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FRENCH GUITAR PERFORMANCE PRACTICE BETWEEN 1790 AND 1810: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

by PASCAL VALOIS

In the beginning of the 19th century, the guitar enjoyed a very high level of popularity in Paris.¹ It attracted the newly empowered bourgeoisie whose pursuit of a more sophisticated *art de vivre* often included the playing of a musical instrument. Virtuosos flew in from all over Europe to meet amateurs' ever growing demand for guitar music. Some of the music published by these foreigners after 1808² was handed down to posterity and remains the cornerstone of today's repertoire for classical guitarists.³ This group of musicians and their works have also become the principal focus of research on guitar performance practice.⁴

However, new investigations of unnoticed sources as well as overlooked sources reveal that Paris boasted a vibrant guitar scene between 1790 and 1810. Contrary to the situation that would prevail after 1810, the most prominent figures of this period were France-born guitarists like Charle Doisy (?–c 1807), Trille LaBarre (fl. end of the 18th), Antoine Marcel Lemoine (1763–1816), Antoine de Lhoyer (1768–1853), Jean-Baptiste Phillis (1751–1823) and Pierre Jean Porro (1750–1831). Despite their relative sinking into oblivion, these musicians published a substantial amount of chamber and solo pieces as well as influential guitar methods.⁵ These sources provide us with a very detailed account of

¹ This article is based on my Ph.D. dissertation *Les guitaristes français entre 1770 et 1830: Pratiques d'exécution et catalogue des méthodes* (2009, Laval University). I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture as well as the generous help of Vicky Hügli for the proofreading.

² 1808 marks the arrival of the Neapolitan guitarist Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841) in Paris. Pedagogue, composer and publisher, Carulli managed to establish himself as a seminal figure of Paris guitar-related economy.

³ Among the most well-known guitarist from this period we find the Italians Ferdinando Carulli, Mateo Carcassi (1792–1853) and the Spaniards Fernando Sor (1778–1839) and Dionisio Aguado (1784–1848).

⁴ Here is a short list of some of the most important contributions to the 18th and 19th century guitar performance practice: Paul Wathen Cox, „Classic Guitar Technique and Its Evolution as Reflected in the Method ca. 1770–1850“, Ph.D Dissertation, Indiana University 1978; Danielle Ribouillault, „La technique de la guitare en France dans la première moitié du 19^e siècle“, Ph.D Dissertation, Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1981; Richard Savino, „Essential Issues in Performance Practices of the Classical Guitar, 1770–1850“, in: Victor Anand Coelho, ed., *Performance on Lute, Guitar and Vihuela: Historical Practice and Modern Interpretation*, Cambridge 1997; James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music: From the Renaissance to the Classical Era*, Oxford and New York 2002.

⁵ Although they constitute highly important guitar sources, Trille LaBarre's guitar method, Doisy's chamber music works as well as Porro's guitar works have received very little attention from researchers thus far. There have very few modern editions of these works, except some reprints of Porro's pieces published by Chanterelle and Studio per edizioni scelte and the newly published guitar concertos of Doisy by Chanterelle.

guitar playing techniques, thus revealing practices that are either very difficult or impossible to detect in the dozen of methods as well as in the repertoire published in Paris later in the century. It is thus possible to assert that the performance practice of French guitarists was very much in step with those advocated in vocal, piano and strings tutors of the same period. They also reflect the growing ascendancy of Italian opera. In addition, sources show that the notion that advanced guitar practices blossomed only after 1810 should be reevaluated.⁶ The aim of this article is to describe the interpretation approach of French guitarists between 1790 and 1810. This discussion will include the type of sources used in our research as well as a description of the ornaments and expression devices, with an emphasis on some overlooked techniques such as improvisation, portamento, and harmonics used as ornaments.

Sources: Methods and Repertoire

The period spanning from 1770 to 1830 witnessed the publication of dozens of guitar methods; the 1820s being the most fertile decade. The methods issued in the 1820s tend to be brief, didactic, and to consist mostly of short music pieces and exercises whereas those published around 1800 are often conceived as small scale encyclopedias. For instance, Trille LaBarre's *Nouvelle méthode pour la guitare*⁷ (82 pages) and Charles Doisy's *Principes généraux de la guitare*⁸ (81 pages) discuss at length a wide variety of issues including detailed advice on the interpretation of guitar music. Some 20 years after the passing of Doisy, guitarists still acknowledged the influence of his method by trying to distinguish their methods from his.⁹

Traditionally, research on guitar interpretation has relied almost exclusively upon methods as its primary source of information. However, a thorough analysis of the French repertoire has proven helpful in filling the many gaps left by the methods. Among the pieces published between 1790 and 1810, the works issued by guitarists who were acting as their own publishers are highly significant for the research on performance practice. Musician-publishers like Doisy and Porro had the resources and the technical skills to translate their music and its specific preferred interpretation into musical notation. In these cases, compromises between the original conception of an ideal performance and the flaws inherent to every musical editing process are minimal. Since he was responsible for the publishing and the engraving of his own works, Doisy, for instance, paid meticulous attention to left-hand fingerings. The painstaking care he took in adding these fingerings to his scores provides a rare insight into the subtle art of position shifting.

⁶ For a discussion on this issue, see Tyler/Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music*.

⁷ Trille LaBarre, *Nouvelle méthode pour la guitare*, Paris c1797–1801. We are grateful to Kenneth Sparr for having provided us with a copy of the method from his collection.

⁸ Charles Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, Paris 1801, Reprint Geneva 1979.

⁹ Naissant, *Nouvelle méthode pratique pour la guitare et lyre*, Paris c1825, 1.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a rather difficult notion to tackle because every type of ornamentation implies a certain amount of agogical, melodic, and dynamic freedom. For this article, we will define improvisation as an extemporization device that goes beyond the mere ornamentation of a single note, like the appoggiatura or the trill. Clive Brown has clearly summarized the discrepancy between the extensive musical elaboration favored by musicians of the 19th century and our modern, almost literal execution of the same music.¹⁰ This gap is certainly apparent in today's classical guitar scene, where musicians barely indulge in the addition of a few grace-notes when playing classical and romantic music.

In the repertoire of French guitarists between 1790 and 1810, improvisation is first of all used as a means to connect two sections of the same work. The most obvious case is the fermata before the return of the „A“ section in a rondo and at the end of a concerto movement: in both cases a short ornamental cadenza is required. This type of improvisation is very well documented, especially by Robert D. Levin.¹¹ However, the interpolation of improvisational-type passages in musical genres like the theme and variations as well as the pot-pourri has so far received much less attention. Yet, some French guitarists left written traces of this practice. For instance, Porro provided performers with several improvisational transitions between the variations of his *Ah! vous dirais-je maman varié et modulé pour l'étude de la guitare* (see example 1). The title of the work „[...] pour l'étude de la guitare“ implies that Porro had a didactical purpose in mind. This detail demonstrates that the author aims at transmitting a common practice rather than adding unconventional ornaments to his score.

Ex. 1: Pierre Jean Porro, *Ah! vous dirais-je maman varié et modulé pour l'étude de la guitare*, 17th variations, mes. 10–16 (p. 3) [and mes. 1–7 of the 18th variation].

14

16

1

Var. 18 minore. – Tempo primo

à deux doigts et à deux cordes

D.C.

¹⁰ Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice: 1750–1900*. Oxford and New York 1999, 415.

¹¹ Robert D. Levin, „The Classical Era: Instrumental Ornamentation Improvisation and Cadenzas“, in: Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, eds, *Performance Practice: Music after 1600*, New York 1990, 284.

Doisy employs the same kind of *ad libitum* passages to connect the different sections of his *Six pot-pourris entremêlés d'airs variés et faciles* (see mes. 44 of example 2). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that Doisy and Porro's meticulous notational approach provides insight into an actual improvisational practice.

Ex. 2: Charles Doisy, *Six pot-pourris entremêlés d'airs variés et faciles* (c1800), 5th Pot-pourri, mes. 26–48 (p. 13).

26 **Andante molto**
Moins vite Femmes sensibles.

30 1 3 2 3 1 3 4 3 8
3e pos. 3e pos. 3e pos.

35 3

39 4 8 Arp.

44 **Andante non troppo**
Ad libitum 8 8 Une petite filette.

For these short cadential passages, Doisy and Porro favor a type of writing that is based on quick slurred scales (32nd and 64nd notes). Except for these passages in small notes, this technique is seldom used in the repertoire of French guitarists. However, as early as 1781, fast slurred runs are described in several tutors like those of Pierre-Jean Baillon¹² and Guillaume Pierre Antoine Gatayes (see example 3). They bear a variety of names: „fusée“, „chute“, „escalade“, „tirade“ and „trait“. Although it is not stated clearly, the necessity for performers to be able to connect different sections of a work can explain the recurring presence of this ornamental device in tutors.

¹² Pierre Jean Baillon, *Nouvelle méthode de guitare selon le système des meilleurs auteurs*, Paris 1781, Reprint Geneva 1977, 9.

Ex. 3: Guillaume Pierre Antoine Gatayes, *Méthode pour la guitare simple et facile à concevoir*, op. 8 (c1800) (p. 22).



In many slow tempo movements written for virtuoso players, Doisy uses improvisational-like figuration for a second purpose: extemporizing on a melody. Example 4 demonstrates a type of writing very close to the one used by the violinist Pierre Baillot in ornamented versions of Giovanni Battista Viotti's second movements of concertos.¹³ The close proximity of the worlds of the guitar and violin at the beginning of the 19th century is attested by Doisy himself in his *Principes généraux*.¹⁴ Moreover, Doisy transcribed Viotti's 18th violin concerto for guitar.

Ex. 4: Charles Doisy, *Grand duo concertant pour guitare et piano*, 2nd movement : Lamentabile con espressione, mes. 1–5 (p. 5).

Lamentabile con espressione

The art of the prelude is the third kind of improvisation we can infer from French sources. For Trille LaBarre, the public performance of a piece must be preceded by a short improvised prelude; in his opinion, the competent playing of prelude and accompaniments is the true reason one must practice scales, chords and positions.¹⁵ This type of improvisation justifies the dozen of short preludes present in guitar tutors, together with their didactical purpose.

¹³ Pierre Baillot, *L'Art du violon: Nouvelle méthode*, Paris c1834, Reprint Courlay 2001, 59.

¹⁴ Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, 10–11.

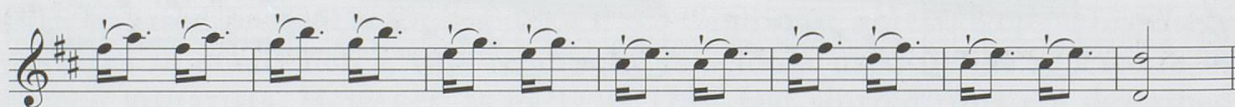
¹⁵ LaBarre, *Nouvelle méthode*, 59.

Portamento

On the guitar, the portamento is achieved by sliding a finger from one note to the next without leaving the fingerboard; the intermediary notes are heard more or less clearly depending on the speed of the movement and the level of pressure applied. The most common term to describe this technique is „glissé“. Interestingly, the importance attributed to this ornament around 1800 is only matched by the disgrace in which it has fallen with today's musicians.¹⁶ Indeed, it was imbedded in Paris performance practice to the extent that the Conservatory vocal tutor (1804) begins with a nine-page exercise designed to help singers develop first-rate portamento.¹⁷

As it is the case for the voice as well as many instruments, the portamento seems to have been introduced to the guitar technique by Italian musicians like guitarists Giacomo Merchi (1730–c1789) and Joseph Bernard Merchi (*fl.* 1750–1755). We believe that Joseph Bernard Merchi is the first guitarist to describe clearly the portamento, in his *Traité des agréments de la musique exécutés sur la guitarre*.¹⁸ Following Merchi's method, the portamento made its way into the majority of French tutors published between 1790 and 1810. Portamentos from that period tend to be defined by swift hand movements connecting two notes separated by a small interval; the intermediary notes are not as resounding as they would be if the slide dragged more. Jean-Baptiste Phillis uses the term „son porté“,¹⁹ as opposed to the „son trainé“. This last type of portamento is executed more slowly and would be favored by the next generation of guitarists (1820–1830). The effect of the „son porté“ is analogous with the short appoggiatura or the grace note. Whereas Doisy believed that only ascending portamento is feasible, Antoine-Marcel Lemoine maintained it could be executed in both directions, as long as it was done with lightness.²⁰ The example 5 is a portamento exercise by Lemoine.

Ex. 5: Antoine Marcel Lemoine, *Méthode de guitare à l'usage des commençans* (c1803) (p. 19).



¹⁶ See Clive Brown, „Notation and Interpretation“, in: Anthony Burton, ed., *A Performer's Guide to Music of the Romantic Period*, London 2002.

¹⁷ Bernard Mengozzi, *Méthode de chant du Conservatoire de musique*, Paris 1804, Reprint Courlay 2005, 15–25.

¹⁸ Joseph Bernard Merchi, *Traité des agréments de la musique exécutés sur la guitarre*, Paris 1777, Reprint Courlay 2003, 20.

¹⁹ Jean-Baptiste Phillis, *Nouvelle méthode pour la lyre ou guitare*, Paris 1799, 8.

²⁰ Antoine Marcel Lemoine, *Nouvelle méthode de guitare à l'usage des commençans*, Paris c1803–1804, Reprint Courlay 2003, 19.

Harmonics

Harmonics on guitar are produced by plucking the string with the right hand while touching lightly the string with the left hand. Their execution is described in almost every guitar tutor. In addition, strings and harp tutors from the beginning of the 19th century have devoted a significant amount of space to them.²¹ On the matter of harmonics, Charles Doisy's case is noteworthy. He begins a rather voluminous section on them (5 pages) with this comment: „I shall not here deal extensively with harmonics theory.“²² He then proceeds to deliver a rather „extensive“ discussion on harmonics; it is probably the most detailed among French guitar tutors. Moreover, Doisy provides readers with an unusually ornamented chart to locate harmonics on the fingerboard; this kind of meticulously-crafted illustration is seldom found in tutors for any instrument (see example 7). We can see that guitarists like Doisy, as well as other musicians, held great esteem for the art of harmonics.

The question of harmonics seems rather straightforward until we compare the amount of space dedicated to them in the tutors with their actual use in the repertoire: there they are scattered at best. There is indeed a patent disproportion between the theory and its application in the pieces. The rationale behind this discrepancy may lie in the fact that harmonics were also used as extemporized ornaments in the pieces as well as in accompaniments. Trille LaBarre's discussion on harmonics implies this type of utilization:

[...] quand à l'exécution, et à leur emploi, nous renvoyons à la seconde partie de cet ouvrage où l'on verra combien ces sons surprenants répandent d'agrément dans les pièces, et même dans l'accompagnement des airs qui en sont susceptibles. Ces sons, en quelque sorte, artificiels[,] ont la faculté d'émouvoir si doucement la sensibilité de l'auditeur, qu'il est nécessaire aux accompagnateurs de n'en faire qu'un usage modéré.²³

In the second movement of his *Grand concerto pour guitare et cordes*, Doisy shows how harmonics can be treated as ornaments (see example 6). In the manner of a violin's notation, there is a small „0“ over notes that should be played as harmonics (*fa* at mes. 10 and 18; *mi* at mes. 11 and 19).

²¹ For instance, Jean-Baptiste Cartier's *L'art du violon* (1798) contains 2 pages of exercises on harmonics and Pierre Baillot's *L'Art du violon* has 6 pages.

²² Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, 63. My translation from the original French: „Je ne traiterai point amplement la théorie des sons harmoniques.“

²³ LaBarre, *Nouvelle méthode*, 52.

Articulation

It has been fully demonstrated that musicians of the mid and late 18th century often found a certain amount of articulation in normal playing desirable.²⁴ Although evidence is far from unequivocal, it seems that guitarists from the 1790s and the 1800s expected a more articulated sound than their counterparts from later generations. On this matter, Trille LaBarre states that „the stroke should be short to allow sounds to be correctly detached.“²⁵ Doisy is far less clear, but his description of the slurred passages implies that slurring is only required when a fast tempo prevents the use of the normal and more difficult articulated stroke (*détaché*).²⁶ Charles Lintant also uses the verb „*détacher*“ when he refers to the execution of non-slurred scales.²⁷ The semantic blurring between „*détacher*“ (to detach) and „*pincer*“ (to stroke) found in some tutors may imply an articulated playing.

The fast-decaying sound of the guitar may have something to do with French guitarists' lack of interest in the staccato technique; they may have felt that reinforcing this acoustic characteristic was not a priority. As a matter of course, the dot over the notes is mainly used as a means to prevent the performer from slurring the dotted notes. This is often seen in context where slurs are used extensively.

Slurring was much more important for 19th century guitarists than it is for today's musicians. This left-hand technique was easier to perform on the early classical guitar, thanks to lower string tension and thinner, narrower fingerboards.²⁸ Also, since most guitarists played without nails on their right hand,²⁹ slurs (always played with the left hand without nails) could be integrated naturally in the playing; stroking with nails while slurring without nails could result in an awkward sound disparity.

Before 1800, slurs were categorized as ornamental, bearing the names „*chute*“ (ascending slur) and „*tirade*“ (descending slur).³⁰ They later lost their ornamental status and evolved into an integral part of guitar writing; then, authors referred to them as „*coulé*“. Although no guitarist describes it in words, analysis of the repertoire shows that slurs were used to put an emphasis on the first note under

²⁴ Among the champion of the articulated playing, we find the influential theorists C. P. E. Bach, Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg and Daniel Gottlob Türk.

²⁵ LaBarre, *Nouvelle méthode*, 51. My translation from the French original: „Le pincé doit être sec afin que les sons en soient mieux détachés.“

²⁶ Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, 63.

²⁷ Charles Lintant, *Nouvelle méthode de lyre et guitare à six cordes*, Paris 1813, 10.

²⁸ The modern guitar string length averages 65–66 cm, whereas it was 63 cm in 1770 and 64 cm in 1820.

²⁹ Despite the common practice of stroking with the flesh, various guitarists and lutenists had played with nails on their right hand since the 17th century. The practice seems to have gained real currency in the 1830s with the endorsement of Dionisio Aguado. Playing with nails is by far the most common technique today.

³⁰ Michel Corette, *Les dons d'Apollon, méthode pour apprendre facilement à jouer de la guitare* Paris 1762, Reprint Courlay 2003, 12 and Antoine Bailleux, *Méthode de guitare par musique et tablature* Paris 1773, Reprint, Geneva 1972, 8–9.

the slur. The stressed note could either be a dissonance, a note that required an expressive accent, or it could fall on a strong beat. Slurs also functioned as a means to facilitate the execution of fast melodic lines, as stated above by Doisy. Unslurred fast runs are foreign to guitarists of our period. Furthermore, slurs serve the purpose of diversifying the type of stroke, thus making the passage lighter and more fluid. This last function of the slur was already clear for Michel Corette in 1762: „Those who do not possess the «chûte» and the «tirade» will never be able to play the pieces well. The constant plucking of the right hand makes for unpleasant performance.”³¹ The placement of slurs finally has to concede to the technique limitation of the instrument; open strings prevent the execution of many ascending slurs.

Vibrato

Although vibrato has never been a French guitarists' prerogative, it seems that many of them favored the technique. In 1822, Francesco Molino made this rather pejorative comment: „French use [vibrato] frequently to prolong the sound, thus trying to correct the flaws of an instrument that cannot sustain the sound.”³² This French tradition has its roots in the practice of the Baroque era; Robert de Visée (c1658–1725) refers to vibrato as „miaulement” in his table of ornaments from the 1680s. It would survive under the name „plainte” up to 1762, when it found its way into Corette's guitar tutor.³³ After this time, it would bear a variety of names: „sons soutenus”, „sons prolongés”, „sons flattés”, „sons balancés” and more often, „sons tremblés”.

In 1810, Antoine Marcel Lemoine argues that vibrato should be performed only in slow-tempo movement. According to him, high positions on the fingerboard (the 5th position to the 12th) are more suitable than low positions to achieve a good vibrato. He echoes the discussion on the subject found ten years earlier in Jean-Baptiste Phillis' *Nouvelle Méthode*. Analysis of the repertoire shows that the vibrato is indeed used most of the time in slow and minor-key movements. Furthermore, guitarists tend to add vibrato to passages consisting of thirds when they are performing on the three higher strings, on high positions. Finally, the use of vibrato in the repertoire is consistent with Robin Stowell's vibrato definition for the violin of the same period: it is utilized as an ornament rather than as an actual component of the right hand technique.³⁴

³¹ Michel Corette, *Les dons d'Apollon*, 12. My translation from the French original: „Ceux qui ne possèdent pas la chute, et la tirade ne jouent jamais bien des pièces. Car d'entendre toujours pincer de la main droite est un jeu désagréable.”

³² Francesco Molino, *Nouvelle méthode complète pour guitare ou lyre*, Paris 1822, 21–22. My translation from the French original: „Les Français en font usage assez fréquent pour prolonger le son, et chercher à corriger en quelque sorte l'imperfection d'un instrument dont le son ne saurait être soutenu.”

³³ Corette, *Les dons d'Apollon, méthode pour apprendre facilement à jouer de la guitare*, 13.

³⁴ Robin Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Cambridge 1985, 203.

Arpeggiation

The arpeggiation of chords is another ornament that is truly embedded in French Baroque performance practice; harpsichordists like D'Anglebert and Couperin, as well as lutenists like Gaultier, Gallot and Mouton have given precise information about the technique of arpeggiation. For Clive Brown, it is still a seminal type of ornament in the 19th century: „It seems in some respects to have been regarded by pianists as their substitute for portamento and vibrato, as a means of highlighting or embellishing selected notes.“³⁵ Even though guitarists had the possibility to use portamento and vibrato, they relied heavily on arpeggiation for expressive purpose. As it was the case for the vibrato, Charles Doisy believed that arpeggiation should be executed in slow movements.³⁶

An important aspect of the execution of arpeggiated chords is the appropriate agogic position of the arpeggio in regard to the beat. Most tutors fail to answer this question unequivocally. However, Trille LaBarre agrees with what seems to be the most common practice at the end of the 18th century: the first note of the arpeggio (usually, the lowest) should fall on the beat.³⁷ He adds that the last note should take half the value of the arpeggiated chord. Nevertheless, it would be unrealistic to assume that every musician refrains from using this kind of ornament in a creative and spontaneous fashion. The repertoire contains many examples where a pre-beat execution of the arpeggio seems desirable. For instance, in example 8, an on-beat execution would blur both the imitation between the two guitars and the precision of the dynamics, which is a structural element in this fragment. In addition, the notation suggests that the last of the arpeggio must be played simultaneously with the lowest note of the other voice.

Ex. 8: Jean-Baptiste Phyllis, *Nouvelle méthode pour la lyre ou guitare*, „Valse pour deux guitares“, mes. 26–32 (p. 38).

³⁵ Brown, „Notation and Interpretation“, 25.

³⁶ Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, 49.

³⁷ LaBarre, *Nouvelle méthode*, 38. Most theorists, like Türk, also believe that the arpeggio must begin on the beat. See Sandra Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*, 286.

Appoggiaturas, Grace-Notes, Trills, Mordents and Turns

Appoggiaturas and grace-notes are certainly the most common ornaments in a French guitarist's repertoire. Although they are not discussed in the tutors issued shortly before our period (Corette 1762, Bailleux 1773, Baillon 1781), appoggiaturas were present in the guitar music of that time. The first tutor to demonstrate them is LaBarre's *Nouvelle méthode*, around 1797. LaBarre called the descending appoggiatura „chute“ and the ascending one „coulé“. Almost at the same time, Phillis used „chute“ for the ascending appoggiatura and „tirade“ for the opposite. Doisy called this last one „port de voix“. This heterogeneous terminology inherited from the French Baroque would give way to a standard nomenclature around 1810.

Most guitarists agree with theorists like Tartini, Quantz, Leopold Mozart and C.P.E. Bach that the appoggiatura should be played on the beat and that it should take half the value of the note it precedes. However Phillis diverged from his peers by describing a shorter appoggiatura: „[Appoggiaturas] are often played with a bass note; the bass note should be stroked with the first note of the appoggiatura, whether this note has a value or not.“³⁸ It seems that Phillis is referring here to what we call a grace-note. In fact, many „small notes“ in the French repertoire are more likely to be played as a grace-note rather than appoggiatura with regard to their context. However, Doisy is the only author to clearly discuss the performance of grace-notes.

Contrary to its role in other instruments' repertoire, the trill is used only sparingly in guitar music. For Doisy, guitarists should play trills even though he admits they are difficult to perform on the guitar: „If we should play only what is easy, there would be fewer virtuosos today.“³⁹ Between 1790 and 1810, authors would propose many types of trills like the „cadence parfaite“, the „cadence feinte“ and the „cadence jetée“. Once again, this variety attests to the persistence of French Baroque practice; the trill would settle to a standard form after 1810.

Concerning the execution of the trill, French guitarists followed the lead of many theorists of their time, including Louis Adam and Ludwig-Wenzel Lachnitz, writers of the Paris Conservatory piano tutor (1798). They all agreed that the trill should start with the ornamental note and should end with some kind of turn. This practice would be challenged by their peers around 1820s.

The technique of mordent is discussed in many tutors predating our period; it is absent from both the repertoire and the methods from the 1790s onward. Nevertheless, it was probably still used as an improvised ornament. The turn is also seldom found in guitar repertoire between 1790 and 1810. Phillis, one of the only authors to discuss it, believed that even if turns are more brilliant and easier to perform than trills, they require a lot of experience from the performer.⁴⁰

³⁸ Phillis, *Nouvelle méthode*, 7.

³⁹ Doisy, *Principes généraux de la guitare*, 62. My translation from the original French: „Si [...] on n'exécutait que ce qui est facile, nous n'aurions pas aujourd'hui autant de virtuoses.“

⁴⁰ Phillis, *Nouvelle méthode*, 11.

Conclusion

The scope of this article does not permit a comprehensive survey of the performance practice of the French guitarists around 1800. Nevertheless, the examination of both their tutors and their repertoire shows a richness and a complexity of practices far remote from the accepted wisdom concerning that period; the launching of a true „modern“ guitar tradition is often associated with the advent of Carulli's popularity around 1810. Also, thanks to guitarist-publishers (and often engravers) like Doisy and Porro, we are able to study rare first-hand accounts of the evolution of the guitar practices. It is probable that the minute attention they gave their scores allows for an accurate representation of the interpretation customs of their time; the major companies like Richault, Dufaut et Dubois, and Janet et Cotelie, that took over the publishing of guitar scores in the 1810s were unlikely to have guitar experts' on hand.

The interpretation of the guitar in France of the 1790s and 1800s also reflects the transition between the Baroque performance practice and the growing influence of the Italian opera in Paris. For instance, the diversity of trills proposed by the authors progressively gave way to more modern Italian-related ornaments like the portamento and the extemporization. In addition, guitarists seem to enjoy a certain liberty with their interpretation practice; every tutor is conceived in a fairly personal manner. Contrarily, the hegemony of Carulli in the 1810s and 1820s would accelerate a kind of standardization in the didactic approach and the presentation of ornaments. We surmise that guitarists would benefit greatly by discovering the vast French repertoire of the 1790s and the 1800s as well as its rich and subtle performance practice.

