field of nuances by which one learns to read and transmit to his instrument, not only the dead letter of music, but the very soul of the composition. It is that musical instinct born of understanding the soul of music, which can be awakened into activity only by the talent of the composer.

I should like to digress for a moment to express my inner convictions by recalling some thoughts from the dim past. During the long period of my deep interest in the guitar, I had an opportunity to hear a large number of guitarists and amateurs of this modest instrument.

Of these, there were only a few who impressed me profoundly. They were Zani De Ferranti, Shultz, the Spaniard, Chibra, and ... but this last event really belongs to the ancient history of my musical life and I would like to tell about it with more detail, since it had a most definite effect on my growing passion for the guitar.

It happened in October 1837. Shortly after my wedding, I had to spend some time alone in Moscow. I stayed at the Hotel *Jakovleff* on Tverskoy Boulevard.

The first evening I took out my guitar, a rather poor instrument, and began to play the first part of the *Third Concerto* of Giuliani. At that time I thought I played this piece fairly well -- today I know that my playing then was no more than a mere scratching of strings.

However, when I finished the piece I became aware of voices through the wall of an adjacent room. I soon realized that the conversation dealt with the guitar. Someone began to play the guitar and played it better than I had ever heard anyone before. I began to feel feverish through admiration and surprise. Never in my life will I forget that deep overwhelming impression that this playing behind the wall produced on my entire nature.

There was strength, clearness, unbelievable rapidity, tenderness and deep feeling in that playing. During the long years which followed I aspired for these same attributes and only gained them slowly by dint of a long period of persistent exercises. I probably would never have gained them had I not become acquainted with Mertz and received his precious manuscripts from him.

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1. Johann George Schertzer ( ), apprentice of Stauffer. He built guitars with up to ten strings.

When the playing stopped, I immediately sent my servant to find out who the player was. He learned that it was a squire from Tula -- Paul Ladijenski.

The next minute I presented myself to him. He was extremely attentive to me and readily told me a few things about himself. He used a seven-string guitar and was one of the pupils of Sichra who was quite famous at the time throughout the whole country. I spent the entire evening with him. He played many numbers for me as I listened with undiminished fascination. The impression from all this was so great, that I immediately declared that I would henceforth play only on the seven-string instrument and would give up my six-string guitar.

However, Mr. Ladijenski was impartial and fair enough to object to my decision, saying that the six-string instrument had great qualities and definite superiority over the seven-string one. He said, moreover, that I had already acquired some musical technique on my guitar and it would be senseless to start all my training from the beginning. He told me to continue to work with persistence and patience.

"Do not lose your spirit when your efforts seem to fail. No matter what your natural talent is, the true artist is made only by effort and assiduity."

That meeting in the hotel decided my future life and destiny. It was only because of P. Ladijenski that I became as passionate lover of guitar music as I am.

I will now continue with the description of my journey abroad. Having settled temporarily in Vienna, I immediately went in search of Mr. Kovatzick to whom I had a letter of recommendation. He worked in the office of the Austrian Emperor, knew Vienna well, was a Slav by birth, loved Russians and spoke French fluently. The latter was important for me, since I did not have any talent for German grammar<sup>1</sup>. My entire musical research was accomplished with his kind and helpful assistance.

First of all, we went to the music store of Gasslineer.

"Who is the best guitarist in Vienna?" asked Kovatzick.

"Mertz," was the answer.

"And the best guitar maker?"

"Fisher<sup>2</sup>, who takes charge of the instruments of the Vienna Conservatory."

"Why not Stauffer?"

"Because Stauffer has not made any guitars since 1848. At present, I believe, he is not even in Vienna."

We took the addresses and immediately entered the workshop of Fisher which was two steps from the store. We were met by a very respectable looking man about fifty, Mr. Fisher. I explained to him that I wanted the best possible guitar and was ready to pay any price for such an instrument.

"I will do all I can," said Fisher.

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1. Again I get the impression that Makaroff did not really like Germans.

2. Anton Fischer (1794-1879), luthier in Vienna, who built guitars after Stauffer's designs, plus violins and harps.

"Come to my hotel tomorrow morning and take a look at my Stauffer guitar. If you make me a guitar which is a little better, more powerful and resonant than mine I will pay you double the price you yourself charge me for the guitar. Do you agree?"

"Definitely," answered Fisher.

"Very well," said I, "then begin your work immediately and have the guitar ready by July. However, if I find that your guitar is only just as good as my present instrument, or possibly worse, I will only pay you the price you charged."

After we left Mr. Fisher, my escort remembered that Stauffer lived not far from where we were and we decided to inquire if he was home. We walked several blocks and saw a sign with a guitar on it. However, the name on it was not Stauffer but Schmidt. We entered. A small fat little man looked at us questioningly.

"Wasn't this formerly Stauffer's workshop?" we asked.

"Yes," he answered, "but he sold me his business in 1848 and went to Prague. However, if you would like to have an excellent instrument, we can do it without Stauffer. It can be made by Schertzer, who was Stauffer's apprentice. Although he has the greatest talent and is a master of guitar making, he can be found living in great poverty at present. Meanwhile Stauffer was made rich through his labor."

We took Schertzer's address (Margarethen, 99) and left. I decided to go to Schertzer and order another guitar from him, since I wanted to try every possible means to get an excellent instrument. Who knows, I thought, perhaps this guitar will turn out even better than Fisher's -- all is possible.

In order to reach his place we had to go across the entire city to the farthest end. He had a very small, but clean and light room. Schertzer was a small, thin man with a tanned face which was very expressive and intelligent. We asked him to show us some of his instruments.

Unfortunately, he could not as he worked only by order and only after being given a deposit. "I am so poor," he said, "that otherwise I would not even be able to buy wood. I have no guitar orders at present, but here is a mandolin which I made for Count L."

The mandolin was excellently made.

"You told me," said Schertzer, "that your guitar was made by Stauffer. Do you remember when he made it for you?"

"In 1849."

"Didn't Stauffer send you two guitars made of Pallsander<sup>1</sup> wood?"

"True."

"Then it was I who made those two guitars for you in this very room. At that time Stauffer had already sold his workroom to Schmidt and ordered your guitars from me by mail."

With these words, he gave us an old letter which we read with great curiosity.

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1. I wonder if Rio Palissander was used in those days. I guess there was no export ban on it, as it is now.

"How much did he pay you for the work?" we asked.

"Twenty-two roubles for each," was the answer.

I was amazed to recollect that I had paid 120 roubles for each one of them, together with postal expenses. I found out afterwards that Stauffer charged 80 florines or 44 roubles for each. I felt sad and annoyed. I left a deposit with Schertzer to buy the necessary materials and departed

I had planned to visit Mertz on the following day. He anticipated me, however. When he learned, from Fisher, that I was in Vienna and had evinced a great desire to meet him, he paid me a visit.

Mertz<sup>1</sup> was a tall man, about 50, neither fat nor thin, very modest and with no hint of a pretense to greatness about him. I had already become well acquainted with him through a large number of his published compositions and especially through his transcriptions of famous opera music for the guitar.

However, with little exception, his music, and in particular, his transcription, was uninteresting. It seemed quite dull to me, rather hurriedly composed without proper attention, simply to satisfy the guitar amateurs of his time. Aware of this, I did not expect anything unusual from his playing. He spoke little French -- my wife assumed the role of translator.

As soon as it was feasible, I offered him my guitar and asked him to play something. He took it readily and immediately began to play. It was a fascinating large work.

"By whom is this piece written?" I asked.

"By me," was the answer. "It has not been published yet."

Then he played another piece, and still another. Each one better than the last -- all magnificent. I was dumbfounded with surprise and admiration. I felt like a Columbus discovering a new America, for here was the great guitar composer I had long given up hope of finding. I had been searching for him everywhere, among the countless pieces of music I bought throughout Russia and Europe.

Afterwards, I had thrown them away in despair, finding them worthless rubbish, cooked up by talentless modern composers such as Padovetz<sup>2</sup>, Carcassi, Bobrovich<sup>3</sup>, Bayer<sup>4</sup>, Soussman, Kuffner<sup>5</sup>, Pettol [Pettoleti?]<sup>6</sup>, etc.

In contrast, the music played by Mertz, to which I listened with ever-growing rapture, contained everything -- rich composition, great musical knowledge, excellent development of an idea, unity, novelty, grandeur of style, absence of trivial expression and multiplicity of harmonic effects.

At the same time, there was the clear basic melody, which kept surging above the surface of arpeggios and chords. The effects were brilliant and daring. Basic to all this,

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1. Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856), famous Hungarian guitarist and composer.
  2. Ivan Padovetz (1800-1873), Croatian violonist, guitarist and composer.
  3. Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (1805-1881), Polish guitarist and composer.
  4. Johann Bayer (1822 - 1908), German guitarist and player of the Zither.
  5. Joseph Küffner (1876 - 1856), German guitarist and composer.
  6. Pietro Pettoletti (ca. 1795-1870), Italian guitarist.

he had a deep understanding of the instrument with all its possibilities and hidden secrets.

In his full-hearted compositions, I liked the finales and introductions especially well, because they were unusual and were wonderfully developed. They could be removed from the rest and played separately without losing their power and musical significance. Thus, they could give full satisfaction to any listener.

After each piece, I asked him the same question and received the same answer -- "Not published."

"Why don't you publish them? Why keep this wonderful music from your admirers? Why do you allow the guitarists to feed on the tasteless compositions of Bobrovich and Padovetz and constantly remain hungry for want of musical beauty?"

"I will tell you," said Mertz. "First, on seeing these, the publishers would say it was too difficult, that I would have to rearrange them. That would spoil the compositions.

Second, as long as these compositions remain in my briefcase, they remain new; and are mine for my own concerts. Within six months after publication, they would become old.

Further, they would become distorted and mutilated by those miserable guitarists who can only scratch the strings of the guitar."

"Would you care to sell me these manuscripts?" I asked.

"With great pleasure," said Mertz, thereupon quoting a modest price.

I told him of my experience with the manuscripts I had bought from Shultz.

"Please do not imitate him and spoil the music by rewriting it to make it less difficult."

"Oh, no, I respect you and myself far too much for that. I will write them for you note by note, exactly as they are."

He kept his word. Within a week, he brought me five compositions written with great care and attention to detail.

As a performer, Mertz was without doubt, the best of the German guitarists I had heard. His playing was marked by power, energy, feeling, clarity and expression.

However, he had the defects of the German school<sup>1</sup> -- the buzzing of basses, the smothering of very rapid passages at times. With respect to the embellishment and polishing of musical sentences and periods, Mertz was not on a par with Zani de Ferranti, or Shultz.

This was also true in respect to tenderness and softness of tone. As a performer, Shultz was much superior to Mertz. However, as a composer, Mertz ranked immeasurably higher than Shultz. He surpassed in originality, in aspiration and particularly in the understanding of the guitar as an instrument with all its possibilities and qualities.

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1. Apparently Makaroff does not like the German school, he complained about it before.



A few days later, I again paid him a visit. Again he played for me. This time I heard compositions which he had written for the guitar with piano accompaniment. His wife, a good pianist, played that instrument.

Mertz used a guitar with ten strings. In my opinion, the tenth string was absolutely superfluous, since it was a bass contra A. It seemed to me that one bass A was sufficient for the six string guitar. I had asked both Fisher and Schertzer to make my guitar with nine strings. It would be better to have a bass contra G, if it were possible. However, since the tone would have to be too low to be distinctly heard, it was not practical.

Six months later, after my return to Russia, I solved the problem of that bass, by adding a tenth string -- an open bass G. This enriched the guitar tremendously, since it took care of the three tones of the scale, C, G, D and made available on open strings, the dominant, tonic and sub-dominant. To a large extent, this made playing easier. It also enlarged the harmonic possibilities of the guitar.

Incidentally, as far back as 1840, I had made an important improvement in guitar construction -- I had ordered a longer fingerboard, which included two full octaves, adding five half tones to the guitar. This improvement was subsequently accepted by Stauffer and by Schertzer.

We remained in Vienna over three weeks. We liked that city very much. It has always remained in our minds as a sweet memory. What beautiful women! How charming, attentive and agreeable everyone there is -- especially to foreigners! The cost of everything is amazingly cheap in Vienna. Here is an example:

Once, in a group of five, we went to Schönbrunn. After a tour of the place, with its large number of portraits of Marie-Therese and her family, we went to the restaurant which had an excellent orchestra under Farbach. Seated around a large round table, we ordered a nine-course dinner, one bottle of Champagne, two bottles of red wine, coffee and ice cream. That excellent dinner, with all the "extras," cost us only one rouble and fifty kopeks per person. We paid a cover charge of 12 florines and for a coach to take us there. For all this, the entire evening cost only 1 rouble and 80 kopeks per person.

This would be absolutely impossible in our Petrograd or Moscow.

First, there is no entertainment of this sort in Russia. Second, a dinner party on one of the better summer places, with poor tea and tasteless beef-steaks together with a glass of Swedish vodka would be much more expensive than an entire day filled with wonderful entertainment in Vienna.

On April 28th, we left for Prague, where I did not miss the opportunity to meet Stauffer<sup>1</sup>. From Prague, we went to Dresden, Leipzig, Frankfurt and finally to Berlin, which was our last city before our return to Russia.

The morning after our arrival in Berlin, I went to the Custom House to obtain my two guitars-those which were sent to me according to information I had received from Fisher and Schertzer, both of Vienna. With the greatest impatience, anxiety and curiosity, I carried the guitars back to my hotel.

The first one I chanced to remove from the strongly-built wooden box, was the guitar made by Fisher. The finish was marvelous, but the tone was much inferior than that of

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1. I wonder if Makaroff complained about Stauffer's commercial instinct, having paid far too much for the guitars he ordered with him.

my own instrument. That was a disappointment. I decided that Fisher was not a good guitar-maker.

I proceeded unwrapping the second guitar -- Schertzer's guitar. I finally removed it and tuned it. With the first chords played, I could tell that it was much superior to Fisher's. The tone was stronger, richer and softer. The workmanship was excellent. The size was larger than any I had seen, but more important and completely new in guitar-making art, were two iron rods, placed length-wise, inside the instrument.

#### **4 Part Four (from Guitar Review no. 5 (1948))**

##### **Editor's Note**

*[ In the preceding installment, Makaroff, anxious to purchase a superior guitar, sought out two of the best guitar makers in Vienna -- Fisher and Stauffer. From the former, he ordered the best possible guitar that could be made, with expense no deterring factor. Then he looked up Stauffer and learned that the guitar maker had left Vienna for Prague some years before.*

*However, Makaroff learned that Schertzer, an apprentice of Stauffer's, lived in Vienna. From Schertzer he also ordered a guitar, with the same stipulations. Several months later the guitars were delivered. Fisher's displeased him. Schertzer's however, delighted him. The guitar was of a larger than usual size, and its tone had great beauty. He noticed also, that placed lengthwise inside the instrument, were two iron rods... ]*

##### **Makaroff's Story Continues**

This clever idea, so skillfully realized, was based on the same principle as the iron straps under the sounding board of the piano. The use of the two rods relieved the sounding board from the burden of carrying the full tension of the strings. This was now thrown completely onto the two rods.

The top of the guitar, which previously had been restrained by this tremendous tension, was now completely free to vibrate. This explains the strength and richness of tone which ensued. After two months of use, Schertzer's guitar acquired a remarkably powerful tone, such as I had never before heard in any guitar.

In addition to this, Schertzer had also introduced another improvement, a double lower back. This too, was of the greatest importance, increasing the richness of tone in the following manner: During the performance, the back of the guitar rests against the body of the performer. The sound becomes muffled, since vibrations are absorbed by the clothing. The second back is left free to vibrate and to reflect the full tone of the instrument.

Another innovation was the use of mechanical pegs. Although this had already been used by other makers, I had never before had any on any guitar before this one. They made tuning easier and more accurate.

Thus, my efforts were crowned with full success. My beloved instrument suddenly made a great stride on the way to perfection, something it had not been able to achieve in the last twenty years. With delight, I sent the 50% bonus I had promised him. In addition, I sent him my deepest thanks for his innovations in guitar-making which improved the instrument by so much. The thanks I sent him were not only for myself, but also in behalf of all sincere lovers of the instrument.

On the 2nd of August, I boarded a ship in Stettin which was to take myself, my family and my three new guitars to my home in Russia. As soon as we became settled in our country home in Tula, I again began to exercise with renewed enthusiasm. Learning the new Mertz pieces I had brought home was delightful.

After two months of concentrated practicing, I had solved the problem of guitar harmony. This, as I mentioned before, was the addition of an extra bass Sol (G), increasing the harmonic possibilities. As soon as I was satisfied that my idea was correct, I wrote to Schertzer, asking him to make three new ten-stringed guitars, two for myself and one for one of my amateur friends. Again I promised him the additional 50% for full satisfaction.

Five months later, the guitars arrived safely from Vienna. However, only one of the three was better than the guitar I received from him in Berlin.

Still, I was quite pleased and sent him the promised prize money. Moreover, I recommended him to amateurs who wanted new instruments and persuaded each of them to send Schertzer similar bonuses. At the same time, I was corresponding continuously with Mertz and was acquiring from him those manuscripts of his which he did not care to publish. In this manner, each year I received three to four new manuscripts. These were a valuable addition to my rare and already extensive library.

However, in spite of my profound interest in the guitar, I could not help feeling that the guitar as an instrument had come to the end of its life cycle. The realization was very hard to take.

I was aware that the pianoforte was constantly being improved and developed, as was also being done with instruments of lesser importance. No one seemed interested enough to improve the guitar. Perhaps this lack of mechanical development was one of the reasons why it was so little in use, or rather, why it had fallen so low.

In addition, the death of [Mauro] Giuliani had been a severe blow, since with him the talented guitar composers had ceased to exist.

Was the guitar really doomed forever, I wondered? Is there anything which can be done to prod and stimulate it into renewed musical significance? Are no more technical improvements on it possible? Are the talented guitar composers gone forever?

Competition is a great lever which prompts progress in all fields of human endeavor. It would be wise to find a way to use it and thereby stimulate the influence of the guitar in the musical world. How to muster the guitar-makers, guitar composers and musicians for a mutual effort in the same direction?

Thinking along these lines brought me finally to a definite conclusion. The idea of a contest came to my mind. I undertook it with a kind of painful hope and feverishly began to bring it to fruition.

In March 1856 I wrote the program of the contest. Inspired only by my impersonal love for music and especially guitar music, and in order to create interest in the competition I established four prizes

- For the best composition for the guitar, 800 Francs (200 rubles).
- For the second-best composition for the guitar, 500 Francs (125 rubles).
- For the best-made guitar, 800 Francs (200 rubles).
- For the second-best guitar, 500 Francs (125 rubles).

Rules For Guitar Composition:

1. Guitar compositions must be original or fantasies on the basis of known tunes. Their chief qualities must be originality and grace of musical thought, in particular the correct development and perfection of the musical idea. They should also incorporate the new ideas in style, taste and brilliance of effects, so that the entire composition is wholly within the spirit and resources of the instrument. They should also reflect all the musical possibilities and qualities peculiar to the guitar.
2. Compositions must be written for the six or ten-stringed guitar for solo playing, or with the additional accompaniment of a piano, or quartet.
3. Every composer has the right to present more than one composition. He may also win both prizes, if his compositions are judged to be the two best.
4. Preference will be given to those compositions which are played at the time of judgment in the presence of the Jury. They may be played by the composer or by any other guitarist present.
5. No composition can receive a prize unless it has been established that it can be played by the best artists. This provision is necessary since there have been, and are, compositions which could never be played by anyone, including the composer himself. These are simply musical fantasmagorias and are excluded from the contest.

Rules For Guitar-Making:

1. The guitar must be large and preferably ten-stringed. The four extra strings are to be basses, contre D, C, contre B and contre A. The Terze-guitar will not be accepted.
2. The qualities of the guitar must embody the following: Strength of tone, depth and melodiousness; the tone must also be mellow, tender and sustained or singing, i.e., the longest possible continuity of sound. The instrument must lend itself to making good vibratos, legatos and portamentos.
3. The neck of the guitar must be perfectly flat, wide enough, particularly at the screw and comprise two full octaves.

**Editor's Note**

*[The neck here described is that of the detachable type, popular at the time with German guitar makers. It is held in place by means of a screw at the heel of the neck, passing through it and the block inside the body of the guitar. This screw also performs an additional function, in that when the instrument is properly designed, it is possible to adjust for "action" by its means.]*

4. The strings must be placed low yet not so low as to give rise to a "buzz" on being played as is so often the case.
5. The pegs should be mechanical, however, wooden pegs will also be accepted.
6. The guitar must be marked by fine workmanship and graceful simplicity at the same time. Surface decorations, when they do not serve to improve the instrument musically, will not have any additional value for the competition.

The contest will be held in Brussels, where all compositions and guitars must be dispatched before October 1856, the time of the competition. I myself translated the rules into French and had them translated into German.

The rules were first published in the Russian Newspaper, St. Petersburg News within a few days after I sent them. Soon after, they were published abroad in several French and German newspapers. I then prepared myself to be ready to travel abroad again.

By this time, my guitar technique had reached a point of artistry. I felt that I was approaching the goal of musical art which is the sine qua non of the virtuoso, something which few possess-the ability to perform well not only at home but under all conditions and circumstances and before every kind of an audience. This skill of being complete master of his instrument, so that he can pour forth his musical feeling, is possessed by very few musicians. There have been great virtuosos for whom playing in public was real torture. Chopin was one of these.

Before leaving, I took part in the Concert of the Amateurs in the University Hall. My playing was disregarded by the music critics. The proverb about prophets in their own countries holds good even in the field of music. This, despite the fact that some of my friends, who are guitar lovers had recognized the qualities of my technique.

In July 1856 I again went abroad to go to Aachen, where I wanted to take a course of sulphur baths. There I met many Russians with whom I had a good time.

I was also visited by two guitarists -- Jansen and Fisher. The latter, a very young and very blond little German, was considered a great guitar maestro on the shores of the lower Rhine.

But, alas, his playing was little better than an exaggeration in all respects of the usual German guitar technique<sup>1</sup>, resulting in a mere scratching of strings. He had great rapidity and force, but no clearness of tone, purity or softness. He played with unvaried fortissimos and with constant buzzing of the strings. Furthermore he smoked the worst possible cigars<sup>2</sup>.

In response to his insistence that he wished my opinion and advice, I finally told him that he must put his guitar away for some time. Then he must go to London and listen to Schultz, or to Brussels, to listen to Zani de Ferranti. Finally, he must come back to his guitar and try to imitate all the qualities of these two great guitarists. Mere rapidity and force is not enough for a good performance.

Fisher advised me to hear the three German guitarists: Schtilling in the city of Fuldt, Brandt at Wurzburg and Franz at Munich. Thus, instead of preparing for the contest, I went to look up these people.

On my way, I stopped off to see the friend of my last trip, Mr. Kamberger. He thought I would only lose money and time in going after these three guitarists. He knew them well, and told me that they did not deserve my interest or attention. I followed his advice and went to Bruxelles where I secured a very cozy apartment.

In connection with my contest, I came in contact with Mr. Damke, a profound musician and master of counterpoint, who had previously lived in St. Petersburg. He met me with open arms and helped me in a most useful and logical way. He immediately introduced

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1. Again Makaroff emphasizes his aversion to the German School.

2. What has this to do with music? Must have been a smoke screen!

me to the best artists and the Professor of the Conservatory. Among these were Cerve, Leonard, Blaz, Bender, Kuffre and many others. They were all happy to accept my invitation to be judges at the Contest. Mr. Damke also gave me the excellent advice to organize my own concert, in order to introduce myself as a guitarist to the general public.

Mr. Geinburg, Director of the Philharmonic Society of Bruxelles offered me a hall for this purpose. It was an excellent auditorium. Naturally, I accepted both the advice and the hall.

I gave the concert on Sunday, Oct. 23rd at 1 P.M. About 400 people were attracted to the concert. All the sincere music lovers of Bruxelles attended. I played alone, with no accompaniment. My guitar sounded so well, that people entering the lobby of the hall, could not believe that it was a guitar, but instead mistook the sounds as those of a piano. The real musical furore was reached when I played my *Mazurka* and my *Venetian Carnival*.

In these, I employed a special technique developed by me and unknown to all other guitarists, i.e., the theme is played on the basses, while the most rapid trill is being performed on two strings by four fingers.

My success was tremendous. When I finished, a great crowd of admiring and exclaiming people had surrounded me. Artists, students, musicians, professors, etc., all shook my hands and embraced me. I was asked to repeat my *Mazurka*, which I did. Then I played an unpublished piece of Mertz, one of his bravado Fantasies called *Elixir d'Amour*<sup>1</sup>, which I consider one of the most brilliant guitar pieces.

One of the most enthusiastic persons present, was Mr. Adan, a real fanatic of both music and the guitar and a friend of the Belgian Minister of Finance. According to him, he played the guitar from the time he was sixteen years old. He had transcribed all the Sonatas of Beethoven for the guitar.

He had heard all the famous guitarists such as Carulli, Giuliani, Legnani, Sor, Aguado, Schtoll, Zani de Ferranti and Huerta<sup>2</sup>, but not one of them had impressed him with his playing as I had. The morning after the concert, the courier from the Ministry of Finance brought me a large envelope in which was a *Rondo* for the guitar by Mr. Adan, dedicated to me. Together with this was a letter from him full of the sincerest praise and admiration of my playing.

This was my third and most successful public appearance. This time, the guitar was not abused in the concert like some poor relative, who is invited to sit at the end of the table out of sheer pity. By no means, this time my guitar was the lord of the manor and ruled unquestionably over the entire concert hall, completely independent for once of the assistance of local semi-celebrities or the favor of newspapermen. It was the guitar alone, whose sounds filled the large hall, attracting true and sincere lovers of music.

These came, not because of cheap advertisements in periodicals which sell mediocre performances of clever musical clients, but because they were induced through their love for music and because of their musical intellect which was higher than usual.

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1. Very likely this is a transcription by Mertz of a melody from the opera *Elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Domenico Maria Donizetti (1797 – 1848)

2. Don A.F. Huerta y Katurla (1803 - 1875), Spanish guitarist.

And now, are you curious as to how large my expenses were for organizing this concert?

- For printing posters, including mailing to the addressees -- 6 Francs. (Far from our St. Petersburg prices, although just as far from the high pathos of our Russian posters.)
- To the caretakers of the Philharmonic Society for taking care of the chairs and benches in the hall -- 15 francs.

All in all it amounted to 21 francs, or 5 rubles and 25 kopecks in Russian money.

Soon after my concert, the Jury for the contest was formed; and I invited all the members for a luxurious dinner at Dubost's. There were nine of us. I must say a few words about that dinner, because never before nor since have I had such a magnificent repast, throughout its twelve courses.

We started with famous Ostende oysters, followed by a soup made of turtles and lobsters served with Strassburg pirog, a type of meat pie. Then came fish and wild fowl, ending with a delicious dessert, coffee and liquors. With the oysters we had two bottle of Chabli. The following courses were accompanied by 6 bottles of a wonderful old Bordeaux and 4 bottles of Champagne.

How much would you think all this luxury should have cost me? Only 149 francs which was equal to 37 rubles, or about 4 ruble per man.

Finally, in October, we held the first meeting of our Jury in my apartment. I opened the meeting with a short speech and then we proceeded with the election of the President. I was unanimously elected. During this first meeting, we worked out the rules and conditions in regard to the dispatch, acceptance and return of compositions and guitars from and to their owners.

We also established the date of the competition, December 1st, although this was later postponed to December 10th. Our resolutions passed at these meetings were immediately published by many Bruxelles' newspapers and later reprinted by French and German publications.

Meanwhile, I was daily receiving a large number of compositions for entry in the Contest. These came from all quarter of Europe-France, Germany, Spain, Poland, Holland and Austria. In all, I received over sixty compositions from thirty competitors. From many of them, I also received letters in which I was called the benefactor of the guitar. They praised my own musical talent, addressing me with grand titles, such as Baron, Count, Prince, etc.

Some sent me posters for their concerts along with the compositions. Others were simply ridiculous and meaningless in what they wrote.

Mertz had sent me four of his compositions while I was still at home. I had been in constant correspondence with him since the day we met. In each of his letters there was much sincere and deep feeling towards me. What touched me most about him, was his remarkable modesty. He did not seem to be conscious of the wonderful quality of the music he composed, or of the extent of his own talent. How different he was in that respect from so many of his comrades in art!

In his last letter, which I received abroad, he told me about his long illness. After that came another letter written by his wife, in which she told me that he was not able to write himself and that he was feeling worse daily. This information came as a great shock to me, since I loved that gifted, modest composer and great guitarist with my whole heart.

In October, a black-bordered letter arrived from Mrs. Mertz<sup>1</sup> with the final sad news. It brought hot tears to my eyes. Even now, while writing these lines, I feel the tears blind my sight and deep sadness tortures my heart. Not only I, but all guitarists of the world should mourn the death of Mertz. His loss is irreparable.

Shortly before the Contest, my guitar again had a brilliant period of success -- a complete victory and regeneration for that forgotten instrument. It came about through my new friend Mr. Damke, who introduced me to two ladies -- passionate lovers of the music of Mozart and Beethoven.

They were the Baronesses Danetant, the wives of two brothers. At their homes regular musical gatherings were held. These were attended by all the famous musicians of the country as well as foreign visitors. At one of these musical evenings, Cerve and I were invited to play the guitar. I played two pieces by Mertz, the *Elixir d'Amour* and another. My playing was heartily applauded. I was invited to play again on another occasion.

This evening was especially important since it was the occasion for one of the most brilliant gatherings of the Season. Among the performers were Cerve, who was superb in his own three pieces for the cello. Then beautiful, young Countess Rossi, a daughter of the famous Rossi-Zontag, sang two incomparable songs. This was followed by Monsieur Damke, who played an *Allegro* from his latest *Symphony for the piano*. It was a four-hand piece and he was assisted by his wife, a pupil of Henzelt.

After this, I played a piece by Mertz on a famous theme from *Pirate*<sup>2</sup>. It was a brilliant and melodious piece. It has one section written entirely in harmonics, which sounded especially beautiful and sweet on my guitar. Thundering applause was my reward after I had finished playing the piece, a part of this rightfully belonged to my deceased friend.

Towards the end of the soiree, Cerve played again, this time, his own brilliant *Souvenir of Warsaw*. Barely had the last sounds of his music faded, when the charming hostess approached me with an irresistible smile.

"In order to end this soiree, we all appeal to you once more to take your beautiful instrument and delight us with the bewitching tones that you know how to coax from it," said she.

"Why Baroness," I answered, "how dare I play after the cello playing of Monsieur Cerve? My music will be an outrage."

All my arguments along these lines were in vain. I had to obey our beautiful hostess. As I was preparing to strike the first chords, Mr. Damke approached me and whispered, "Please play your *Symphonic Fantasy*." However, I denied his wish, since I thought my *Fantasy* too long and too serious for the moment. I told him I would play instead my *Venetian Carnival*. It was not as serious but extremely effective. He wished me success.

Again I pressed my "beloved" to my heart, glanced over the brilliant gathering of magnificently dressed men and women, mentally called for help on the shadows of the great guitarists -- the deceased Giuliani and the living Schultz -- and began to play. I finished the performance with my heart thundering loudly in my chest. I realized that never before had I performed the *Carnival*, that blinding, radiant firework, better than this time.

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1. Josephine Plantin, a pianist.

2. The opera *Il Pirata* by the Italian composer Vincenzo Bellini (1801 -1835).



It is impossible to describe the ovation and applause which followed the final chord of my playing. It was a tidal wave of the most sincere admiration and enthusiasm. Many rushed forward to clasp my hands. The sister of my hostess, Baroness Danetant, remarked aloud to Mr. Damke, "I would never have believed that the guitar could produce such marvelous effects, had I not heard it myself."

These two performances, in addition to my concert at Bruxelles resulted in completely reversing the contention of some people, that the guitar is not a concert instrument. A silly idea. Every instrument can become a concert instrument, provided the instrument is an excellent one of its kind and that the performer is the best available. In addition, it is necessary that the program should be cleverly and artistically arranged and that the concert hall itself should correspond in size and acoustics with the instrument to be used. But how can one ever win an argument with old-fashioned conservative skeptics of music?

During my stay in Bruxelles, I was visited by many amateur guitarists, as well as other musicians. Among them were two young Spaniards from Gibraltar -- a pianist and a violinist. They tried to persuade me to go to Spain, assuring me that their countrymen would welcome me throughout the land. Attracted by their youthful enthusiasm, I was considering a visit to their poetical country; however my plans were changed for rather prosaic reasons.

Another interesting person often visited me -- Mr. Yradier<sup>1</sup>. Also Spanish, he was the liveliest, gayest and most outspoken fellow I had ever known. He laughed at the slightest provocation. When he spoke he gesticulated with his hands. He would pound out his own compositions on the piano or would play and sing Spanish folk songs on the guitar, snapping his fingers, using his heels, whistling, etc.

He was preparing for the contest when a strange event put an end to his aspirations. He had been working on his composition, when I played for him at his invitation, Mertz's *Fantasie* from *Montechi*<sup>2</sup>.

He appeared very shocked, when I had finished. Suddenly he exclaimed, "You killed me!"

Then he showed me a piece of paper covered with musical notations.

"Here," he said, "I began to work on a composition on exactly the same theme from *Montechi*, which you have just played. I only feel now, that I could never be able to write anything equal to it in beauty. Therefore, I simply give up."

And he did.

Four days before the end of the Contest, I had more visitors. My old friend Coste of Paris brought four of his compositions for the contest.

A Spanish guitarist, named Chibra came for the same purpose. Chibra had been born in Seville, but he had lived in London and Paris for the past twenty years. Abroad. he had written a large opera which had proved a failure when produced. He entered a composition for the contest.

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1. I guess this is Sebastian Yradier (1809 - 1865), the composer of songs like *La Paloma* and *El Arreglito*.

2. *I Capituleti e i Montecchi*, an opera by Vincenzo Bellini (1801 - 1835).

As a composer he proved to be very mediocre. It was true that his music had originality and was quite different from anything written by Giuliani or Mertz. It was also true that the pieces were very melodious and sweet, more so when he himself played them. Their main defect was an over-all monotony in general and in details. The style was poor and suitable only for dancing. The harmony was thin and pale, the tonality impossibly boring, the key never rising above two or three sharps. This seems to be the palladium of all poor guitarists, on whom a key with one flat, let alone two, makes the same impression as water on hydrophobes.

However, for the sake of a varied repertoire, which should include samples of different styles and manners, I learned two of his compositions. I enjoyed playing these; almost without exception, everyone, especially the ladies, liked them. I shall never forget the real furore they aroused when I played them on the boat during my trip aboard in 1875.

Now I would like to say a few more words about Chibra<sup>1</sup> as a performer on the guitar.

This is something which was most unusual and remarkable. As is the custom with almost all Spanish guitarists, he had grown very long nails on his right hand, which he held in an oblique position while playing, not perpendicularly, as guitarists usually do.

Moreover, he did not actually strike the string with the nail, but simply pressed it on the string, slipping off from the string onto the neck of the guitar. In this manner, he was able somehow to draw remarkably tender, deep melodious sounds from the instrument, the equal of which I had never before heard from anyone; not even from the great Zani de Ferranti, who was known for the softness of his playing.

The vibrato, when performed by Chibra, was really divine, his guitar actually sobbed, wailed and sighed. Chibra only showed these remarkable qualities in slow tempos as in largo, adagio or andante.

The moment he had to play allegro or presto, the reverse side of the medal became evident. Then it became impossible to slip from the string to the neck, instead it became necessary to strike the string. This caused a disagreeable, metallic sound, quite contrary to the velvety tones of his wonderful adagios.

In a word, Chibra's performance could give his listeners the greatest delight for a few days, but not over any extended length of time since both his manner and his compositions became tiresome. The art of music is like cooking, one cannot live only on monotonous sweets. At times, pepper and mustard are required to stir the taste.

When I returned home from Bruxelles, the news reached me that Chibra had given a concert in one of Bruxelles' music halls, but had not had much success, in spite of a large audience. I was sincerely sorry to hear that, since I consider him one of the most talented guitarists of his time.

However, I must finish my story about the guitar contest. The organization and preparation of the contest had given me much trouble and a good many headaches. In addition, it was very expensive for me, since I had to pay for the transportation of the instruments as well as the compositions. The most disagreeable and difficult task, was the process of deciphering the compositions, most of which disclosed ignorance and lack of talent. There were two or three which were exceptions to this, besides the compositions of Coste and Mertz.

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1. The Spanish guitarist Jose Maria Ciebra from Seville

Only a few guitars were entered, however, in the competition. One came from Schertzer in Vienna, one from Argusen of St. Petersburg, one from Paris from the successor of Lacotte-Eirich, one from Prague and two from Munich. There were more from Vienna, (I do not remember by whom) which came too late to participate in the contest.

At last came the grand day for the awarding of prizes. At 8:00 P.M. all the members of the panel came to my hotel apartment. I opened the conference. We decided to vote after debating. Of 64 compositions, we found only 40 worthy of participating in the competition. Of these 40, the following compositions were judged worthy of prizes: Four compositions by Mertz, four by Coste, two compositions by Komamy, and one composition by Kuhnel.

This made a total of 11 compositions. Before the contest, I had made a statement that I would not consider the death of Mertz a hindrance to the admission of his compositions into the contest and that in the event that one of them should win, the prize should be sent to his widow. My opinion was wholeheartedly supported by the other members of the panel.

Alas, on the very last day of the contest, I discovered that a plot was being engineered to overthrow the accepted decision. I do not like to mention the name of the person responsible for this. Because of personal antagonism against me, he had decided to take revenge on me by attacking me through my devotion and loyalty to the music and memory of Mertz. He protested against our awarding to Mertz the well deserved prize.

However, all of his charges against Mertz were fittingly overcome by my just and clear explanations and arguments. These evidently had a good effect on the rest of the judges. In spite of this, my heart was beating hard when we began to count the votes for the prizes. A great burden fell off my shoulders, when I counted them and found that Mertz was found worthy of the first prize for compositions. Coste had received the second prize.

I immediately sent a messenger with a note to Coste asking him to come with his guitar, since the judges wished to hear both of his compositions in order to decide which of them was more worthy of the prize.

Coste came immediately, his face shining with joy. He began to kiss and embrace me, saying that he considered it the greatest honor to receive the second prize after Mertz, the greatest guitar composer of the time. I introduced him to the judges and after many hearty congratulations he played his compositions. His Serenade was recognized as the better piece.

Then we proceeded to examine the instruments and to award the prizes for these. There were no debates on this score. I simply played several chords on each of the guitars. Two of them left the others far behind, a guitar made by Schertzer and another made by Argusen.

The first was remarkably good, the best in tone and volume that I had ever heard. The second guitar did not equal the first in tone and depth of sound, but it possessed an extremely pleasant silvery and tender sound. The greatest honor went to Schertzer, not only because of the more excellent instrument, but also because it was he who invented all of the improvements in the construction of the instrument, while Argusen was only the copyist, so to speak.

Finally, I played a piece on each of the prize guitars. After the contest I bought both of them from their owners, sending them a special bonus over the fixed prices. The entire

procedure of the contest was pleasant and interesting. It seems that all of the members of the judging panel liked one another.

At our parting, I gave a gift to each of them in the Russian manner, i.e., I gave each one of them two pounds of excellent tea, for which I had sent to St. Petersburg. This little token gift seemed to give them the greatest pleasure, for they were all fond of Russian tea.

The next morning, I mailed the money and two letters of congratulations -- one to Mrs. Mertz with 800 francs and another to Schertzer with a similar enclosure. I soon received from them answers that were full of gratitude and pleasure.

My contest for which I had built up so much hope ended in this manner. Alas! The contest did not achieve what I had had in mind; it did not uncover any new or wonderful composer for the guitar who could fittingly occupy the place left vacant by Mertz. I hope that perhaps someone in the future will be more fortunate than I. However, for the revival of the guitar, I believe I did everything I could, everything one person alone, without any support of sympathizers to encourage and help him, could do.

For all of eighteen years, I fought against old-fashioned conservatives, who did not want to recognize the guitar as a dignified musical instrument. I fought against the indifference of the guitarists themselves, against insults and the mockery of fellow musicians and against a thousand and one other hindrances on my course to place the guitar and its music on the plane it so well deserves in the musical world.

My greatest reward, is that in spite of all odds and opposition, my deep love for the guitar has never let my spirit down in the fight for the defense and furtherance of this beloved instrument.

#### **End of Makaroff's Memoirs on the Guitar**

#### **Editor's Notes**

*Further references to the distinguished guitarist, Leonard Schulz will be found in the following works:*

- *Die Gitarre und ihre Meister* by Frits Buek, pp. 35-36.
- *Diccionario de Guitarristas* by Domingo Prat, p. 289.
- *The Guitar and Mandolin* by E. Philip Bone, pp. 268-270.
- "The Famous Guitarists," Boris A. Perott, *B.M.G Magazine* (1931 to 1938).