

# Scherzo a Chitarra sola

intitolato

Dialogo tra una vecchia ed una giovane

Luigi Legnani

Introduction and revision by Marco Mustardino

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# Introduction

by Marco Mustardino, September 2025

Luigi Legnani (Ferrara, 1790 – Ravenna, 1877) lived and worked in a historical musical period characterized by a relatively chaotic publishing environment, in which relations between composers and publishers, often antagonistic (with copyright protection in its infancy), varied considerably from region to region – especially in countries like Italy, which had yet to become unified. Naturally, Legnani was no stranger to these events and presumably several of his compositions were never published or were published by less prestigious publishers with limited circulation. These limitations are part of the reason for those gaps in the numbering of his catalog<sup>1</sup> that are the subject of so much speculation.

Like Opp. 14 and 15, which have recently filled some of these numerical lacunae,<sup>2</sup> other manuscripts by Legnani (signed and unsigned) help to complete part of this enigmatic mosaic. The *Scherzo a Chitarra sola intitolato / Dialogo tra una vecchia ed una giovane / Composto dal Sig.r Luigi Legnani* is part of that corpus of compositions that were apparently never published: no published copy of this piece has been found, with only two handwritten copies, both without a work number, preserved in the Library of the Orazio Vecchi – Antonio Tonelli Conservatory of Music in Modena (I-MOI).<sup>3</sup>

The first known performance of this composition by Legnani dates back to April 10, 1818 (a date, as we shall see, of curious significance) at the Società Filarmonica Modenese.<sup>4</sup> The second performance we know of took place in Ravenna in 1820, with Lord Byron and Teresa Guiccioli among the audience.<sup>5</sup> In the years that followed, the piece often appeared in the programs of his concerts both in Italy and abroad (the last being in 1843 in Barcelona), often with the title *La Suocera e la Nuora* or *Dialogo tra la Suocera e la Nuora*.<sup>6</sup> According to numerous mentions within the documents at our disposal, it is clear that this composition was greatly appreciated by a public ever hungry for virtuosity and effective extravagance and also admired by even the most demanding critics.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the composition is not lofty in style, but rather, sensational (similar to, among others, the Op. 10 *Scherzo, ossia quattro Variazioni a sola chitarra da eseguirsi con un solo dito della mano sinistra*), which the virtuoso

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<sup>1</sup> Marco Mustardino, *Luigi Legnani: catalogo tematico delle edizioni a stampa per e con chitarra* (Rome: Aracne, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Marco Mustardino, *Luigi Legnani: Gran Pot-Pourri Op.15* (Osaka: Da Vinci, 2024); and *Luigi Legnani: Grande Ouverture Op.14* (Osaka: Da Vinci, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> The first manuscript, belonging to the Romolo Ferrari Collection, has the call number *F. VIII/219*. The second manuscript, presumably later than the first, bears a reference to the location of the first on its title page: *Bibl. liceo mus. Modena. / Fondo R. Ferrari. / n. 219. (cart. n. 8)*. Neither of the two handwritings can be attributed to Legnani but to two different copyists; at the end of the second there is also a signature, unfortunately not deciphered even by the library, and the date 8/8/69.

<sup>4</sup> The concert announcement including the musical program, is published in *Quaderni Estensi* (Modena: Mucchi Editore, 2009), vol. 1. It is reproduced in full in the magazine *L'Arte Chitarristica*, ed. Romolo Ferrari (Modena: Berben, August 1947), year 1, no. 4; and in Raffaele Carpino, *Luigi Legnani, Opere per chitarra* (Tactus, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Sergio Monaldini, *Chitarra romantica: Luigi (Rinaldo) Legnani e il virtuosismo strumentale nell'Ottocento* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Sergio Monaldini, *ibid.* In concerts held in Spain, the composition is called *Contrasto tra suocera e nuora* and later *Lite tra una vecchia e una giovane*.

<sup>7</sup> Sergio Monaldini, *ibid.* The famous librettist and music critic Felice Romani (1788-1865) dedicated several reviews to Legnani, one of which was particularly heartfelt after the concert held on July 15, 1836, at the Teatro Carignano in Turin, attended by Niccolò Paganini. Among other things, the critic wrote: “[...] it was a lively dialogue, a contrast, a contest between two emotions, a suffering between the young Amarilli and the old Corisca, a chirping between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; but all this expressed with the utmost truth, colored with the utmost clarity, cheerful, playful, fantastic like the famous contra dance of the whistles floating under the walnut tree of Benevento ... in short, it was a beautiful imitation of a masterpiece by Paganini [...]”

# SCHERZO A CHITARRA SOLA INTITOLATO

## DIALOGO TRA UNA VECCHIA ED UNA GIOVANE

REVISIONE DI  
MARGO MUSTARDINO

LUIGI LEGNANI  
(1790 - 1877)

*Si faccia un Mi  
della seconda corda*

