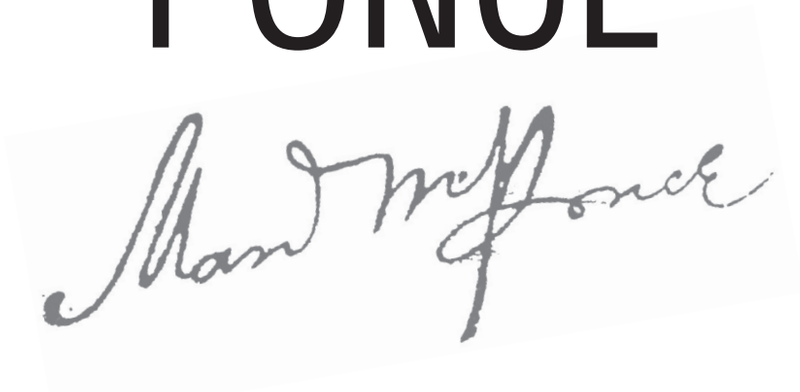
Manuel M. PONCE



MÚSICA DE CÁMARA

PRÉLUDE

para guitarra y clavecín

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PREFACE

A red notebook belonging to Manuel M. Ponce is preserved at the Historic Archive of the State of Zacatecas; the composer inscribed the title on the first page as a cover: "Suite à duo pour guitare et clavecin par M. M. Ponce". The *Prélude* for these instruments appears four pages ahead, covering the following eleven pages; it is a pencil draft with several indications regarding expression and dynamics, and after the final double bar it is dated and signed: Mexico, February 27, 1936[1]. This red notebook, *cahier de musique*, was bought by Ponce during a prolonged stay in Paris from 1925 until early 1933; it holds 6 staves per page and it has the composer's signature on the cover, as well as the the year, 1931, and his address: 8, Av. Emile Zola, Paris. There are no other movements apart from the *Prélude* of the *Suite à duo* announced on the first page. Despite being a pencil manuscript which shows some slight modifications made by the composer, such as erased notes, changes in the tessitura, or the characteristic black ink emendations, it is precisely thanks to such modifications, as well as to the attention granted to the hairpins and other dynamic indications, along with the signature at the end of the piece, that we can deem this manuscript as one pertaining a finished work, likely to be edited. In 1981 Corazón Otero published the facsimile photographs of the eleven pages of this document on her book *Manuel M. Ponce y la guitarra*[2], and published it again later at Ediciones Musicales Yolotl in 1985[3].

The counterpart of this pencil manuscript of the *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord is the final version –probably in ink–, sent by Ponce as a wedding gift to Andrés Segovia and the Catalan pianist Francisca Madriguera (1900–1965), Paquita, the guitarist's second wife. Unfortunately, that manuscript has not been located yet. Not withstanding, one might venture that the version that Segovia recorded in 1958 with Colombian harpsichordist Rafael Puyana (1931–2013)[4] was based on this source, since the manuscript was not listed among those works lost during the Spanish Civil War –recounted by Segovia in a letter to the composer after the Barcelona Revolution of July, 1936—and because the guitarist did not stay much in touch with Ponce's heirs after his death; thus, such recording can be considered as an indirect reference of the final manuscript for studying this piece[5], keeping track of the changes between both sources, under the hypothesis that such changes may come from the author –not being the first time that Ponce did so, particularly in this kind of repertoire[6]–, being aware that the recording is no substitute for the missing manuscript and that the modifications may as well have been made by the performers.

This piece had been part of other works of the Ponce repertoire in different versions. Originally it was the first one in a group named as *Pièces*, for solo guitar, as can be seen on the pencil draft (the sole survivor of this version of the *Prélude*) dated

[1] On the cover page, the first one of the album, there is a measure in 7/8 of an unknown work on the upper right side; it is written in the G major key signature and uses a three-stave system. In the following page, there are two interrupted phrases, three and six measures, respectively, using two staves for harpsichord or piano. Of these two fragments, unknown to the editor, the first one is crossed out. Both are written in the E major key signature and in 2/4, except for the last three measures of the second phrase, which are in 3/4. The following page marks the beginning of the eleven pages that comprise the *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord. In the next page, there are seven measures in 3/4 of an unknown work in the E minor key signature.

[2] Otero, Corazón. *Manuel M. Ponce y la guitarra*. Fonapas, Mexico City., 1981. pp. 40-50.

[3] Ponce, Manuel M. *Prélude* para guitarra y clavecín. Foreword by Corazón Otero. Revised by Julio Cesar Oliva, Ediciones Musicales Yolotl, EMY-D-01, Lomas de Bezares, Mexico, 1985.

[4] Golden Jubilee. Vol. 2. Andrés Segovia, guitar; Rafael Puyana, harpsichord. Vynil. DECCA DL 9996. Recorded in New York in 1958.

[5] Considering the possibility of a copy made by Rafael Puyana in regard to the recording, I have contacted the Archivo Manuel de Falla, in Granada, that holds the collection of scores that belonged to the harpsichordist. Aurora Fernández, curator of the Archives, mentioned there is no work registered under that name.

[6] One example of this is the pencil draft of the *Suite en Re* for solo guitar, which has considerable differences when compared with its ink counterpart, the final version dedicated to Segovia, which is kept at the Fundación Casa Museo Andrés Segovia, in Linares, Spain. Such modifications, authored by the composer, were mistakenly attributed to the guitarist in his BBC recording. For further information about this work and, in general, to the baroque repertoire for guitar by Manuel M. Ponce, see Zambrano, Raúl. "Ponce y la invención del barroco". Marín, Javier (ed.) *De Nueva España a México, el universo musical mexicano entre centenarios (1517-1917)* Universidad de Andalucía, 2020, pp. 137-154.

October 1931, which was accompanied by an *Air de danse* –this one also preserved as an original in ink by the composer. These pieces belong to the old-style pieces that Segovia asked of Ponce so intently; these works in particular were credited to Silvius Leopold Weiss (1687-1750) in the recitals and recordings of the Andalusian guitarist. The notebook with the pencil draft of the two pieces, along with the sheet with the ink manuscript of the *Air de danse*, are kept at the archives of the Fundación Casa Museo Andrés Segovia, in Linares, Spain[7]. In 1934, already in Mexico, Ponce composes the music for the staging of *La verdad sospechosa* (The Suspicious Truth) by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, for the official inauguration of the Palace of the Fine Arts. He reformulates the *Prélude* turning it into an *Interludio* for string orchestra, around a Hispanic sonority with ornaments and imitations[8]. A photocopy of the manuscript with the stage music for *La verdad sospechosa* can be found at the Special Collections of Cuicamatini Library of the Faculty of Music of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

There are thence three manuscript sources handwritten by Ponce that can be consulted: the pencil draft of the *Prélude*, the original version for solo guitar; the photocopy of the *Interludio* for strings of the music for *La verdad sospechosa*; and obviously the manuscript of the *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord, kept in Zacatecas, upon which this edition is based. There is also an indirect source: the recording made by Segovia and Puyana, that refers –with reservations— to the missing manuscript of the final version of this work[9].

There is an accumulation of ideas throughout the three versions that is even reflected in the indication at the beginning of each one, which goes from *Allegro*, in the version for solo guitar, to *Allegro non troppo* in the version for strings of the *Interludio* of the music for *La verdad sospechosa*, and finally *Allegro non troppo, piacevole* of the version for guitar and harpsichord. The difference in treatment of the passage of mm. 33 to 42, being a harmonic progression by fourths in the solo guitar version –going from *A minor* to *E minor*–, will be adorned in the string version with lines and ornaments in the Spanish style, while in the guitar and harpsichord it deals with a more complex counterpoint. Something similar happens in the passage corresponding to mm. 51 to 55, where the string version includes, towards the end, a thirteen-measure extension with pedal in the dominant, thus conferring greater dramatic tension to the resolution in *E major*. From this moment on, Ponce will make slight variations in this version, which encompasses 106 measures in contrast to the guitar and harpsichord version which only reformulates the same 91 measures of the solo guitar version. It is truly exciting to witness, throughout the evolution of the different versions, the flourishing of polyphonic thought and of a counterpoint invention, and to see that, somehow, everything is contained in the version for solo guitar since the very beginning.

It is important to emphasize such diversity, since the universe of the piece is established in it, allowing us to better understand each manuscript; it also conveys a recurring concept in the repertoire of works by Ponce: multiple

[7] Andrés Segovia maintained these two pieces in his repertoire throughout his career; he used to play them in the reverse order to that of the penciled notebook, changing the name of the *Prélude* to *Allegretto* and the name of the *Air de danse* to *Ballet*.

[8] If we consider that the original version of the *Prélude* for solo guitar could have for a referent the Prelude of Bach's *Partita* BWV 1006 – its transcription for lute was made after having met Weiss thanks to his son–, it is thus possible to establish a parallel between Ponce's string version with Bach's reworking of his Prelude in the Symphony at the beginning of the Cantata BWV 29, *Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir*.

[9] It is thus worthwhile to follow the trajectory of the recordings made by Andrés Segovia of the different versions of this work, both to establish references in the absence of some lost manuscripts - notably the final ink version of the version for solo guitar and the version for guitar and harpsichord - and to follow the evolution of the correct attribution of this repertoire made over the years:

- Segovia records *Prélude & Ballet* (as he called the *Air de danse*), along with the *Gigue* of the *Suite en la menor*, in March 1952. *An Andrés Segovia Recital.* Andrés Segovia, guitar. Vinyl. Decca DL 9633.
- Recording of the version for guitar and harpsichord, with Rafael Puyana, as *Prélude*, attributed to Weiss and arranged by Ponce. *Golden Jubilee Vol. 2*. Andrés Segovia, guitar (Rafael Puyana, harpsichord). Vinyl. Decca DL 9996. Recorded in New York 1958.
- In December 1973, he records the *Prélude* in Madrid, now attributing it to Manuel M. Ponce *Recital íntimo*. Andrés Segovia, guitar. Vinyl. Fonomusic 89.2355/7 / RCA ARL 1-0864, recorded at Estudios Audiofilm, Madrid December 1973.
- Also, in Christopher Nupen's documentary *"The Song of the Guitar"*, where he records both pieces as *Ballet & Allegretto*, under the proper attribution. *The Song of the Guitar (Documentary)*. Andrés Segovia, guitar. Directed by Christopher Nupen; filmography David Findlay, editing, Peter Heelas and Chris Fraser, sound Derek Williams. Allegro Films, UK, recorded at The Alhambra, Spain, 1977.

solutions. These works have a defined form, while not unique; thus, Ponce once more gathers his musical heritage in a long-lasting fashion, leaving behind not a petrified version of the piece, but the possibility of some work that is reformulated several times, since music is an occurrence (it is pointless to mention how many times Bach reworked his compositions –or those of others–, setting for us the task to execute it in all its multiplicity).

The title *Suite à duo pour guitare et clavecin* is written on ink on the first page of the notebook; this, along with the data on the cover that dates the notebook to 1931, allows us to establish a hypothesis that locates such title in that year. The signature and date at the end of the penciled manuscript of the *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord, in Mexico on February 27, 1936, is relevant since it sets a five-year lapse between one and the other. It is during these five years that Ponce leaves Paris. During those years, both artists gave up the idea of going back to that city to live. Upon his return to Mexico, in 1933, Ponce will devote more time to projects not related to the guitar. Their personal relation will also suffer, and Segovia shows some resentment due to such estrangement in his letters. Particularly during the period from February 1935 to February 1936, there is a persistent silence from Ponce; two letters from the guitarist are proof of this.

> *[…] I have sent you three letters to the Colonia Condesa and another to the Conservatory. The first ones sank into the most indifferent silence […] In all of them I was complaining that you had picked up a pen only once since we left Mexico […] For reasons which I cannot guess or you are both displeased with me or my letters get stubbornly lost, […]*[10]

There is no certainty as to whether Ponce was displeased; however, it is worth considering it, in an attempt to establish a plausible reason behind the changing intention of the composer, going from the idea of composing a full suite in 1931, to only writing the prelude in 1936. Both their creative relationship and their friendship might have been affected by Segovia's harassing request for repertoire and his imposition in demanding modifications, as well as the guitarist lack of attention towards some of the works that Ponce wrote for him. Requesting works that follow some specific criterion or suggesting ways to sort out some challenges in certain passages is a customary and natural thing to do while engaging in a collaborative relationship of this sort. The Zacatecan composer was not in the least reluctant to make some changes to his work once in a while. There is plenty of proof of both artists showing their admiration and utmost affection towards one another. Notwithstanding, Segovia resents some estrangement in their relationship[11].

> *My dear Manuel: Since your return letter which I received in New York, I have heard nothing about you, in spite of having given my address in Europe, until a few days ago when I spoke with Quesada who informed me of the latest attacks you have suffered from your cruel illness. I feel so sorry for our growing away from each other, Manuel, and I am referring more to what creates silence between us than to what divides us as a result of distance. This aloofness of yours, as much Clema's as your own would be natural if I had behaved like an enemy in your lives. But it is inexplicable if you are sure of my unalterable affection. What is going on with you? Is it possible that your work completely impedes your sending a little news about your fragile health, at least once a month? This is unnatural. Something else exists, hidden from our comprehension, that acts within you with greater effectiveness than work and chores. […]*
>
> *[…] Meanwhile I will try to forget this unpleasantness, to tell you abundantly and with precision about the culminating events of the elapsed time.*
>
> *[…] And now the last item, on the list. Paquita and I have gotten married. A group of intimate friends and very close relatives of Paquita's*

[10] Alcázar, Miguel (ed.). *The Segovia-Ponce Letters* (trans. Peter Segal). Columbus, OH, Editions Orphée, Inc., 1989, p. 152. Alcázar includes the date February 1935 in brackets.

[11] For further details about other letters where Segovia recriminates the estrangement of the composer, see Alcázar, Miguel (ed.). *The Segovia-Ponce*…, pp. 33-34, 44-45, 229-231. For information regarding Ponce and his relationship with Segovia through his letters exchanged with Clema Maurel, see BEREA, Adei (editor), *Epistolario íntimo de Manuel M. Ponce y cronología*. Mexico City, 2019, pp.126, 128, 130, 136, 140-141, 163 (non-commercial book). For information regarding the collaboration of Manuel M. Ponce and Andrés Segovia, see L. Madrid, Alejandro. "De México, Concierto para Andrés Segovia: Una visita al *Concierto del Sur* de Manuel M. Ponce". *Heterofonía* XXXI 118-119 (January-December, 1998), pp.106-117 (it may be accessed online at: http://inbadigital.bellasartes.gob.mx:8080/jspui/handle/11271/579)

> *were in attendance. It was modest and discreet, and our life glides along calmly, very quiet and peaceful.[…]*[12]

The *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord is born thence, as a wedding gift for Segovia and Paquita. A letter dated March 22, 1936 –now missing– bears witness of this present by the composer; fragments of it were made public by Corazón Otero in the two works mentioned above:

> *My dear Manuel:*
> *…You have woven an exquisite contrapuntal fabric around your old Prelude, so loved by Falla. You give proof of the inexhaustible resources of your ever youthful imagination, creating a second body for that little work, so perfect, that it could almost have an independent existence. Nevertheless the fit between the two is admirable, to the point that now they are two halves of one indivisible whole. I am renouncing it in advance in favor of the guitar, and I await the other parts of the Suite to constitute a new aspect of the musical life of my instrument. It is the best wedding gift that Paquita and I have received. It benefits both of us at the same time and the using of it produces an ineffable pleasure in us… If you were to send us the completed Suite, it would not be surprising if we were to begin saving to get a harpsichord. To play a work of yours is sufficient reason for that...*[13]

"If you were to send us the completed Suite, it would not be surprising if we were to begin saving to get a harpsichord. To play a work of yours is sufficient reason for that..."[14] Segovia does not seem to notice that such "sufficient reason for that" already existed a full decade earlier: the *Sonata* for guitar and harpsichord composed in 1926; while Segovia mentions he has been studying the piece with the intention of programming its debut in Paris, and later in Brussels, he does not seem to have played it, not even with Paquita, though it would have been only natural for him to do so. Curiously enough, this piece was not composed by request of the guitarist, but by the sole impulse and initiative of the composer, who was interested in creating a dialogue between the keyboard and the guitar, in a sonata that is a small sampler of his musical language.

In any case, if there was any kind of estrangement between both musicians, it was not definitive. While Ponce did not respond anymore to Segovia's requests for baroque works or for the restitution of lost manuscripts, he would notwithstanding finish, some years later, the long-promised *Concert* for guitar, and he would begin a quartet for guitar and strings (violin, viola and cello). However, he would not continue working on the *Suite à duo pour guitare et clavecin* announced on the first page of the *Cahier de Musique*, whose *Prélude* perhaps had the intention to reformulate a piece that was significant for both of them, being at the same time a gift, a token of reconciliation and a good omen for a future life.

The 1936 *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord symbolically marks the end of the most intense period of collaboration between the two artists, a thirteen-year cycle; it is during the greatest part of that period, during Ponce's stay in Paris, that the fundamental works for this instrument are created, while, at the same time, Ponce reaches the synthesis of his language, which would accompany him for the rest of his creative life, and in whose origins lies also the voice of the guitar.

Raúl Zambrano
Brussels, March 21, 2019

Translation
Martha Celis & Enrique Vargas Celis

Autograph sources

- Autograph manuscript in pencil of the *Prélude* for guitar and harpsichord of the red *Cahier de musique*, with no signature number, which resides at the Archivo Histórico del Estado de Zacatecas, at the Colección Especial Manuel M. Ponce. Serie: Partituras. Caja 10. Expediente: 389. Año. 1936. Original. Manuscrito a lápiz.
- Penciled autograph manuscript of the *Prélude*, of the *Pièces* for solo guitar, with no signature number, which resides at Fundación Casa Museo Andrés Segovia, in Linares, Spain.
- Photocopy of the autograph manuscript of the stage music for *La verdad sospechosa*, with no signature number, which resides at the Special Collections of Cuicamatini Library of the Faculty of Music of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 157 y 160. Alcázar includes the date February 1936 in brackets.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.
[14] The harpsichord that they were planning to purchase is the Pleyel reconstruction that Wanda Landowska played. Ponce was conceiving this work with it in mind, and other composers such Manuel de Falla or Francis Poulenc also wrote pieces for it.