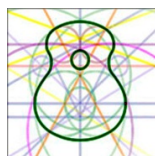


# Francisco Tárrega



## Compliment

Prepared for solo  
guitar by Kirill Voljanin  
from an original handwritten  
manuscript



April's  
fool  
2020

BERGMANN EDITION 2020

Francisco Tárrega, Compliment  
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# Compliment

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Andantino ②---④ CII---①

*mp*

4

7

CII---①

10

CII---① rit.

a tempo

CIV---① CII---①

13

⑤ *p*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for guitar, titled 'Compliment' by Francisco Tárrega. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 6/8 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The score consists of five systems of music. The first system starts with a dynamic marking of *mp* and includes fingering numbers (0, 1, 3, 3, 0) and a circled number 4. The second system starts with a circled number 4. The third system starts with a circled number 7 and includes a circled number 1. The fourth system starts with a circled number 10 and includes a circled number 3 and a *rit.* marking. The fifth system starts with a circled number 13 and includes a circled number 5 and a *p* dynamic marking. The score features various guitar-specific notations, including naturals, slurs, and circled numbers indicating specific techniques or fingering.

15

17

20

23

26

29 CII-----1

32

35 CII-----1

38 CII-----1 rit.

41 **a tempo**

44 CII-----1

47 CIV-----1 CII-----1 CII-----1

51

54

57

59

61

63

## **‘Compliments’, by Francisco Tárrega**

The story behind this piece is so incredible that, if it was not entirely true and documented, it would be ridiculed as a flight of fancy.

The composer Francisco de Asís Tárrega y Eixea (1852 – 1909), known as Francisco Tárrega, revolutionized perceptions of the Spanish guitar. He did so not only by his compositions - to this day, staples of the repertoire - but also by his teaching. By the 1870s, he was at the Madrid Conservatory and gathering around himself a group of disciples who would become the giants of the next generation, such as Pujol, Llobet and Fortea. Among them was an extraordinary figure, now almost entirely forgotten, called Ernesto del Rio Costilla de Rana del Teso Cañera, known as ‘El Niño’.

Before its adoption by serious composers in the nineteenth century, the guitar was the instrument of disreputable street and café performers, low entertainers and gypsies. El Niño was all of these things, and a prodigious drinker and womaniser. He was a man of tiny stature, some 1 m 22 cm (4 ft) in height, hence his nickname. Yet he was a guitarist of extraordinary power and virtuosity. On occasion he would accompany his own singing, which witnesses described as “a piercing soprano of no great refinement but much volume” (one more critical listener described it as “the screech of a jackdaw being eaten by a cat”). Of his skill as a guitarist, however, there can be no doubt. The Honorable Gremio de Músicos de las Calles de Madrid (Honorable Guild of Musicians of the Streets of Madrid) raised a subscription in 1880, following his release from a spell of imprisonment for serial bigamy, to enable him to attend the conservatory and study under the great Tárrega.

At first, Tárrega was repelled by such low company, ostentatiously breathing through a scented handkerchief when in close proximity with the diminutive performer. But on his fourth day El Niño produced, from its wrapping of old sacks, a battered and disreputable guitar made of cheap pine, with a back and sides nailed together from pieces of a wooden packing-case. He proceeded to play a deep lament so powerful and full of pathos that the room fell utterly silent and two young women fainted. Tárrega, transfixed, spontaneously burst into tears. He lifted the little man off his feet and clasped him fervently to his breast, then picked up his own guitar and, on the instant, improvised the immortal melody we now know as ‘Lagrima’ (‘A Tear’).

The two men grew close: Tárrega developed many musical ideas through their association. For example, as a street performer El Niño often sang a risqué comic song full of innuendo and double entendre called “The Capricious Arab”: Tárrega transformed its melody into one of his better-known concert pieces.

El Niño would on occasion duet with Tárrega in concert, Tárrega in his accustomed chair and El Niño sitting on his footstool. It soon became apparent, however, that El Niño’s guitar could not match the volume and tone of Tárrega’s sublime Torres (and to make matters worse, El Niño suffered frequent cuts from the protruding nails and splinters). Secretly, Tárrega and his friend Isaac Albéniz commissioned Torres to make a guitar for El Niño. On 3 July 1894 they presented it to him, in a beautifully ornate tooled leather case. Attached to the case was a note saying “Cumplidos, F Tárrega” (‘Compliments, F Tárrega’).

The guitar was a sensation. Torres used all his art to make an instrument for the little maestro that, while only the size of a modern ukulele, projected an almost orchestral sound with extraordinary volume and presence. An early 20th century listener described it as ‘the voice of Caruso from the body of a gnat’.

Sadly, El Niño survived only ten years after the gift, dying of acute alcoholic poisoning on 8 September 1904 in a municipal workhouse in Valladolid. He died deeply in debt, leaving at least three wives and 32 known children, four of them born in the very workhouse where he spent his last ten months, including one to the matron. The Torres guitar vanished, never to be seen again, probably pawned or sold by one of his widows.



## Discovery of the manuscript

In 2014, the Russian guitarist, composer and Tárrega scholar Kirill Voljanin was on a concert tour in Spain. Scheduled to play in the small town of Galápagos in the province of Guadalajara, he stayed the night at a picturesque old inn. Hanging from the rafters amid hams and dusty wine bottles he noticed a curious antique tooled leather ukulele case. He asked the landlord about it: the landlord shrugged, and said it was a curio collected by his father, now in his late 90s. This piqued Voljanin's interest enough to ask whether he could talk to the old man. The following morning, over churros and coffee, the father told him that the gipsy who had sold him the case for a few pesetas in the late 1960s had told him it originally held a tiny guitar famous throughout Spain, now lost forever, but once heard in the great concert halls of the land. Voljanin, with an inward thrill, realized that this might conceivably be the lost Torres of El Niño, designated SE151 ½, which he had read about in an obscure doctoral thesis. He asked to examine the case, and it was taken down among clouds of dust. Opening it, Voljanin felt an overwhelming connection with Spain's musical past. He explored the storage compartment and, among brittle remnants of catgut strings just one metre in length, found a folded paper. Delicately opening it out, he saw the magical words "Cumplidos, F Tárrega", in the maestro's unmistakable hand.

Even better was to come! Voljanin turned the paper over with a shaking hand, and saw on its obverse a set of hastily-ruled staves and what appeared to be a sketch of a piece of music. It was written in a shorthand notation, with many blots and stains, but legible enough for Voljanin to make out its musical intent. Fetching his own guitar, he played it through and was electrified by the sensation of being in the presence of Tárrega himself. He also had a nagging feeling of déjà vu: although he knew this was no recognized piece from the Tárrega canon, it seemed hauntingly familiar.

Musical scholars have since confirmed that the piece, published here for the first time, is indeed by Tárrega himself. After some six years of deliberation, Anders Van Willem of Utrecht, known throughout the guitar world as the greatest academic authority on Tárrega, confirmed only this year that it shows the unmistakable characteristics of the master's hand and can safely be attributed to the master.

In the end, there is no doubt about the provenance of the piece: Voljanin has at last resolved the mystery of its familiarity. The only known recording by Tárrega was made in 1903, using the Edison Phonograph system of recording onto wax cylinders. In 1982 these cylinders were discovered in a state of disrepair in an abandoned warehouse in Salamanca, and only fragments of their contents survive. In 2019, they were remastered in digital form by the Instituto Tárrega and shared with a select group of the Senior Fellows of the Institute (of whom Voljanin is one). Most are of easily recognized pieces, the opera and piano transcriptions that preoccupied Tárrega in his latter years. There is one, however, that survives only as a very short fragment and had never previously been identified. Voljanin recognized it as the piece presented here – no doubt written specially for El Niño to play on his wondrous tiny Torres.

Thus, Bergmann Edition has the honour and pleasure of presenting a new and original work by Francisco Tárrega, only the second such work to be published in over 120 years. This is indeed a unique and exciting event in the history of guitar music.

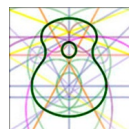
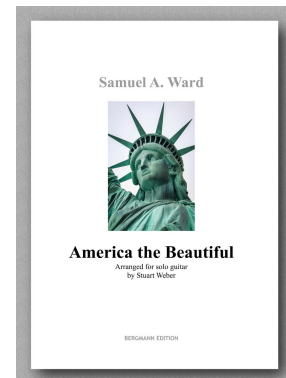
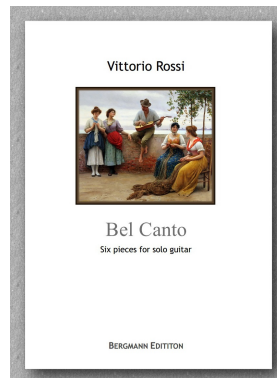
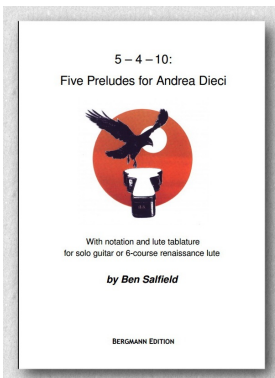
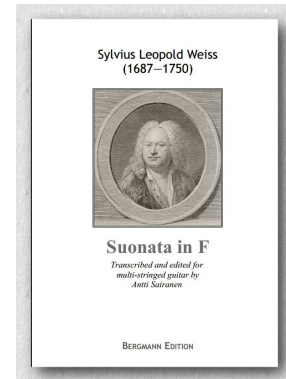
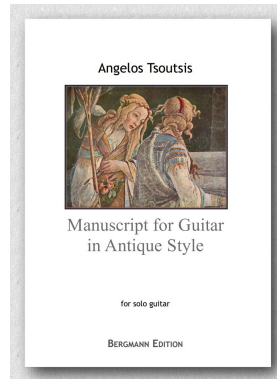
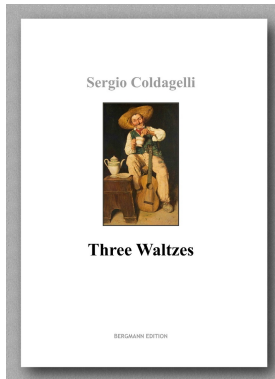
*A. Williams*





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