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MUSIC ON THE SECONDARY LEVEL

A TEACHING GUIDE

COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS:

Fernando SOR:
Variations on a Theme from
THE MAGIC FLUTE, by Mozart

Presentation: Marcel Gervais

Music Examinations of June 1975

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VARIATIONS ON A THEME FROM WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART,
by Fernando Sor (1778-1839), Spain.

RECORDING: ERATO ESM-8064.

The Author.

Fernando Sor was born on February 14, 1778. At the age of five he was already composing little pieces on his father's guitar and violin. He was placed in the hands of a teacher of violin and violoncello.

During his adolescent years Fernando Sor was a boarder at the famous monastery of Montserrat where he received an excellent musical formation. He studied harmony and counterpoint under the direction of Padre Fray Anselmo Viola.

During his sojourn at the monastery, where he remained until the age of sixteen, Sor was fascinated by the six-string guitar. (This was an important innovation. The guitar such as we know it today dates from the end of the Eighteenth Century, but its history goes back 4500 years into ancient Persia.

The works of Fernando Sor are very numerous, the most valuable being without doubt his études (studies). He was a great admirer of Mozart. The work being studied, Variations on a Theme from Mozart, is indeed a true composition of Sor. However, the theme of "The Magic Flute" is always present.

Fernando Sor died in Paris on July 8, 1839. He is buried in the Cemetery of Montmartre.

The Work.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME FROM MOZART, by Fernando Sor.

--The THEME, in E major, is written in two parts:

1st Part: 8 bars repeated;

2nd Part: 16 bars without reprise.

--First Variation: E major (2 parts, 8 measures each, repeated).

Note: Alternation of thirty-seconds and sixteenths.
Tied notes and separate notes (in keeping with guitar technique).

--Second Variation: E minor (two parts, eight measures each, repeated).

Note: Different harmonic structure.
Embellishments.

--Third Variation: E major (two parts, eight measures each, repeated).

Note: Frequent use of arpeggios in sixteenths.

--Fourth Variation: E major (two parts, eight measures each, repeated).

Characteristics: Intervals in sixteenth-note triplets, followed by a third and a rapid arpeggio.

--Fifth Variation: E major (two parts, eight measures each, repeated).

Note: The presence of sixteenth-note triplets.

--Sixth Variation: E major...twenty-two bars.

Characteristics: Sixteenth-note triplets; long arpeggios with the finale punctuated by chords.

THE MAGIC FLUTE, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

A few words about this work of Mozart which inspired the Variations by Fernando Sor.

Mozart's "Magic Flute" belongs in the category of SINGSPIELS (opera with some spoken dialogue, as opposed to Grand Opera, where everything is sung).

List of works of the same kind:

The Magic Flute (1791);

The Abduction from the Seraglio (1782);

Zaide (1779).

Liederspiels: Bastien and Bastienne (1768);
The Theatre Director (1786).

The SINGSPIEL.

A descendant of the French "opéra comique" and the Italian Opera Buffa, the SINGSPIEL has the following national antecedents:

the college comedy (Schulkomödie); and

the impromptu comedy (Stegreif Komödie).

The SINGSPIEL came into existence in the north of Germany, due to the troops of wandering comedians (actors) whose repertory consisted of foreign adaptations put to music by Standfuss and Hiller.

Hiller's work extends up to 1782. (Hiller: 1728-1804) Inspired principally by the French titles of Sedaine, Favard and Anseaume, his scores contain lieder (art songs), duets, and chorales of a certain quality.

While the SINGSPIEL of the North (of Germany) readily adopted the French style (opéra-comique), the Viennese SINGSPIEL shows on the contrary a marked preference for the Italian opera-buffa. Its best-known representatives are Umlauf, Holzbauer, Ditters von Dittersdorf and Gluck (who, moreover, was influenced by the French style).

The various tendencies of the French opéra-comique are found in varying degrees in the German SINGSPIEL: exoticism, seriousness, historical bent, people-oriented, an inclination towards the fanciful and towards middle-class drama, light intrigues alternating with more serious subjects.

Until 1770 German opera had been of the Italian opera sort. It is with the SINGSPIEL that an opera of national character was created. And it to Mozart that we owe the first really significant contributions.

The Variation.

- The Variation is a technique which permits the modification of a given piece of music, from the standpoint of melody, rhythm, harmony or counterpoint.
- The ornamental variation adds numerous ornaments to the melody. One can also change the very character of the melody by changing the time, the measure, the rhythm, the mode and the harmonies.
- In the contrapuntal variations the theme remains generally unchanged but is enriched with counter-parts.

E.g.: the passacaglia, the chaconne, etc.

(From Frank Onnen)

--The Process:

The VARIATION exists since the very discovery of music. It is a form which permits the varying or transforming of a theme with regard to:

its melody;
 its tempo;
 its rhythm;
 its tonality;
 its mode (major, minor, natural, etc.);
 its harmony.

--"Strict" Variations and "Free" Variations.

--Strict Variations. The composer generally uses either harmonic or rhythmic resources, with the same number of measures that were in the theme.

He creates the variation by "embroidering" the theme.

Free Variations. The composer uses elements of the theme. He invents, embroiders, and oftentimes operates outside of all the rules established at the beginning and dealing with:

melody;
 harmony;
 rhythm;
 tempo;
 etc.

The Performing Artist.

Narciso Yepes --born 1927--Spain.

The guitarist Narciso Yepes was born in Lorca, Spain, in 1927. At a tender age he displayed an unusual talent for the guitar, which he studied, along with harmony and composition, at the Conservatory of Valencia.

His first public recital, which took place in December, 1947, with the Madrid Chamber Orchestra, was a sensation in the musical world. From then on Yepes was acclaimed enthusiastically at his many recitals.

In 1950 he was recognized internationally at Paris during a concert with the Madrid Chamber Orchestra, at which he performed the Concierto de Aranjuez (a work present on the secondary school programs of 1972-3-4).

The VARIATIONS ON A THEME FROM MOZART are performed superbly by this outstanding artist, who has succeeded in bringing to this work all the charm and delicacy that Fernando Sor would have required.

Marcel Gervais.

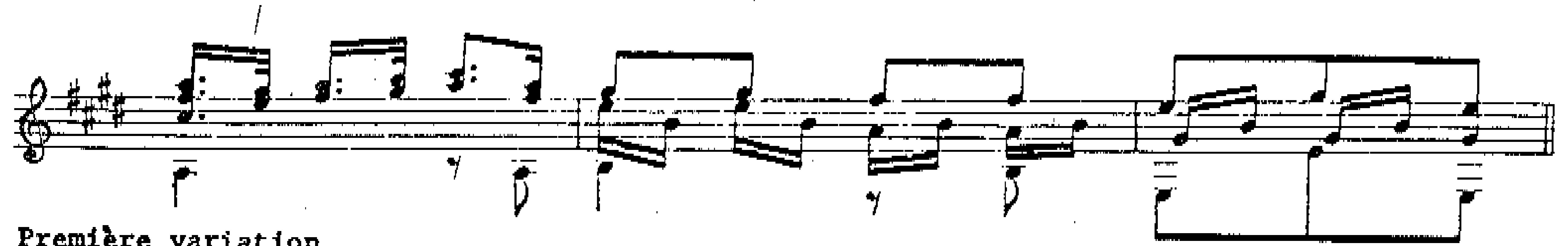
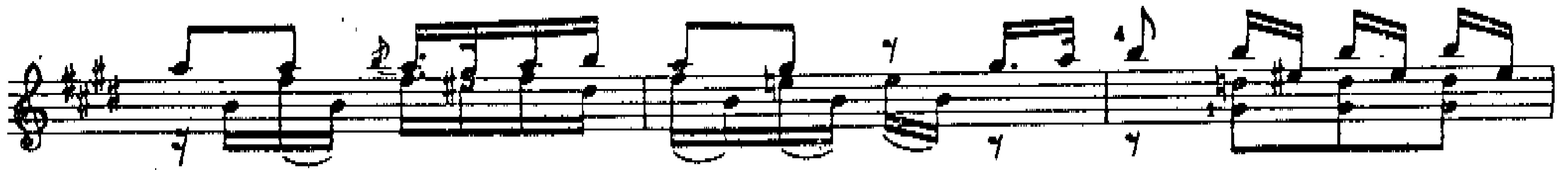
VARIATIONS SUR UN THÈME DE MOZART

Thème

Andante

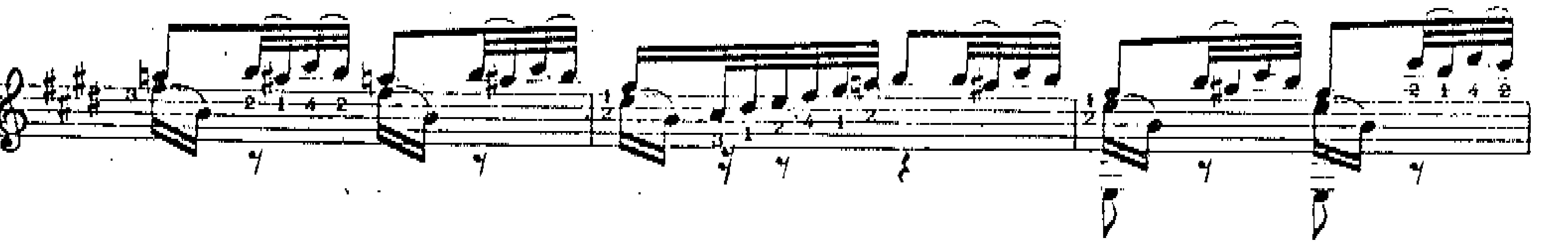
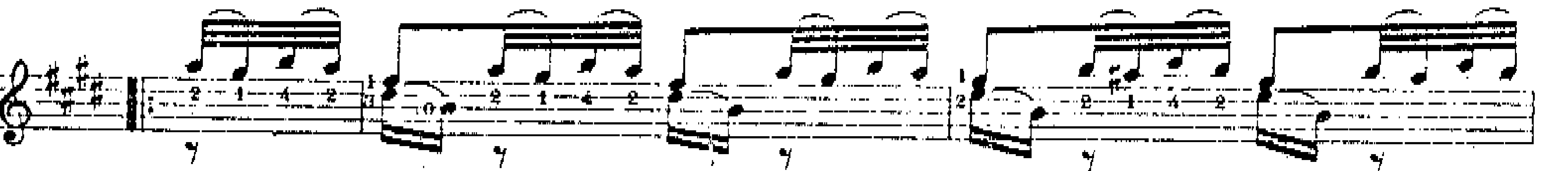
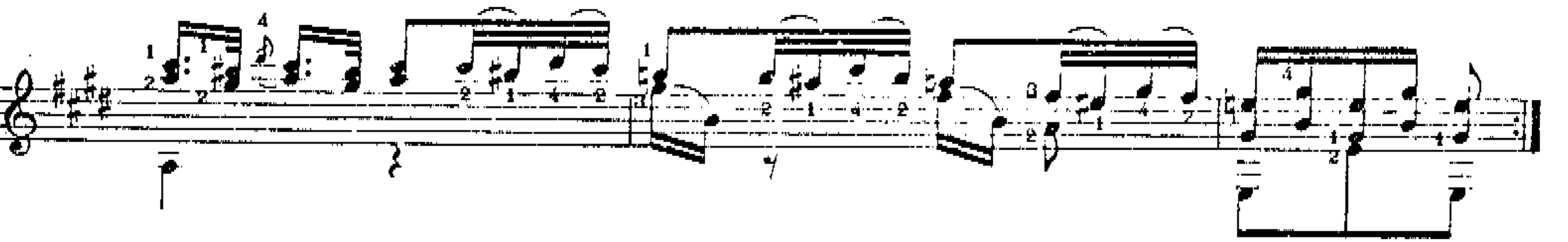
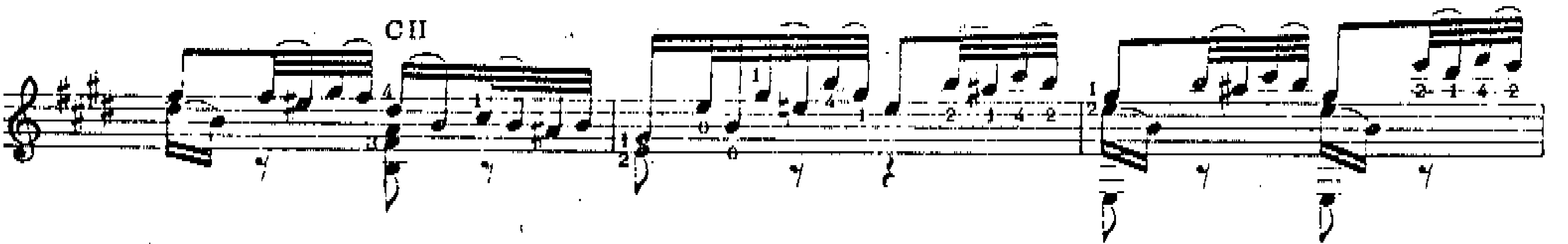
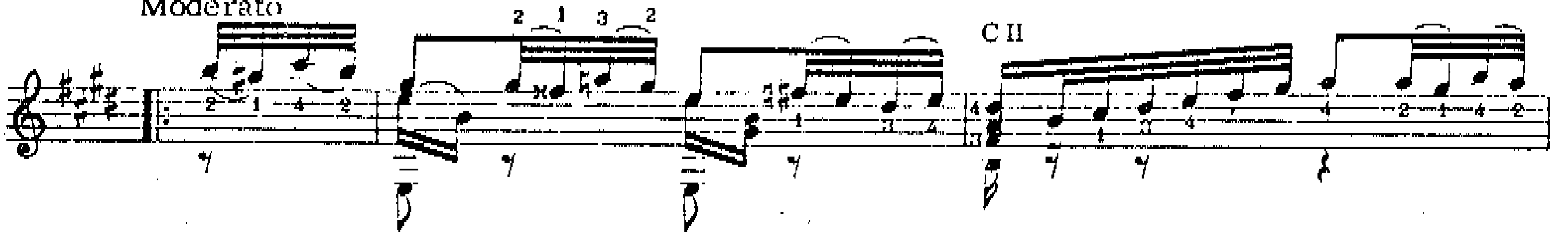
FERNANDO SOR

The image displays a musical score for guitar, titled "VARIATIONS SUR UN THÈME DE MOZART" by Fernando Sor. The score is organized into seven systems, each representing a different section of the piece. The first system is the "Thème" (Theme), marked "Andante". It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff, with a bass line indicated by a dashed line below the staff. The theme consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and rests. The subsequent six systems represent variations on the theme. Each variation introduces new rhythmic patterns, such as triplets, sixteenth-note runs, and slurs, while maintaining the melodic structure of the original theme. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and dynamic markings (e.g., 'f' for forte). The overall style is characteristic of 19th-century guitar music, emphasizing technical skill and melodic invention.



Première variation

Moderato



Seconde variation
Adagio (Mineur)

Troisième variation
Moderato

Quatrième variation

Allegretto

CIX

CII

3

-3

a i m p i m a a i m

5

3

3

3

p p i m a

3

5

3

3

p p i m a

3

3

3

3

p p i m a

3

3

3

3

p p i m a

Cinquième variation
Allegro

Sixième variation
Presto

