

THE QUERELLE DES CLÉS
AN EPISODE IN FRANCISCO FRONTERA DE VALLDEMOSA'S
EXUBERANT LIFE

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PART I: MADRID 1858

In 1858, Francisco Frontera de Valldemosa published a peculiar music theory treatise in Madrid under the title *Equinotación ó Nuevo sistema musical de llaves*. The book, barely a hundred pages long, purported to have invented a new, simplified system of musical notation by reducing all clefs to only three: the usual G treble clef on the second line of the five-line music staff; a bizarre new D clef on the fourth line, which, oddly enough and for unexplained reasons, used the old C clef symbol (or **B**); and an idiosyncratic new F bass clef on the fifth line in the lower staff, which logically equated its pitch spelling to the G treble clef, but an octave lower (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Valldemosa's new, "simplified" three-clef system (*Equinotación*, p. 17, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, BNE, Madrid).

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Needless to say, no country, conservatory, or individual, either professional or amateur musician, ever adopted the system. Writing a century later, musicologist José Subirá dismissed the enterprise entirely and argued that Valldemosa's system – a composer who was “a protégé of the Spanish royal family”, he added reproachfully – was soon forgotten, indeed, although when it was first presented, he stressed, it had prompted “great admiration everywhere”, secured the initial support of the Paris and Madrid conservatories and, for that matter, the endorsement of some of the most respected French and Spanish musicians of the time (always my translations; Subirá, 1965, p. 34).¹

Subirá was right on both counts. True, the system was indeed soon forgotten, but also the brightest musical minds of the time sanctioned and promoted it openly – at least nominally –. Valldemosa, as it happened, was, among other things, voice teacher of the Queen of Spain, Isabel II, as he had been also her mother's and her children's vocal instructor. As such, he was, of course, a man of immense influence. The support he received from colleagues could have been a way for many musicians to ingratiate themselves with a man who had the Queen's

¹ The book was reviewed profusely immediately after its publication and then, afterwards, in later months and even years, in a stream of reviews, articles, and press mentions. Georges Kastner in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (April, 4, 1958, p. 112) called it an “ingenious system”, “exceptionally useful for pianists” (Kastner, 1858, p. 112). *El león español* celebrated the publication (May 26, 1858) and *El mallorquín*, Valldemosa's hometown paper, reprinted the article. *La Correspondencia de España* (June 24, 1864, p. 1) quoted A. Biaggi's essay published in *Boccherini* (Florence, April 15, 1864), which called Valldemosa and his treatise “courageous”. A second article in *La correspondencia de España* (August 25, 1860, p. 3) stated that the treatise had “relevant merit (...), confessed and highly proclaimed by competent music periodicals such as *Il Pirata*, *L'Orphéon*, *La presse teatrale*, *La Gaceta musical* of Naples [*Gazzetta musicale di Napoli*], *L'Italia musicale*, and others” (quoted in Bover, 1868, p. 323–324). Additionally it received the attention of *El Clamor público* (May 15, 1858, p. 3), *La Esperanza* (June 14, 1859, p. 4), *La España* (June 28, 1864, p. 4), *La Libertad* (June 29 1864, p. 3), *El Artista* (March 7, 1867, p. 8), and *Revista y gaceta musical* (May 4, 1868, p. 4). Two contemporary music theory handbooks praised Valldemosa's *equinotación*, *Gramática musical* by J. M. Pérez González (1859) and *Gramática musical ó sea Teoría general de la música* by Antonio Romero (1861), but did not apply it. Furthermore, to secure his scholarly reputation, a few months after the publication of *Equinotación* the pioneer, nationalistic *Historia de la música española* by Mariano Soriano Fuertes incorporated a laudatory biography of Valldemosa, whose source was with all probability Valldemosa himself (Soriano Fuertes, 1859, pp. 357–361). Signed generically by an editor, the same text, with very small changes, was immediately reproduced on April 30 1859 in *Escenas contemporáneas* (Sánchez, 1859, pp. 100–114). And yet a few months later, to top it all, the *Dizionario Biografico: dei più celebri poeti ed artisti* adapted the same text (Regli, 1860, pp. 212–213). Valldemosa's reputation as a scholar was thus solidified and internationalized, but it was Saldoni who cemented it in Spain by including him in his later *Diccionario biográfico* (Saldoni, 1880, Vol. III, p. 206).

ear – as well as that of her mother and children, and even that of the Empress Eugenia de Montijo’s, Napoleon III’s wife, another of his students –. Isabel II, to be sure, was a devotee of music and musical institutions; she supported the Madrid Conservatory and the Teatro Real, built exclusively for opera, regularly attended concerts, organized many musical performances, and commissioned many compositions. At one point, she even built her own opera theater in the Royal Palace, but it closed soon after, for a lack of funding. Thus, it seemed only logical that the most reputable musicians of the time, wary of alienating the royal patronage, supported this treatise and its author, oblivious, at best, of its utopian future and, at worst, of its more or less innocent absurdities. A press preview of the publication, written in stilted, pompous nineteenth-century Spanish, already stated:

We have just received a copy of *Equinotación, Nuevo Sistema musical de llaves (sin variar su figura)* with which the author proposes that the current complication disappears while facilitating the comprehension of all music written for two or more parts, that of large scores, and the art of transposition for accompanists. This curious innovation is the work of Don Francisco Valldemosa, singing teacher of Her Majesty the Queen, director of her royal concerts and professor of singing at the Madrid Conservatory.

For today, we are content to recommend this publication to Spanish teachers and to all those who are seriously engaged in the advancements of the musical art, committing ourselves another day to a detailed examination (Lozano, 1858, p. 216).

Perusing the treatise, one cannot but notice the many enthusiastic letters of support and approval written by prominent musicians. They are placed strategically as a preamble to Valldemosa’s actual text and the list of contributors is a true who’s-who of the Spanish music scene.² Dedicated to Isabel II, in a quaint short preface, the author addresses the Queen directly, as it had been customary for centuries in this sort of printed materials. He explains that considering that she is a busy monarch, with many important state affairs in her

² In addition to the French Henri Hertz, the list includes J. M. Guelbenzu, and Joaquín Gastambide. The three of them present letters unconditionally praising the “invention”, as Valldemosa tends to call it. Then, Emilio Arrieta, Baltasar Saldoni, Francisco de Monasterio, Antonio Romero, Mariano Martín, Juan Castellanos, Pedro Sarmiento, and Rafael Hernando state that they send their adhesion to the official declaration of the Madrid Conservatory’s faculty. The actual declaration is signed by Hilarión Eslava, Francisco de Asís Gil, Román Gimeno, Antonio Aguado, Manuel Mendizábal, José Miró, Juan Gil, Juan Pablo Hijosa, Juan Díez, Manuel Muñoz, Julián Aguirre, Camilo Mellers, Miguel Sacrista, Eduardo Velaz de Medrano, Antonio María Segovia, Antonio Mercé, José Oreiro, and Ventura de la Vega.

hands to occupy her time, it seems absurd to have to stall her musical progress and delay the enjoyment of music by learning the seven, perhaps even eight, clefs that are currently taught to all students and amateurs. The clefs, he explains, are: F on the third and fourth lines; C clefs on the fourth, third, second, and first lines; G clef on the second line; and the rarely used G on the first line (Fig. 2). So, he proposes his “invention” as a way to simplify this cumbersome clef system and reduce it to only three clefs (F, D, and G) so that amateur musicians, and especially the Queen herself, can directly relish the art of music without unnecessary, cumbrous, and unsurmountable technicalities.



Fig. 2. The seven usual clefs and their equivalent pitch in the G treble clef as illustrated by Valldemosa (*Equinotación*, p. 13. Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, BNE, Madrid).

After all these introductory sections, the actual treatise begins. It has two parts. The first (pp. 11–20) is an explanation of the invention (namely, the reduction of all clefs to only three) detailing the perceived actual need for it (that is, most clefs are unnecessary, and they impede or delay the creativity of the avid music learner). The second part (new pagination, pp. 2–83) is a curious anthology of music in many genres and styles. On the left page of each spread, there is a composition or a fragment of a work in its original clef notation; the opposite right-hand page presents its transcription into the new *equinotación* system (Fig. 3).

The musical anthology in *Equinotación* reveals, for one, Valldemosa’s political acumen. To be sure, each one of these composers and compositions was compiled at least for two reasons: one, musical, showing that the *equinotación* could be used in many different musical genres and contexts; and two, as a professional and social strategy.³ Thus, there were pieces by José Miró, a colleague at the Madrid

³ The following list shows the composers and genres compiled and transcribed by Valldemosa: Miró, piano; Rossini, vocal/piano (*William Tell*: excerpt from Matilde’s *Selva opaca*); Valldemosa, vocal duo for two tenors and piano lyrics in Spanish and French; Auber, vocal duo for soprano, tenor, and piano (excerpt from *La part du diable*); Meyerbeer, vocal trio for soprano, tenor, bass, and piano (excerpt from *Robert le diable*); Verdi, vocal trio for soprano, tenor, bass, and piano (*Il*

conservatory; Hilarión Eslava who had been the Royal Family's most trusted composer, music scholar, and administrator. The late Cherubini had been director of the Paris conservatory and the author a prestigious textbook. Haydn and Beethoven were a stamp of prestige. Auber and Meyerbeer, of course, were very popular opera composers. And, finally, Rossini was the most revered composer of the first part of the nineteenth century – an unquestioned celebrity, respected by professionals and admired by the general public –. He was also Valldemosa's close and long-time friend, as documented elsewhere (Pizà / Martínez, 2019).

The figure consists of two side-by-side musical score pages for the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The left page is the original notation, labeled 'N.º 15.' and 'All. con brio de rap.'. It features complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *ff*, *f*, *p*, and *pp*. The right page is the 'simplified' system, also labeled 'N.º 15.' and 'All. con brio de rap.'. It uses a more regular rhythmic notation with fewer notes and simplified dynamic markings, primarily *f* and *p*.

Fig. 3. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in its original notation (left page) and in Valldemosa's "simplified" system (right page) (*Equinotación*, pp. 78–79, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, BNE, Madrid)

trovatore); Valldemosa, vocal score for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and piano (*Coda de un canon*); Valldemosa, vocal score for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and piano (*Plegaria*); Eslava, vocal score for four voices and no accompaniment (*Motete religioso*); Haydn, String quartet No. 58, 2nd movt. *Andante grazioso*, Hob III: 73; Cherubini, orchestra and vocal soloists ("Gradual from Requiem Mass"); Haydn, orchestra and vocal soloists (*Seven Last Words*); Eslava, orchestra and vocal soloists ("Fuga from Te Deum"); Rossini, orchestra ("Ritornello" from *William Tell*); Beethoven, orchestra (excerpt from 1st movement, Symphony No. 5).

PART 2: PARIS 1838

The story of Valldemosa's *equinotación* system had actually begun in Paris about two decades earlier. At the end of the summer of 1837, Valldemosa had drafted an early version of his ideas on the topic in a treatise titled *Nouveau moyen trouvé par F.F. de Valldemosa pour lire avec promptitude et facilité la musique écrite pour le piano* (Frontera, 1837) and, as required by the law to secure his authorship rights, he rushed to deposit it at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris in its Dépôt legal. The slim volume included an early version of the *equinotación* system and a transcription of the well-known Spanish song, generally attributed to Blas de Laserna, *El Trípoli*. Dedicated to Rossini, who apparently loved and played the tune with delight, though probably not from Valldemosa's *equinotación* transcription, the treatise caused quite a stir in the Parisian *monde musicale*, though not for its scholarly contribution, but rather for a dispute regarding the originality of its ideas.

A few months before Valldemosa's publication of the *Nouveau moyen*, a well-respected composer and teacher at the Paris conservatory, Hippolyte-Raymond Colet, had published *La panharmonie musicale*, a voluminous full-blown music theory compendium, trudging unbridled through an immense variety of topics from notation to orchestration, as well as harmony, counterpoint, and composition. Colet, a student and assistant of Anton Reicha (Beethoven's classmate and friend), intended this tome as a textbook for his classes at the conservatory. Colet also hoped it would replace Reicha's own book and that it would sale through a subscription to the general public outside the limited circle of the conservatory. More problematic, at least for Valldemosa, *La panharmonie musicale* also included a small section on the need for a simplification of the clef system.

On February 4 1838, Valldemosa sent an indignant letter to the editor of the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*. "Monsieur le Rédacteur", he begins, regarding Colet's system to eliminate the F clef for the piano scores, he continues, a clarification is needed. And then, using italics for emphasis, Valldemosa adds: "I must declare that M. Colet has received from *me solely* the knowledge of this discovery, and that *I am the sole* author of this innovation". Valldemosa, then, threatens a lawsuit should Colet not retract what he printed regarding the F clef. Colet heard it from me first, repeats Valldemosa in a more casual way, and was never authorized to make use of it, he concludes (Valldemosa, 1838, p. 53).

Colet's response arrived a week later. Thus on 11 February 1838, he states typing in italics: "*I declare formally that I have never received any confidence from M. Valldemosa, and the idea of this new system of clefs belongs to me exclusively*" (Colet,

1838, p. 67). He then claims that what has inspired him to simplify the clefs is the actual difficulty students have when learning harmony and composition. “M. Valldemosa”, he continues, “came to me recommended by Rossini to request harmony lessons. One day I told him that in my method I reduce all clefs to G on the second line. He strongly approved of it and encouraged me to develop this new system (...). Worry-free and humble, I told him where the treasure was, and when I could not see, at night, he went and grabbed it; and not only did he think of perusing, but also to appropriating it in its entirety; and then when my work was about to appear, he quickly autographed two pages of music, announcing as his own the discovery of this clef, and he deposited the dear copies at the Bibliothèque” (Colet, 1838, p. 67). Colet also argues in six points the minutiae of Valldemosa’s arguments and asserts that if they ever go to court, the lawyers will need to take a year of harmony with him, Colet, to be able to argue the case.

Two weeks later, Adrien de la Fage, an eminent composer and musicologist, published a front-page essay titled “De la querelle des clés” in *Revue et gazette* (De la Fage, 1838a, pp. 81–84). De la Fage is nowadays remembered, mostly, if at all, for his studies on early music. Life was not always kind to him and handed in many difficult blows, both professional as well as personal. His opera and other compositions were never successful. His wife and son died. And he himself died in an asylum for the insane, where he had been committed a few years before unable, perhaps to cope with the trials of life. Prolific to a fault, in addition to many scholarly writings, he contributed many journalistic essays to the *Revue et gazette* and many other publications for the general reader. Vain, perhaps, of his insane final days, he loved loud and public controversies and diatribes. His style was argumentative and made use of all possible literary resources: irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, neologisms and made-up words (*diphthérogaphie*), farfetched analogies, and even character assassination.

However, De la Fage’s contribution to the issues raised by the *equinotación* was a well-argued and perfectly supported argument, not only literary fireworks. He contends, to begin with, that both Colet and Valldemosa are actually mistaken if they think a simplification of the clefs’ system is new – it is not –.⁴ “Are

⁴ In *Equinotación*, Valldemosa includes an *Apéndice* declaring disingenuously that “after” finishing his treatise he has learned of another 1824 Spanish book by Federico Moretti, a volume that deals with the same issue (Moretti, 1824). In Spanish there had been indeed other precedents, notably, José Mariano Elízaga’s essay in *Diario de México* and Juan Rojo’s *La música simplificada* (1855). Elízaga’s reference is mentioned on p. 177 of Robert Stevenson’s *Music in Mexico* (Sarmiento, 2016, p. 63). Valldemosa makes another misleading statement, oblivious to the 1838 *querelle*, when he grants that Colet’s *Panharmonie* had indeed mentioned the idea of simplifying the clefs, but

they mocking us”, he asks, “in presenting as a novelty a practice that all music publishers have not ceased to use for all music destined to amateurs and that has been printed in Paris for more than twenty years?” (De la Fage, 1838a, p. 81). He, then, outlines the history of many previous theorists and treatises or *unicleffiers*, as he calls them, which have attempted to rationalize the clef system.⁵

In the end, De la Fage considers that Colet and Valldemosa (whom he doubts could have ever been a serious pianist for the alleged simplification goes against any idiomatic writing for the piano) are engaged in *risibles querelles* (De la Fage, 1838a, p. 84). Solely the Germans, he says, have a valid system of notating multiple-part music in only two clefs (the G and F, as in the chorales). As for the complicated clef system, it is better to leave it alone and engage a solfege instructor to practice the clefs with discipline, he advises.

A few months later, De la Fage published yet another front-page article in the *Revue et Gazette*, this one to tear apart mercilessly Colet’s treatise *La panharmonie musicale*. To start, he ridicules the title (too long), the volume’s length (unnecessary), the pretentious Shakespeare epigraph (too general), the dedication to Rossini, to whom many have dedicated “worse books than this one”, certainly, but which “does not commit him [Rossini] to anything”, but above all the “extravagant system of reduction of clefs” (De la Fage, 1838b, p. 286). The book offers nothing new, he bluntly contends; only many errors, especially in the sections dedicated to the old masters. Horrified that this volume appears as a *i^{ère} Édition*, he fears a possible second edition – unless, of course, it includes many corrections –. Among many pieces of advice, De la Fage proposes that Colet give up the idea of the “simplification” of the clefs because it amounts instead to a “complication” (De la Fage, 1838b, p. 287). The book, he adds, should

rushes to say that he published his treatise “months after my work” and insists that the French professor had acknowledged the usefulness of “my invention” (Valldemosa, 1858, p. 16).

⁵ De la Fage or the typesetters of the *Revue et gazette* make innumerable spelling mistakes in quoting names and sources. This is a corrected list of the books that De la Fage’s uses to back his claim regarding the long history of the *equinotación*: Thomas Salmon: *Essay to the Advance of Musick* (London, 1672); Matthew Locke: *Observations upon a Late Book entituled “Essay to the Advancement of Musick”* (London, 1672); John Wallis: *A Vindication of an Essay to the Advancement of Musick, from Mr. Matthew Lock’s “Observations”, by Enquiring into the Real Nature and Most Convenient Practise of that Science* (London 1672); Abbé [Joseph] Lacassagne: *Traité general des éléments du chant* (Paris, 1766); Pascal Boyer: *Lettre à Monsieur Diderot, sur le projet de l’unité de clef dans la musique, et la réforme des mesures, proposés par M. l’abbé La Cassagne, dans ses “Elémens du chant”* (Paris, 1767); Abbé [Joseph] Lacassagne: *L’unicleffier musical, pour servir de supplément au Traité général, et de réponse à quelques objections* (Paris, 1768).

also be credited not only to Colet alone, but to Colet as “Reicha’s student”, as it lacks his own original ideas.

For all his self-righteous, indignant tone, De la Fage fails to mention that he himself was also the co-author of a rival music theory compendium, written with Alexandre Étienne Choron. Since Choron died in 1834, De la Fage was in charge of completing and publishing, from 1836 to 1839, their monumental, multivolume *Manuel complet de musique vocale et instrumentale, ou Encyclopédie musicale*. In addition to his musicological contributions, Choron had been a high-ranking administrator of many Parisian institutions including the Opéra and the *Conservatoire*. He had as many friends as he had enemies. De la Fage was sticking with his friend. Thus, though justified in some instances, the attacks on Colet’s work – and on Valldemosa’s *equinotación* – were mostly a defense strategy in the musical politics and high-flying egos of the Parisian *monde musicale* – a new twist, indeed, in the *querelle des clefs* –.

PART 3: PALMA DE MALLORCA 1807

Francisco Frontera de Valldemosa’s exuberant – and now mostly forgotten – life began about thirty years before the *querelle des clefs* and around fifty years ahead of the publication of *Equinotación*. He was born in Palma de Mallorca in 1807.⁶ His real name was Francisco Frontera Laserra, but he added “de Valldemosa” – the name, with a gratuitously aristocratic “de” that in the end stuck as his career developed internationally in Paris and among royalty in Madrid – as a homage to the picturesque town of Valldemossa, in Mallorca, and to his stepfather, born there, Andrés Pavía.⁷

Pavía was a notable local musician working fulltime at the Palma cathedral and performing in the town’s opera productions, both public and private (Esteve,

⁶ My sincere gratitude to Gabriel Quetglas Olin, curator of the Celda de Frédéric Chopin y George Sand (Valldemossa, Mallorca); Joan Parets i Serra, founder of the Centre de Documentació Musical (Mallorca); and Joan Ciria, independent scholar. They all have contributed materials and comments regarding the musician’s early years in Mallorca.

⁷ Frontera had a cousin with the exact same name and he could have modified his name to differentiate himself from him. There are many spellings for all these names, including the Catalan-language versions: Andreu Pavía(s) and Francesc Frontera [de] Valldemossa [Valldemosa]. In addition, his name is misspelled frequently: Valdemosa, Vildemosa, Walldemosa, Baldemosa, Valldemoro, Frontela, Fronteru, Foradada, and La Serra, among other mistakes. The conjunction “y” is sometimes found as “i” and other times it is totally eliminated.

2008). In 1815, he moved his family, including his stepson, Francisco, to Barcelona. Pavía was engaged by the Teatre de la Santa Creu,⁸ as a *maestro al cembalo* (i.e. keyboardist, conductor, and impresario of sorts) to produce and perform Italian operas. He was actually one of the first musicians to produce a Rossini opera in Spain, *L'Italiana in Algeri* in 1815.⁹ There he worked with Marco Bordogni, the enormously successful Italian tenor and singing teacher, who premiered many Rossini operas, and eventually became the future professor of voice at the Paris conservatory.

Pavía and his family returned to Palma in 1817 where young Francisco completed his musical education by studying piano and harmony. He soon began to participate, in different capacities, in the musical life of Palma and specifically in musical theater productions, both public and private. During the 1824–1825 season, he was *suggeritore* (prompter); next, in 1825–1826, he was promoted to first violin in the company's orchestra; eventually, in 1826–1827, he became *maestro al cembalo*. During these years, he performed as an instrumentalist (again, he could play the violin and the harpsichord or piano), conducted, and even produced many Rossini operas. During the seasons encompassing 1824–1830, Francisco (now) “de Valldemosa” participated in one capacity or another in an enormous number of operas by Rossini as well as other composers.¹⁰ All the Italian operas were staged in Italian with a roster that included many Italian singers such as

⁸ Founded in 1579 and rebuilt many times afterwards, it was also known as Teatro de la Santa Cruz or later Teatro Principal (in Spanish) as well as Teatre Principal (in Catalan).

⁹ It is normally considered that the first Rossini opera in Spain was produced and conducted by Pietro Generali (also known as Mercandetti Generali, 1773–1832), an Italian composer and impresario who was brought to Barcelona by the Teatre de la Santa Creu board to re-introduce Italian operas to the city after the Napoleonic wars. Earlier, Rossini was actually offered the job in Barcelona, but Ricordi dissuaded him to take it. The first documented performance of Rossini excerpts in Spain, a *Tancredi* aria, are from 1814 (Cortés, 2008). However, in 1815, Pavía was already *maestro al cembalo* in the Teatre de la Santa Creu in Barcelona. This could mean that Pavía – and not Generali – gave the very first performance of a Rossini opera in Spain. The following document would attest to this hypothesis. It reads (my italics): “In August 1816 (...) Andres Pavía, a Catalan, was the maestro al clave; and Mr. Generali did not come until the next comic season, which began in April 1817 (...)”. If indeed Generali did not arrive in Barcelona until 1817, he could not have given the first performance of a Rossini work ([n.a.], 1820, p. 4). I am grateful to professor Francesc Cortés for many indications regarding this hypothesis.

¹⁰ These include: *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Torvaldo e Dorliska*, *Aureliano in Palmira (pastiche)*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La gazza ladra*, *L'inganno felice*, *La pietra del paragone*, *Il turco in Italia*, *La Cenerentola*, *Tancredi*, *Semiramide*, *Eduardo e Cristina*, *La donna del lago*, *Matilde di Shabran*, *Otello*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *Zelmira*, *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra*, and *L'assedio di Corinto (Le siège de Corinthe, a revision of Maometto secondo)* (Garcías Estelrich, 2004, pp. 150–216).

the famed Rossini specialists Antonietta Mosca and Giuseppe (José) Mosca, brother of Luigi Mosca, composer of an 1808 setting of Angelo Anelli's opera buffa libretto *L'italiana in Algeri*, the same story and librettist Rossini used for his *Italiana* in 1813.

Even more importantly for his future, in Palma, Valldemosa became a regular at the salon of Francisco Javier Gorostiza, *tesorero* or royal tax collector, and eventually his future father-in-law. At this home, the cauldron of a very busy artistic salon (Choussat, 2010, pp. 93 and 96), he produced a complete concert version of Rossini's *Semiramide* (*Diario Balear*, February 14, 15, 16 of 1830; cited in Bernal Llabrés, 1959, p. 342). One of the regulars at these select musical evenings was a talented, ambitious middle rank officer, Colonel Baldomero Espartero, who, after a meteoric ascend in the military echelons, with famous campaigns in the Americas and the Napoleonic wars, became a few years later, nothing less than Regent of the Spanish Crown.

In 1836, Valldemosa settled in Paris to continue his musical education. His social network was already solid – Bordogni, on the musical front and, later, Espartero, in the high social circles –.¹¹ Soon he befriended Rossini – at that time, an authentic celebrity worshiped by all of Parisian society – as well as other composers of great influence, including two, who were then assistants to the prestigious Anton Reicha in his class at the Paris conservatory: Hippolyte-Raymond Colet, whose wife, besides being Flaubert's mistress, was the host of an influential literary salon including all Parisian artistic luminaries, and Antoine Elwart, whose most influential book Valldemosa would translate into Spanish in two successful editions (Elwart, 1845). Valldemosa recommended him to receive the prestigious Orden de Carlos III and Elwart, in return, would review in the *Revue et gazette* Valldemosa's ambitious cantata *El voto en España* (Elwart, 1853, pp. 196–197).

The exiled Spanish aristocrats Manuel and Charlotte Marliani also welcome him in their salon. He befriended Countess Merlin, the Cuban-born Parisian literary star, self-declared *creole*, pioneer of anti-colonial movements and of women's rights who was fictionalized by Balzac and to whom Valldemosa dedicated one song (Gay, 1893, pp. 182-203). And then, Paganini, who praised his facility for “vocalization and musical feeling” ([n.a.] 1839a, *El Correo*, p. 4), Liszt, Balzac, Delacroix, the Viardot family, but above all George Sand and Chopin, whom he persuaded to go to Mallorca during the winter 1838-39, were all habitués

¹¹ When Valldemosa arrived in Paris, many Spanish musicians, maybe himself, lived at the Hôtel Favart, which is, incidentally, where Goya had already stayed during his exile. An expat bohemian, liberal atmosphere is described elsewhere (Saldoni, 1880, p. 253).

of this salon and all contributors, as well, to the *Revue et gazette* where the *querelle des clefs* was published.

In Paris, Valldemosa also frequented the salon of Olympe Pélissier, a former child slave, who became Balzac's and Bellini's lover and Rossini's future wife and heir, capping thus his social network in the French capital. By now, the French press treated him as a celebrity. In 1839, the *Revue et gazette* stated: "Among the many vocal teachers that populate Paris, it is worth highlighting M. Valldemosa [sic], Spanish young man, good composer and excellent accompanist" ([n.a.], 1839, p. 488).

Valldemosa's social ascent, almost like the heroes that populate the novels of his friend Balzac, peaked in 1841, when the recently-appointed Regent of Spain, General Baldomero Espartero (that old acquaintance from Palma de Mallorca and the *Semiramide* performances at the home of his father-in-law, the tax collector), named him voice instructor of the infant Queen Isabel II. As a token of royal appreciation, he was given a salary twice as large as that of the Queen's piano instructor (Vega, 1910, p. 578).

Thus, the young monarch and her teacher established a long-lasting relationship, which progressively afforded him many existing or newly created music positions in the Spanish court. Valldemosa eventually became professor of voice at the Royal Conservatory of Madrid and even director of the Queen's private opera theater. Soon enough, this intimate liaison provoked rumors, which have never been proven or disproven (Barrios, 2004, pp. 35–43).¹²

The nature of Valldemosa's relationship with the young Queen Isabel II remains in the end unresolved. The fact that they were close can perhaps be attributed to a bizarre episode. In 1841, Isabel's mother, María Cristina, plotted to abduct her daughter (though she later denied any responsibility), to regain

¹² The sexual life of many Bourbon royals has been written about in literally dozens of books. Queen Mother María Cristina maintained a relationship with and eventually married a young, low rank officer, her bodyguard, actually, nicknamed *el guapo* (the handsome one) for his good looks; Isabel was thought to be a nymphomaniac, and her husband Francisco de Asís was ridiculed for being a homosexual or even inter-sex, before the term existed (Barrios, 2004, p. 119). The gossip regarding the love affair between the monarch and Valldemosa (twenty-four years her senior) took off in modern times in a fictional work on Isabel II (De la Cierva, 1988). It was picked up as a true historical fact in a non-fiction book (Barrios, 2004). Repeated afterwards many times, it was incorporated as fact in an otherwise excellent scholarly study (Sánchez, 2013, p. 70). It is worth observing that the instigator of these *fake news*, De la Cierva, was a noted apologist of Francisco Franco's authoritarian regime and many of his discredited books were dedicated to provide a flattering narrative of the dictator. Even after Franco, his *alternative facts* were rewarded in many occasions including a stint as a Minister of Culture – of all things –.

the throne for herself. Thus on October 7 1841, a group of soldiers attempted to enter the Royal Palace. The guards, understandably, protected the building and skirmishes ensued. The intruders were kept at bay in the main staircase leading to the private quarters of the royals, who apparently were sleeping surrounded by their female staff. During the attempted abduction, Isabel was also in her private rooms, first sleeping and then awaiting for a resolution. The scene was described in detail by a direct eyewitness, the Queen's *aya* or governess (Vega, 1910, pp. 63–66). Valldemosa was the only man with her during the scuffle and the young Queen reportedly felt protected by her older, masculine teacher – and perhaps even developed the alleged infatuation –.

Due to the swinging movements of Spanish politics of the period, Valldemosa was eventually let go 1868. Retired in his hometown, Palma, he was granted the rank of *Bayle Real*, an honorific title with no obligations but a permanent salary and the right to occupy the Palma magnificent medieval fortress, the Palau de l'Almudaina, for the rest of his life. Although reportedly ill, he was not done, let alone defeated, and craving still the attention he had had during his active high-spirited life. In 1888, three years before his death, he returned to his proud invention and published in Palma a vindication of his *Equinotación* (Frontera, 1888).¹³

When he died in 1891, both the Spanish and French press published extensive and superlative obituaries. In one of those, a close friend, the scholar José María Cuadrado, described his worldly, exuberant life, but also his integrity amid the royal court, a world, he said, defined by frivolities and mendacious interests (quoted in Pedrell, 1897). In his last will and testament,¹⁴ he made provisions for his immediate family and servants, but added an endowment for future opulent masses with music for the Royal Family and a special bequest to fund a free public school, both (masses and school) in the town of Valldemossa, Andrés Pavía's birthplace, his stepfather and the man and musician who introduced him – and for that matter, the rest of Spain – to Rossini, in particular, and to music,

¹³ Earlier, in 1884, he printed privately a few copies of the same pamphlet and sent it to some publications and friends. This generated a small second wave of publicity for his "invention". See among others: *El Áncora* (November 10, 1884, p. 3; and October 21, 1887, pp. 2–3), *La opinión* (11 November, 1884, p. 2), *El nuevo ateneo* (July 15, 1888, p. 7), *El isleño* (November 11, 1891, p. 4), *El magisterio balear* (July 17, 1915, p. 2), *Sóller* (July 24, 1915, p. 2; and August 21, 1915, p. 5). Additionally, a respected music theory handbook praised Valldemosa's *equinotación*, although it evaded its application, see G. M. Baños's *Gramática musical razonada* (1886).

¹⁴ I am grateful to Joan Ciria for bringing the will to my attention. He obtained it from Mr. Jaume Bibiloni, a living descendant of Valldemosa.

in general. In the end, the appellative “de Valldemosa” was not mere pose, but a genuine feeling.

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