

# Napoléon Coste: Composer and Guitarist in the Musical Life of 19th-Century Paris

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Napoléon Coste - Disdéri, 1867

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## Prélude

*As people generally do not have their own judgement, let alone being capable of accurately assessing eminent and complicated achievements, they always rely on the authority of others, such that for 99 per cent of those expressing their approval the praise of a higher order depends exclusively on faith and credulity.<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION: BIOGRAPHY, SEARCHING OR FINDING?

Since Josef Zuth published his study on the guitar and guitar music in 1920<sup>2</sup> – François Fétis dedicated some words to the history of the instrument in 1831<sup>3</sup> – the initial scant number of publications dedicated to the subject by the millennium has nearly grown to what one could call an abundance of books. Many articles on the history and literature of the guitar have also come to light.<sup>4</sup> As a rule, these publications concern the history of the Classical guitar, the history and morphology of the instrument, case studies of types of guitars and guitar playing, guitar construction and luthiers or composers and their music. As a musical prelude to this biography, it is interesting to show the relation in numbers as reflected in my library of guitar books, of which just those from Allorto to Zuth number some 250 items. The majority of these concern instruments and luthiers, a minority of them music and players, and a few in which the lives of guitar composers are described.<sup>5</sup> The latter include only a few scholarly biographies of composers regarded as great names in the world of the Classical guitar.<sup>6</sup> Specifically these are biographies of Mauro Giuliani, Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, written by Thomas Heck, Brian Jeffery, Wolf Moser, William Sasser, and Pompeyo Pérez-Díaz, respectively.<sup>7</sup> Other books and articles on them and their music are not of a very musicological or scholarly historical nature, method and structure, leading to the consequences one might expect: in monographs and reviews contained in manuals one finds assumptions that are either undemonstrable or unresearched, false references or unsupported claims, which moreover suffer from the bad tradition of being handed down from author to author. Biographical data, for instance, are unreliable: in regard to Napoléon Coste I found eight different dates of birth and seven dates of death, which alone gives reason enough to approach Napoléon Coste's life in a scholarly fashion. As a rule, the dates of particular events, concerts and compositions in the time that Coste lived are difficult to ascertain; the correct information is hard to establish. Magazines often list the wrong dates, an incorrect day and at times no date at all. This is why I have brought together different sources for verification. The spelling of names, places and streets is also not uniform in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources. To prevent confusion, here I have chosen to standardize on the present-day custom in the text: 'Lizst' remains Liszt, 'Scizepanowski'

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer, Arthur: 'Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit', in: *Parerga und 1 Paralipomena*, Berlin, Hayn, 1851, repr. Leipzig, Insel Verlag, 1917, p. 112: 'Denn da die Menschen in der Regel ohne eigenes Urtheil und zumal hohe und schwierige Leistungen abzuschätzen durchaus keine Fähigkeit haben; so folgen sie hier stets fremder Auktorität, und der Ruhm, in hoher Gattung, beruht bei 99 unter 100 Rühmern bloss auf Treu und Glauben.'

<sup>2</sup> Zuth, Josef: *Simon Molitor und die Wiener gitarristik*, Wien, Goll, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Fétis, François: 'Instrumens [sic] à cordes pincées', in: *Revue musicale*, Vme année, no. 3, 19 II 1831, p. 17-19.

<sup>4</sup> Lyons, David B.: *Lute, vihuela, guitar to 1800: a bibliography*, Detroit, Information Coordinators, 1978; Rezits, Joseph: *The Guitarist's Resource Guide*, San Diego, Pallma Music Co., 1983. Schwarz, Werner: *Guitar Bibliography*, München, Saur, 1984; McCutcheon, Meredith Alice: *Guitar and Vihuela, An Annotated Bibliography*, New York, Pendragon Press, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Allorto, Enrico: 'L'organologia' in: Chiesa, Ruggiero, ed.: *La Chitarra*, Torino, Edizioni di Torino, 1990, p. 3-96; Zuth, Josef: *Handbuch der Laute und Gitarre*, Wien, Doblinger, 1926-28, repr. Hildesheim, Olms, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Chiesa, Ruggiero: 'La diteggiatura', in: Chiesa, Ruggiero ed.: *La Chitarra*, Torino, Edizioni di Torino, 1990, p. 179.

<sup>7</sup> Sasser, William Gray: *The guitar works of Fernando Sor*, PhD University of North Carolina, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960; Heck, Thomas Fitzsimmons: *The Birth of the Classic Guitar and its Cultivation in Vienna, reflected in the Career and Compositions of Mauro Giuliani (d.1829)* (with) vol II: *Thematic Catalogue of the complete works of Mauro Giuliani*, PhD Yale University, 1970, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977; Jeffery, Brian: *Fernando Sor, Composer and Guitarist*, Tecla, London, 1977; Jeffery, Brian: *Dionisio Aguado*, biography and bibliography, Chanterelle, Heidelberg, 1994; Moser, Wolf: *Fernando Sor: Versuch einer Autobiografie und gitarristische Schriften*, [translation in German of Ledhuy], Köln, Saint-Georges, 1984; Pérez-Díaz, Pompeyo: *Dionisio Aguado y la guitarra clásico-romántica*, Madrid, Alpuerto, 2003.

# I

## Introduction

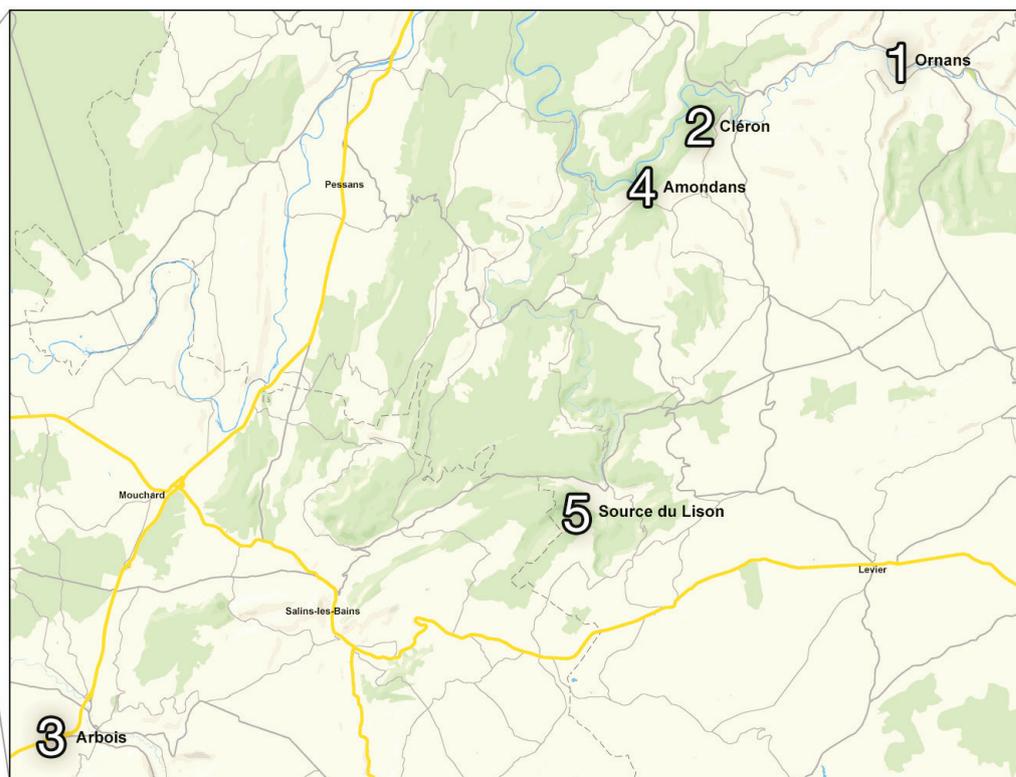
*We, members of the administrative council, declare that citizen J. François Coste, geometrist, is chosen to be captain, the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1792. Of which we put up the certificate for him today, in the camp near Mayenne, the 7<sup>th</sup> Prairéal of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the French Republic.<sup>1</sup>*

### SURROUNDINGS

Through the high table-land of the Jura the small river of the Loue winds along villages such as Ornans [1] and Cléron [2] in the Franche-Comté in the east of France. Further away it flows into the Doubs, the river that gives its name to this *département* since the French Revolution, with Besançon as its capital. This valley of Ornans, geographically the Vallée de la Loue, wooded with forest, has been brought into cultivation with grasslands and grain agriculture, as well as vineyards that produce the white wine of Arbois [3] that even Jacques Brel sang of, only available in this area. The climate provides ample showers of rain, alternated with a summer sun, and cold and snow in winter. It is this region where Napoléon Coste is born in Amondans [4] in 1805 and where he lives in his childhood, where his contemporary Gustave Courbet finds inspiration to paint his realistic art. Further to the south the Source du Lison [5] can be found. There, a small stream with the same name jumps away from the mountain cave, now a tourist attraction. Once there was a watermill. After a cascade with the Conche this water joins the Loue.



1 France



2 Surroundings of Amondans

Coste refers to these places in his compositions *La Vallée d'Ornans* opus 17 (1852), *Souvenir(s) du Jura* opus 44 (1876) and *La Source du Lyson* opus 47 (1878). At distance to the north-east are the banks

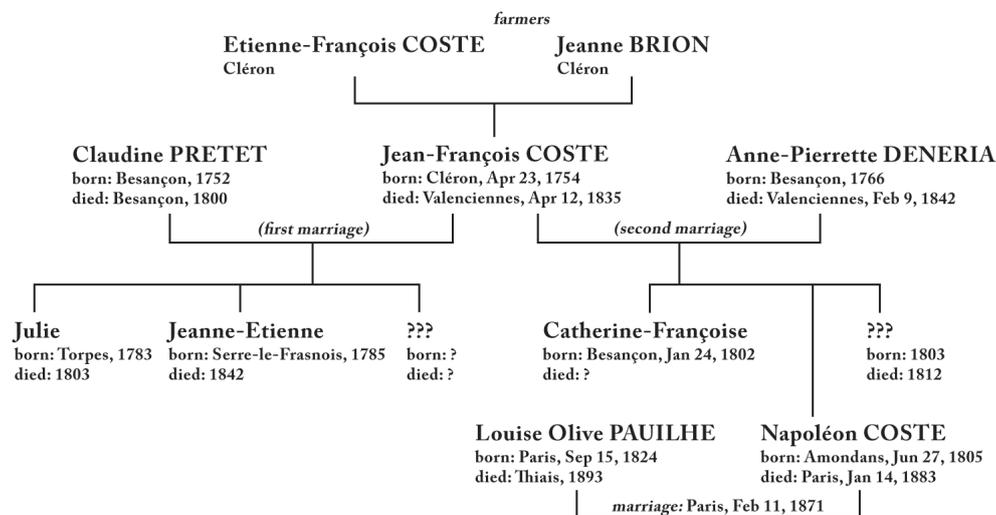
<sup>1</sup> Dossier J.F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 02]: 'Nous membres du conseil d'administration certifions que le citoyen, J. François Coste, Géomètre a été élu Capitaine le 12 août 1792. Ensoi de quoi nous lui avons délivré le présent, au camp près Mayenne, le 7 Prairéal 3<sup>me</sup> année de la République française.'

## II Caprice

*We now number 5 soldiers, including my son, who, only eight years old, armed himself with a good saddle pistol and has \very well/ done the guard duty with us and is continuing.<sup>23</sup>*

### AMONDANS 1805-1809

The small village of Amondans is situated in the rural countryside along the river Loue, which flows through the town of Ornans, some ten kilometers further on. In present-day Europe, expressing this distance in kilometers is a matter of course, but the metric system that this unit of measurement is part of had only been introduced by the French revolutionists in 1798 in France and still new in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today Amondans has some 100 houses, most of them in the town, some in the neighborhood.<sup>24</sup> At the time it would not have been very different. Here Napoléon Coste was born in 1805 as the first and only son of Jean-François Coste (1754-1835) and Anne Pierrette Dénéria (1766-1842). Coste's father is 51 years old now and a retired officer of the Napoleonic army. He is chosen mayor of Amondans in 1803 and he lives with his family in the *mairie*, the same town hall whose present tenant (in 2005) says it still is functioning in this way. Other members of the family are 3-year-old daughter Cathérine-Françoise and the three daughters from Coste's first marriage with Claudine Pretet (1752-1800), Julie, 22 years of age at this point, Jeanne-Étienne, 20 years and Jeanne-Pierrette, 16 years.



6 Genealogy Napoléon Coste (based on Roncet, exhibition Amondans, 2005)

This presentation of the genealogy of Coste seems well-ordered, but in reality it is more complex. It might be the case that Julie dies in Amondans November 20, 1803. In that case there are four children in 1805, a fact that concurs a letter dated May 16, 1810 from Coste's father to the ministry in which he writes of 'a wife and four children.'<sup>25</sup> But when he mentions 'the death of one of my daughters' in a letter to the ministry dated July 28, 1812, requested to be transferred away from Rochefort, where he is stationed at the time,<sup>26</sup> the question remains open which daughter this can be. In 1835 Jeanne-Étienne

<sup>23</sup> Dossier J. F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 28]: 'Nous sommes alors au nombre de 5 Combattants y compris mon fils qui, âgé de 8 ans seulement, s'est armé d'un bon pistolet d'arçon et a \ fort bien / fait avec nous le service de surveillance et il continue.'

<sup>24</sup> The author visited Amondans and Ornans in 2002 and in 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Dossier J.F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 50]: '[...] avec une femme et quatre enfants [...]'].

<sup>26</sup> Dossier J.F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 34]: '[...] la mort d'une de mes filles [...]'].

### III

## *Thème varié*

*Last Saturday's concert deserves a separate mention, nevertheless. M. Coste had the good spirit to appeal to the legs as well as to the ears, and the announcement of a final ball did not make a little contribution to the raising of the box-office money.<sup>60</sup>*

### VALENCIENNES 1815-1828

From Holland Captain Coste and Napoléon, his son of eight years, eventually arrive at Lille on June 9, 1814. His wife and the other children go there too. The family is reunited and temporarily stays in Hôtel d'Angleterre. As an ex-commander the captain awaits new orders and meanwhile asks for the decoration he is keen on, apparently. Because he is out of active service, his salary is halved, which causes financial problems.<sup>61</sup> These are hard times for him and for his family, the future is uncertain, the political circumstances unstable. Then Napoléon Bonaparte's last action comes. He escapes from Elba in February 1815, lands in the south of France and marches north with a couple of followers. On the way he meets the French army in la Mure, which is searching for him, and he succeeds to win them to his side in a theatrical scene. In March he arrives at Paris. Captain Coste then is appointed adjudant first class in Valenciennes in the Douai district, département du Nord, where he arrives at the end of May 1815.<sup>62</sup>



14 Valenciennes, plan 19th C.

<sup>60</sup> *Petites Affiches*, Valenciennes: 6<sup>e</sup> Année, 28 III 1827, no. 556, p. 545: 'Le concert de samedi dernier mérite cependant une mention particulière. M. Coste a eu le bon esprit d'intéresser les jambes en même temps que les oreilles, et l'annonce d'un bal à la suite, n'a pas peu contribué à grossir la recette.'

<sup>61</sup> Dossier J.F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 68]: 'Lille le 25 juin 1814 [...] Coste a ministre de la guerre.'

<sup>62</sup> Dossier J.F. Coste, Château de Vincennes, 24<sup>e</sup> 815 [Item 17]: '[...] nommé adjudant de première classe pour la place de Valenciennes - Je me mettrai en roule pour me rendre à mon poste au plutard le 22 du courant [...].'

## *Intermezzo I*

*In the past the guitar was a poor instrument, meant to accompany the singing of a romance or an ariette with some plucking. Since then the works of several distinguished artists have given it a greater importance in music, but in this endeavor no one has succeeded in making use of as many resources as M. Sor.<sup>103</sup>*

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Not only did the French Revolution upend the entire social status quo in France, it also is of importance to musical life in Paris, which had been dominated by the nobility. After 1789 it becomes increasingly structured and as regards contents also becomes subject to regulation by the new revolutionary state. After the revolution every person is equal to the law and titles of nobility vested by birth are abolished. However, in his *Code civil* of 1814 Napoléon Bonaparte states that some people may earn such a title by merit. As a result some 3,200 people receive titles of nobility, only 22.5% of them from the old nobility, a fact that makes the return to royalism impossible.<sup>104</sup> The influence of the Revolution clears the way to fast growth in public concert life. Private concert life is in the hands of the upperclass consisting of industrialists and practitioners of free professions, but of some of the nobility too. The new difference between light and serious music that comes into existence, brings citizens and aristocracy together in matters of musical taste, crossing boundaries of social class.<sup>105</sup>

When Coste arrives in Paris, at the end of 1828 or the beginning of 1829, the city is on the threshold of great developments. After the Restoration of 1814 Charles X rules France from 1824, but he gives way to Louis-Philippe I in the Revolution of July 1830. Coste writes a song on that subject, and Carulli also composes a guitar piece on 'Les Trois Glorieuses' [the three days of glory], the name under which this event entered history. The city then is far from being modelled by Baron Haussmann's radical changes, which take place between 1852 and 1870, and it still has the moderate suburban size in the center.<sup>106</sup> But by 1846 the population has grown from around 750,000 inhabitants to 1 million citizens. Moreover, there are many developments in infrastructure that change the daily life of the Parisians dramatically. Transport of passengers still is by diligence (public stagecoach) under the monopoly of Caillard. The omnibus appears in 1828 with 100 carriages for 14 passengers at 25c per seat for everyone. Paris has to wait until 1835 for its first railway station West; until 1846 the city has three railway stations only, Saint Lazare, Montparnasse and Jardin des Plantes. The Gare du Nord is opened in 1846, whereafter Gare de Lyon and Gare de l'Est follow in 1849, the last in Coste's neighborhood. At the end of 1828 Napoléon Coste will have travelled from Valenciennes to Paris by diligence. Traffic in the city always is difficult, with carriages, wheelbarrows, and pedestrians crowding each other out. The roads are paved with cobblestones until 1800, when Rambuteau replaces them by 'macadam', crushed stone. Water is supplied by canals and the Seine or drawn from wells. The food supply is arranged at the famous Halles and many marketplaces. For defense the city is surrounded by many walls, almost making Paris a prison: 'Le mur murant Paris rend Paris murmurant' [the wall that walls about Paris makes Paris murmur].

<sup>103</sup> *Revue musicale de Paris*, tome I, mars 1827, p. 124: 'La guitare était autrefois un pauvre instrument destiné à soutenir par quelques harpèges le chant d'une romance ou d'une ariette. Les travaux de plusieurs artistes distingués lui ont donné depuis une plus grande importance dans la musique; mais personne n'a su trouver autant de ressources que M. Sor.'

<sup>104</sup> Johnson, James H.: *Listening in Paris: a cultural history*, Berkeley, University of Berkeley Press, 1995, p. 229.

<sup>105</sup> Weber, William: *Music and the Middle Class, The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1975, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2004, p. 80-86; Weber, William: *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 90-91.

<sup>106</sup> Gaillard, Jeanne: *Paris, la ville, 1852-1870, l'urbanisme Parisien à l'heure d'Haussman...*[sic], Paris, Honoré Champion, 1977, p. 47-48.

## IV

### *Aux Parisiens*

*In the province the guitar often is the instrument of the intimate music. The great progress it has made, prove that talented artists do not cease to be engaged with it. M. Coste walks with dignity in the tracks of the famous guitarists. He is distinguished by his excellent style, pure and with crisp. It is a very sublime musical sentiment that the guitar imputes him, and, in this respect, he has much in common with Sor: he approaches him as a performing artist and as a composer.<sup>193</sup>*

#### CONTACTS 1829

Paris is a sparkling city, full of musical activities, when young Napoléon Coste, as an onrushing guitar talent, arrives there at the turn of the year 1828-1829, and settles in the rue Bleue no. 28. This street begins at the rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière no. 67 and ends at the rue La Fayette no. 72 in the 9<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris. At the time it is 250 meters long and 10 meters wide. Rue Bleue is a continuation of the rue du Paradis and is therefore also called 'rue de l'Enfer.' Much later, in 1859 the rue La Fayette is widened, for which the last houses of rue Bleue had to give way, among them no. 28.<sup>194</sup> In 1818 Fétis lives in an apartment in rue Bleue no. 18 and in 1830 the office of the *Revue musicale de Paris* is located there, almost next to Coste's address.<sup>195</sup>

The Conservatoire in the rue du Faubourg Poissonnière no. 11 is around the corner, where Coste, according to a note on the title page of the issue, played his *Le Tournoi* opus 15, and his *Fantaisie 'Norma'* opus 16, but by then he already lives in the rue de l'Échiquier.<sup>196</sup> Richault, who publishes the first works of Coste, opus 2, 3, 5 and 7, is located at no.16. This publisher remains important to Coste, editing another ten works by him later.<sup>197</sup> According to Planque's *Agenda musical* in 1836 Coste lives in rue Bleue no. 28 as a *professeur de guitare*, which is curious because he lives in the rue du Vieux-Colombier no. 25 from 1832 on. Did Planque made a mistake, or has he copied old information? In this almanac Coste is in the company of Castellacci, Carulli, Huerta, Ledhuy, a party where the names of Aguado, Carcassi, Molino and Sor are strikingly missing. Lacôte is active as a luthier in the rue de Louvois.<sup>198</sup> In the 1837 edition Planque is far more extensive: the list of guitar teachers there includes 25 gentlemen and 7 ladies, for piano that is 144 and 173, both sexes being neatly distinguished. He also gives an indication of prices of instruments; a Mirecourt guitar costs 20 to 40 fr., but a guitar can be hired for 3 to 10 fr. a month.<sup>199</sup> Coste settles in a district that is important for Parisian musical life. One might expect that the young man, once arrived in Paris, tries to make contacts, on the one hand with people he knows, musicians who came from Valenciennes to Paris such as the Tilmant brothers, violinist Lecointe and female singer Dorus-Gras, and on the other hand with established

<sup>193</sup> *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, vol. V, no. 18, 6 V 1838, Nouvelles, p. 190: 'La guitare est souvent en province l'instrument de la musique intime. Les grands progrès qu'elle a faits attestent que d'habiles artistes n'ont pas cessé de s'en occuper. M. Coste marche dignement sur les traces des guitaristes célèbres. Ce qui le distingue, c'est un excellent style, pur, gracieux et nerveux; c'est un sentiment musical plus élevé que la guitare ne le suppose, et, à cet égard, il a beaucoup d'analogie avec Sor: il se rapproche de lui comme exécutant et comme compositeur.'

<sup>194</sup> Leconte, André, ed.: *Plan de Paris par Arrondissement*, Paris, 1977, p. 16. plan O7.

<sup>195</sup> Hillairet, Jacques: *Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1963-1972, p. 9-45, plan 1808, p. 202; *Revue musicale*, tome I, vol. 7, no. 7, 1830.

<sup>196</sup> Gardeton, César: *Bibliographie musicale de la France et de l'étranger*, Paris, 1822, repr. Genève, Minkoff, 1978, p. 530: 'Conservatoire de musique [...] rue du faubourg Poissonnière n. 11'.

<sup>197</sup> Devriès, Anik & François Lesure: *Dictionnaire des éditeurs de musique français*, vol. II, De 1820, Genève, Minkoff, 1979, p. 365, 395.

<sup>198</sup> Planque: *Agenda musical pour l'année 1836*, Paris, 1836, repr. Genève, Minkoff, 1981, p. 63: 'Professeurs de guitare: Castellacci, Carulli, Coste, rue Bleue, 28, Huerta.'; p. 158: 'Luthiers: Lacote, r. de Louvois, 10'; p. 186: 'Guitare: Aguado, Carcassi, Carulli, Castellacci'; p. 265: 'Guitare: Aguado, Carcassi, Carulli, Castellacci, Piano: Chopin'.

<sup>199</sup> Planque: *Agenda musical...3<sup>e</sup> Année, 1837*, Paris, 1837, repr. Genève, Minkoff, 1981, p. 279: 'Guitares à six cordes, 60 fr., Les guitares communes de Mirecourt varient de prix de 20 à 40 fr.'; p. 285: 'Location (au mois): Guitare, de 3 à 10 fr.'

## V

### Souvenirs

*What to say about the concert given by M. Napoléon Coste. Despite the decline into which the guitar has fallen, this intrepid guitarist persists in the study of this instrument with a laudable perseverance. He has performed twice and was listened to with the greatest attention. If there aren't a great number of guitar amateurs, there is, nevertheless, a substantial audience to applaud this skillful guitarist, as a compensation. M. Coste is first class; he plays with an unbelievable speed and a perfect purity.*<sup>375</sup>

#### REPUTATION 1840

In the years of his youth in Valenciennes a total of six concerts are found in the sources in which Coste played as a guitarist. In the early period in Paris, between 1828 and 1839, another six concerts are found in which it is almost certain Coste participated. Still, these are mixed concerts and there are not too many of them, but it is very likely Coste, as a budding talent, played in many more, of which there is no report in the early musical press. Sor, for instance, is known to have played in 27 concerts in Paris between 1828 and 1838, which is not very many for a celebrity like him.<sup>376</sup> The information available remains the starting point for sketching the situation concerning concerts in this period and the position that the guitar as an instrument – and Coste as a guitarist – has in them. Liszt continues the solo concert which was introduced by Paganini in 1831, but this was not a general practice. He starts with these in London in 1840, where his solo concerts are given the name 'recital', after the custom of reciting poems by heart.<sup>377</sup> In Paris he calls it a *soliloque musical* or *monologue de piano* on April 20, 1840.<sup>378</sup> There are no solo concerts for guitar, but 17 mixed concerts take place in the period between 1840 and 1855 in which Coste demonstrably participates. Another eight will come after this, which brings the total of concerts by Coste in Paris up to 31. This is very few for such a long period and it is therefore of great importance to discuss these and determine what he has played in them, first to draw the relation with his works and then to determine to which musical circles he is associated with. After the departure of Aguado and the death of Sor he now is on his own, so to speak. The only guitarists active in Paris are Carulli, Molino and Carcassi – from the Classic generation – and Castellacci and Huerta – from the Romantic generation – as far as a clear artistic distinction between the two generations can be made.

The first concert in which Coste plays in 1840 is an afternoon performance, organized by M. Laurelli, on clarinet and Mme Laurelli, on the piano, in Petzold's salon, on Sunday, February 16. *Le Ménestrel* writes:

*[...] the musical matinee was very interesting. [...] The instrumental part consisted of a solo for guitar by M. Coste, an air varié for clarinet by M. Laurelli and a duet for harp and piano, in a perfect performance by M. La Rivière and Mme Laurelli.*<sup>379</sup>

<sup>375</sup> *La France musicale*, vol. V, no. 15, 17 IV 1842, p. 153: 'Que vous dire du concert donné par M. Napoléon Coste. Ce guitariste intrépide, malgré le dépérissement où est tombée la guitare, poursuit avec une louable persévérance l'étude de cet instrument. Deux fois il s'est fait entendre et il a été écouté avec le plus intérêt. S'il n'y a pas un grand nombre d'amateurs de guitare, il y a au moins un public nombreux pour applaudir l'habile guitariste, c'est là une compensation. M. Coste est de première force; il joue avec une incroyable agilité et une pureté parfaite.'

<sup>376</sup> Jeffery, Brian: 'Fernando Sor, concert performer', in: *Guitar Review*, New York, The Society of the Classic Guitar, no. 39, summer 1974, p. 8-10; *Revue musicale de Paris*, 1829 tome V, p. 115, 181, 240, 304, 351; 1831, tome IV, p. 71, 96, 1832, vol. VI, p. 21, 31, 60, 63, 150; 1835, vol. IX, p. 61-62; *La France musicale*, 1838, vol. I, no. 16, p. 5-7.

<sup>377</sup> Weber, William: *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 158-160.

<sup>378</sup> Eigeldinger, Jean-Jacques: 'Introduction'; Bailbé, Joseph Marc: 'La critique musicale au *Journal des Débats*' in: Bailbé [et al]: *La musique en France à l'époque romantique (1830-1870)*, Paris, Flammarion, 1991, p. 12-13, 81.

<sup>379</sup> *Le Ménestrel*, vol. VII, no. 12, 16 II 1840, p. [4]: 'Aujourd'hui dimanche [...] Laurelli [...] matinée musicale [...] salons Petzold,'; no. 13, 23 II 1840, p. [4]: '[...] a été très intéressante. [...] La partie instrumentale a été remplie par un solo de guitare de M. Coste, un air varié pour clarinette. par M. Laurelli, et un duo de harpe et de piano, supérieurement exécuté par M. La Rivière et Mme Laurelli.'

## VI

### *Grande Sérénade*

*In 1856 Monsieur de Makaroff, a Russian nobleman, opened a competition in Brussels in which all European guitarists were invited [...] J. Mertz from Vienna, who died after entering his works, had four votes for first prize, against three that were given to Nap. Coste from Paris for the second prize. Due to Mertz's death, Napoléon Coste is left as the only remaining prize-winner of this European competition.*<sup>569</sup>

#### MEMOIRS

After Nicolai de Makaroff makes the acquaintance of Napoléon Coste in 1851 in Paris, he continues his travel through Europe, searching for guitarists, luthiers and composers who are also guitarists at the time. He gives account of this in his memoirs, which were published between 1859 and 1882 in different editions in the Russian language. They are a very subjective source of information on the world of the guitar halfway through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Parts of these memoirs, which are important for the guitar, are published for the first time in 1910 in *Der Gitarrefreund*,<sup>570</sup> in a translation in German, with summaries and citations, and later in 1946 in *The Guitar Review* in a direct translation into English.<sup>571</sup> Matanya Opee gives his opinion on these memoirs in 1982, with the addition of parts that were not translated until then, and he sheds a different light upon certain things.<sup>572</sup> From these sources an image can be given of the events that were of great importance to Coste, in particular his way of composing.

In his travel record Makaroff devotes a short paragraph to Coste, in contrast with the many long ones dedicated to Mertz, and he draws the conclusion that he had met many guitarists on his trip, of which just a few made a profound impression on him: Zani de Ferranti, Schulz, Ciebra and Mertz. Nevertheless, somewhat earlier he wrote that he had left London without making the acquaintance of Regondi and Ciebra, impressed as he was by Schulz. His memoirs have more inconsistencies, such as Stauffer living in Prague.<sup>573</sup> He somehow ordered guitars from Scherzer and Fischer, which he happily unpacks back in Russia. He does not like Fischer's guitar, but he finds Scherzer's ten-string guitar to be excellent. He is in continuous correspondence with Mertz. He has bought five of his compositions, which he takes along and studies. In his reflections on the journey it saddens him that he must draw the conclusion, despite his keen interest in the guitar, that the instrument has come to the end of its existence. He realizes that the pianoforte is being improved and developed, just as other, less important instruments. But no one seems to have any serious interest in improving the guitar, he complains, and he wonders if the guitar has really been lost forever. He thinks a competition can provide an important source of motivation, bringing progress in all sectors of human enterprise. In this way he gets the idea of holding a competition. With a sort of painful hope he embarks on this endeavor.

<sup>569</sup> Coste, Napoléon: 'Sérénade opus 30', in: Wynberg, Simon: *The Guitar Works of Napoleon Coste*, facsimile edition, Monaco, 1981, vol. IV, p. 51: 'En 1856 a été ouvert à Bruxelles par Mr. de Makaroff, noble Seigneur Russe, un concours auquel ont été conviés tous les guitaristes de l'Europe [...] J. Mertz de Vienne, mort depuis l'envoi de ses oeuvres, a obtenu 4 voix pour le premier prix contre 3 qui ont été données à Nap. Coste de Paris et lui ont valu le second prix. Par le fait du décès de Mertz, Napoléon Coste est donc resté l'unique lauréat de ce concours Européen.'

<sup>570</sup> Makarow (Stockmann) (Stockhausen?) 'Aus den Lebenserinnerungen des russischen Gitarrevirtuosen N. P. Makarow', in: *Der Gitarrefreund, Mitteilungen der Gitarristischen Vereinigung*, 11. Jahrgang 1910, Heft 6 p. 43-45; 12. Jahrgang, 1911 Heft 1 p. 1-3; Heft 2 p. 11-13; Heft 3 p. 23-25; Heft 4 p. 35-37; Heft 5 p. 45-47;... [H. 6 fehlt im Bestand].

<sup>571</sup> Makaroff, Nikolai Petrovich de: 'The Memoirs of Makaroff', in: *The Guitar Review*, New York, The Society of the Classic Guitar, 1946-48, (vol. I reprint 1974/1975) no. 1, 1946, p. 10-12, no. 2, 1947, p. 32-34, no. 3, 1947, p. 56-59, no. 5, 1948, p. 109-113.

<sup>572</sup> Opee, Matanya: 'The Memoirs of Makaroff, A Second Look', in: *Soundboard*, the journal of the Guitar Foundation of America, vol. IX, no. 3, 1982, p. 226-233.

<sup>573</sup> Makaroff, N. de: 'The Memoirs of Makaroff', in: *The Guitar Review*, no. 1, 1946, p. 10-12, no. 2 p. 56-59; Opee, M.: 'The Memoirs of Makaroff, A Second Look', in: *Soundboard*, vol. IX, no. 3, 1982, p. 232.

## *Intermezzo II*

*The instrument was even a sort of favorite in France and Italy; but for some time now it has started to become neglected everywhere, or completely abandoned for some time in favor of the piano, whose perfection and well-earned popularity grows by the day.*<sup>643</sup>

### ECONOMY

In the same way that in the first intermezzo the year 1828, when Coste arrived in Paris, was taken as the point of reference for examining the musical world and the world outside it, the year 1856 will be the point of departure for this second intermezzo. This is the year in which Coste participates in the Makaroff competition, travelling to Brussels to submit his compositions. His entries prove to be among his very best compositions, he wins a prize in the competition and returns with this honor to the splendid city where he has resided for the past 28 years. There he has proved his worth on the concert scene and belongs to a musical network of musicians, composers and publishers, as well as Freemasons, either in an organized fashion or informally. He gives private lesson, but also has a job at the Caisse Municipale in Paris as an administrator. In Paris after 1848, the day-to-day circumstances have changed, as have circumstances in the musical world, at times gradually, sometimes abruptly. And unlike the period before 1828, considering that Coste now belongs to that world, the situation can be related directly to him.

In 1845, a mediocre grain harvest in France leads to depleted stocks, while at the same time continuing rains aggravate the outbreak potato blight. The following year an exceptional drought causes a poor grain harvest, leading to rising prices, including that of bread. The agricultural crisis is reflected in the cost of living, which for a laborer between 1845 and 1847 rises 13%, which is followed by an industrial and political crisis. In 1848, grain harvest and wine production are good and prices are low, but the economic crisis continues, profits from agriculture are minimal and drop even further as the industrial crisis continues and unemployment remains high. These problems are exacerbated by that year's cholera epidemic, which claims thousands of lives, but which spares Coste. This situation contributes to the creation of the revolution of 1848, which brings the Deuxième République to power, and the coup of 1851, in spite of the fact that food prices have dropped 21% thanks to good harvests. In 1852, the Second Empire allows the economy to quickly pick up again. Various measures encourage taking out credit and undertaking large projects, especially the construction of new railways and urban development.<sup>644</sup> But the salaries of staff and instructors at the conservatory have hardly changed since 1830. In 1830 Cherubini earns 8,000 fr. a year as a director. Similarly, Auber, a voice instructor, earns 2,000 fr. in both 1830 and 1855, while the violin instructor Baillot earns 2,000 fr. in 1830 and Alard earns 1,200 fr. in 1855.<sup>645</sup> The Crimean War has a greater impact than just disrupting the planned Makaroff competition and grain imports, causing severe food shortages in 1856; the cost of living for the man in the street rises 33% since 1851. The situation bounces back and forth between prosperity and adversity, and there are large fluctuations in the economy. A good harvest and the end of the Crimean War, after which grain imports resume, lead to a sharp decline in food prices, but then comes a financial crisis. This new crisis does not last long: in 1859 the economy is back on the road to recovery.

<sup>643</sup> Soullier, Charles: *Nouveau dictionnaire de musique illustré...*, Paris, Bazault, 1855, p. 140: 'Cet instrument avait même joui de quelque faveur en France et en Italie; mais il commence depuis quelque temps à être partout un peu négligé ou délaissé entièrement pour le piano, dont le perfectionnement et la popularité méritée redoublent de jour en jour.'

<sup>644</sup> Singer-Kerel, J.: *Le coût de la vie à Paris de 1840 à 1954*, Paris, A. Colin, 1961, p. 98.

<sup>645</sup> Pierre, Constant: *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation: documents historiques et administratifs*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1900, p. 420, 425.

## VII

### *Études de Genre*

*How much I now regret returning to my post after the contest. I should have left that miserable job and travelled. The success I had just obtained would have been an excellent passport. Anyway, such was God's will.*<sup>689</sup>

#### RETURN 1856

Napoléon Coste is 51 years old when he returns to Paris with his laurels from the Makaroff competition in December 1856. There he resumes his activities again: as a private guitar instructor; as a composer, writing and publishing his works; as a guitarist, participating in concerts; but also as an administrator at the Préfecture de la Seine, fulfilling tasks that were anything but artistic. He describes his regrets about this in his letter of June 15, 1858 to Søffren Degen. Coste should have capitalized on his award by travelling across the music world of Europe as a virtuoso guitarist as others had before him – Huerta, Zani de Ferranti, Szczepanowski – and he now sees that as a missed opportunity. There are various factors that may have led him to this decision. Coste has established himself in the artistic circles of the *Société académique des Enfants d'Apollon* and the *Frères Unis Inséparables*, in which he is surrounded by other composers and musicians. He plays music with them and gives concerts with them, at least this is recorded one time at the Masonic lodge, in 1852. He also has pupils who afford him a certain amount of income security, pupils with a high standard of musical ability, as evidenced by the études that he writes for them and that he dedicates to them. Paris is also the best city for publishing his prize-winning works, as must have been obvious to him. But Coste shows his humility when he writes of his 'feeble genius as a composer and artist.'<sup>690</sup> And that may partially underlie his decision to remain in Paris. Moreover, he is not a traveler, as he says himself.<sup>691</sup> And then there is Louise Olive Pauilhé, a pupil who plays an important role in his life, and whom he finally marries in 1871.<sup>692</sup> She is already mentioned in 1840 as being his pupil, when Coste dedicates his Caprice *La Cachucha* opus 13 to her. The publication of *La Chasse des Sylphes* opus 29, of the winning *Sérénade* opus 30 and of *Le Départ* opus 31 was all handled by Girod, the latter two of which, in any case, appeared in 1857. Coste worked with great accuracy: the editions turn up very few printing errors, as Simon Wynberg indicates in the photographic reprinting of them in 1981.<sup>693</sup> Girod has his office at boulevard Montmartre no. 16, while Coste lives not far away at rue de Calais no. 11, in the same arrondissement, Opéra, which is now intersected by the new boulevard Haussmann, or where major construction work on the intersection is underway, in any case, extending the boulevard Montmartre diagonally through that district.

#### CONCERTS 1856-1858

A short time before the review of June 6, 1858, Ciebra plays in the Salle de Beethoven:

*M. José de Ciebra, a Spanish nobleman and guitarist, plays a very nice fantasy on Donizetti's Lucrezia Borgia.*<sup>694</sup>

<sup>689</sup> Coste-Degen, 15 VI 1858, Århus, Statsbiblioteket, Søffren Degens Papirer, Manuscript no. 27b, p. 3: 'Combien je regrette maintenant d'être revenu à mon poste après le concours! j'aurais dû quitter ce misérable emploi à cette époque et me mettre à voyager. Le succès que je venais d'obtenir était pour moi un excellent passeport. enfin, Dieu l'a voulu.'

<sup>690</sup> Coste-Degen, 15 VI 1858, Århus, Statsbiblioteket, Søffren Degens Papirer, Manuscript no. 27b, p. 1: '[...] mon faible génie de compositeur et d'artiste.'

<sup>691</sup> Coste-Degen, 17 VI 1863, Århus, Statsbiblioteket, Søffren Degens Papirer, Manuscript no. 27b, p. 4: '[...] vous. savez que je ne suis pas voyageur, [...]'].

<sup>692</sup> Paris, Archives de Paris, *Acte de mariage Napoléon Coste & Louise Olive Pauilhé*, 11 I 1871, Série V2E 5Mi 3/210.

<sup>693</sup> Wynberg, Simon: *The Guitar Works of Napoléon Coste*, facsimile edition, Monaco, 1981, vol. IV, commentary.

<sup>694</sup> *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, vol. XIV, no. 23, 6 I 1858, p. 190: 'M. José de Ciebra, noble espagnol et guitariste, jouant une fort jolie fantaisie sur la romance de la Lucrezia Borgia, de Donizetti.'

## VIII

### *Divagation*

*We are also sorry to announce the death of M. Napoléon Coste, the excellent guitarist-composer: he was 78 years of age. Up to the end of his career he kept his passion for his art, and, not too long ago, he published the Livre d'Or des Guitaristes, an important work, worthy of the musicians attention.*<sup>821</sup>

#### CONCERTS 1873-1876

In this period of Coste's final years, the life in Paris of the composer and guitarist can be followed closely, in every year events emerge from the sources, worth-while mentioning, such as concerts, publications and letters. From these, an image of his life can be sketched, even better when he models his memories in his programmatic works. In the period between 1857 and 1872, 20 concerts with guitar were found, apart from the 2 in which Coste participated, but now there are only 3 concerts found in the literature, with Jaime Bosch and Francisco Tárrega, apart from the 7 with Coste. Bosch, the Spanish guitarist, who settled in Paris in 1861, is still active in giving concerts, such as on April 6, 1873 and April 5, 1874.<sup>822</sup> In this period, these are all the concerts with guitar that could be found in the musical press, which is represented principally by the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, until 1880, and *Le Ménestrel*, with 8 pages now, but without the initial chanson. The issues of *La Presse musicale*, *L'art musical* and *Le Monde Artiste* could not be found. The last volume of *La France musicale* appeared in 1870. According to this information, presuming that the reviews represent the real number of concerts, the guitar appears to have been vanished from the concert stage in Paris. On top of this, Trinidad Huerta died in Paris on June 19, 1874, the Spanish guitarist who always was very active in concerts during his presence there, with whom an important representative has gone.<sup>823</sup> Coste complains about the popularity of the piano:

*I do not deny that the piano is a tremendously powerful instrument on which some admirable music is played. The power pianists have is mighty. They play thousands of notes at a dizzying speed. [...] It's a horrible epidemic. Since one doesn't need a musical organization to play the piano, anyone can do so, either well or poorly, leading to this endless craze. In every house you hear this atrocious instrument being clanked on from the basement to the attic. In the building we live in there are only three of them, and we are quite fortunate that they are seldom played, but one hears a lot of them in the distance in the neighborhood.*<sup>824</sup>

The 'guitar mania' is superseded by the 'piano mania'. But Coste gives concerts as well. According to reports and his own letters, in 1874 he suffers a heavy fall from a stairway and dislocates his left shoulder blade, making him feel the need to ask his superiors at the Préfecture de la Seine for a 25-day leave of absence on July 30 so he can undergo hydrotherapy to alleviate the pain.<sup>825</sup> However, that does not keep him from participating in the monthly, members-only concert of the *Société académique*

<sup>821</sup> *Le Ménestrel*, vol. 49, no. 9, 28 I 1883, p. [8]: 'Nous avons le regret d'annoncer aussi la mort de M. Napoléon Coste, éminent guitariste-compositeur: il était âgé de 78 ans. Jusqu'à la fin de sa carrière, il avait gardé la passion de son art et, il y a peu de temps encore, il publiait le Livre d'or des Guitaristes, ouvrage important et digne de l'attention des musiciens.'

<sup>822</sup> *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, vol. XXVIII, no. 9, 3 III 1861, p. 70: 'M. Bosch, le célèbre guitariste est de retour à Paris'; vol. XL, no. 14, 6 IV 1873, p. 110: '[...] concert guitariste Bosch'; vol. XLI, no. 14, 5 IV 1874, p. 110: '[...] guitariste Espagnol J. Bosch'.

<sup>823</sup> Coldwell, Robert: *A.T. Huerta, Life and Works*, DGA Editions, 2006, p. 51.

<sup>824</sup> Coste-Schult, 20 VII 1876: 'Je ne nie pas que le piano ne soit un instrument d'une puissance formidable et sur lequel on joue d'admirable musique. La force des pianistes est prodigieuse. Ils font des myriades de notes avec une rapidité que vous donne le vertige. [...] C'est une affreuse épidémie. Comme il n'est pas nécessaire pour jouer du piano d'avoir une organisation musicale, chacun peut en jouer bien et mal. De là une manie sans fin. Dans toutes les maisons de la cave au grenier on entend tapoter cet affreux instrument. Dans la maison que nous habitons il n'y en a que trois et fort heureusement on les joue peu, mais on entend beaucoup au loin dans le voisinage.'

<sup>825</sup> Jaworski, Roman: 'Napoléon Coste 1805-1883, une histoire perdue', in: *Valentiana*, Valenciennes, 1992, no. 10, p. 77; Roncet, Noël: *Napoléon Coste, Compositeur, 1805-1883*, Amondans, 2005, p. 26.

## IX *Finale*

*Here it is no longer merely a matter of a description, but a secret, indescribable connection between the melody and the sheer immensity of the mountain, and everything this immensity touches in the deepest recesses of our soul. [...] One should hardly endeavor to dissect its phrases or to claim that an analysis of a melody or a chord progression led one to discover the hidden cause that makes this art such a marvelous interpreter of our feelings, an art that evokes both a spectacle and the soul it embodies.*<sup>955</sup>

### RECEPTION 1884-1992

In the years 1884 through 1992, ten authors of manuals, guitar histories and articles, have written a shorter or longer review of Napoléon Coste's works. In 1884 Richard Lämpke writes that the person who made the connection between the old era and the new era has gone with Coste, the man who was personally in contact with people whom we now only can admire through their works.<sup>956</sup> After the turn of the century, Shtokman writes an article on Coste in *Der Gitarrefreund* in 1902, in which he makes a plea to save the works of the greatest French guitarist from oblivion. He also gives an explanation for the lamentable turn in public opinion in a way that disfavors the guitar. Certain individuals appeared who, using their self-appointed authority, took pains to discredit the noble instrument in their words and writings. This prevented Coste's compositions from reaching a wide audience.<sup>957</sup> Shtokman is followed by Fritz Buek, who in 1926 draws the conclusion that the guitar's heyday in France ends with Coste's departure.<sup>958</sup> One year later, Erwin Schwarz-Reiflingen writes extensively about Coste's musical influence, and he is very creative and admiring in his description. The line of guitarists from the instrument's zenith in the previous century comes to an end with Napoléon Coste. As an artist and a musician he matured quite late. A variety of different styles are audible in his compositions, in which French elements alternate with Italian, German and Spanish influences. Coste is truly an exponent of his era. His works are mainly Romantic in their themes and the expression of the sentiment they represent, they are Romantic in his pursuit of the program and his dramatic instrumentation, influenced by Berlioz, and they are 'Coste-like' due to his working method, in which the various style elements are brought together. They are not graced with Sor's clarity of expression, and yet they are full of admirable qualities, which often are of the same artistic standard as Sor's.<sup>959</sup> According to Mario Giordano, who in 1934 has a very lyrical way of writing, the special quality in Coste's music comes about from the perfect balance between idea and technique, a characteristic that is also present in Chopin's and Wieniawski's music. In this way, if Chopin can be called 'pianistic', and Wieniawski 'violinistic', Coste appears to us as being completely 'guitaristic'. His art is grounded in a tremendous enthusiasm, connected to a profound musical culture possessed only by Sor among the guitarists. Giordano thinks that all this makes Coste one of the best representative personalities in the history of the guitar and one of the most interesting musicians of the past century.<sup>960</sup> José de Azpiazu writes briefly about Coste in 1959, saying

<sup>955</sup> Koechlin, Ch.: 'Les tendances de la musique moderne Française', in: Lavignac, Albert: *Encyclopédie de la musique...*, Paris, Delagrave, 1925, p. 63: 'Il ne s'agit plus ici d'une simple description, mais d'une secrète, indéfinissable correspondance entre la mélodie, et l'immensité de la montagne, et tout ce que cette immensité remue au plus profond de nous. [...] Il ne faudrait point s'aviser d'en vouloir disséquer les phrases; ni de prétendre, par l'analyse, d'une mélodie ou d'une suite d'accords, découvrir les raisons cachées qui font de cet art l'interprète merveilleux de nos sentiments, l'évocatéur à la fois d'un spectacle et de ce qu'il contient d'âme.' [concerning Berlioz's Scène aux champs].

<sup>956</sup> Lämpke, Richard: 'Biographie Napoléon Coste' in: *Internationale Gitarre-Zeitung*, Jahrgang I, no. 4 (Jan.1884), no. 5 (Febr.1884), Leipzig, transcr. Eduard Fack, 'Die Meister', unpag. p. 119.

<sup>957</sup> Stockmann, J. [Shtokman]: 'Napoléon Coste', in: *Der Gitarrefreund, Mitteilungen des Internationalen Gitarristen-Verbandes*, München, 3. Jahrgang, 1902, Heft 5, p. 56.

<sup>958</sup> Buek, Fritz: *Die Gitarre und ihre Meister*, Berlin, Robert Lienau, 1926, 2e ed. 1935, p. 109.

<sup>959</sup> Schwarz-Reiflingen, Erwin: 'Napoléon Coste', in: *Die Gitarre*, Berlin, 1927, Jahrgang VIII, Heft 7/8, [Coste-Heft] p. 46.

<sup>960</sup> Giordano, Mario: 'Napoléon Coste e le sue opere', in: *Il plettro*, febbraio 1934, no. 2, p. 7.