

# *Félix Máximo López: A review of the new edition by Alberto Cobo*

JOHN COLLINS

The vast amount of keyboard music composed in Spain during the 18th century and preserved in various cathedral, monastery and parish archives as well as in the great National collections at Madrid and Barcelona has been seriously neglected when it comes to modern editions. Even with regards to acknowledged masters such as Cabanilles and Elías, there remain many works yet to be made available to performers in the *Obras Completas* started many years ago but which have now seemingly ground to a halt. Of the later masters, particularly those who fulfilled duties at the Chapel Royal, an edition of the *Complete works* of José Lidón is being brought out by Guy Bovet, whilst the *Seis Fugas* by Sessé were published by Almonte Howell, other pieces by P Samuel Rubio.

Félix Máximo  
López  
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Félix Máximo  
López: Integral de  
la música para  
clave y pianoforte.  
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cargo de Alberto Cobo. Published by  
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López has been represented by a few organ pieces scattered in anthologies, as well as a substantial volume of keyboard pieces published in 1983 by Lanham Maryland University Press of America, *The Keyboard Works of Félix Máximo López: An Anthology*, selected and edited by Professor Alma Espinosa, whose doctoral thesis submitted in 1976 *The Keyboard Works of Félix Máximo López (1742-1821)* remains the only substantial account and detailed analysis (including a thematic catalogue) of the life and works of this composer.

Recently Sociedad Española de Musicología published 2 sets of *Minuet afandangado con variaciones*, edited by Genoveva Gálvez, of which the set in D minor also featured in the edition by Professor Espinosa. However up to now, no complete edition of the non-organ denominated pieces has appeared, so it was with great anticipation that I opened the above volume. This handsomely produced book comprises 3 pages of introduction and 296 pages of music preceded by a neatly-centred portrait of López which however takes up rather less than half a page. The quality of the printed page is excellent, with 6 systems per page and an at times generous spacing between notes which does help to avoid some tricky page turns. It is unfortunate that my copy does not lie flat on the music stand until after page

However, right from the start we run into difficulties- whilst there is an "index" at the back of the volume, which has just two entries, The Introduction, followed by The Integral. There is **no** table of contents, which means that the aspiring performer must compile his own, surely quite unnecessary in a volume of this standard of production.

In fact the book contains a *Pieza de Clave*, 13 sonatas in from two to four movements, 2 further sonatas for four hands, a *Capricho*, two rondos, a *Stracto de la Polaca en variaciones*, as well as the two sets of *Minuet Afandangado variations* mentioned above and a set of *Variaciones del Fandango español al fortepiano*.

There is also **no** detailed critical commentary giving details of sources consulted for each piece and a complete listing of deviations from the original, (there are a few footnotes at the bottom of appropriate pages where the editor has amended the source reading) neither is there any reference to the other editions of and articles about López's works, particularly those by Professor Espinosa.

The introduction does list sources for the keyboard works of López known to survive, although gathering all the *Juegos de Versos* under MS 1735, rather than presenting them under the individual MSS 1735-1741, but fails to make clear from which MSS the pieces included in the present edition were taken. (For the pieces other than the minuets and the fandango the source is in fact MS1234 at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid). The variant readings of the *Minuet Afandangado in G minor* from the Cathedral Archives of Orihuela are not included, neither are the 2 extra variations from that source by Carlos Dumonchau.

In the introduction Cobo cites Longo's editions of Scarlatti and Nin's of Soler as his models. As these editions contain no critical apparatus either and are demonstrably smothered in editorial "enrichments", it is somewhat puzzling how they could be taken as yardsticks for editorial excellence at the start of the 21st century. Also, whilst I can understand up to a point why the two sonatas for four hands appear together at the end of this edition (in the original source they appear as items 7 and 8), what is far less understandable is why the order of the original MS has not been followed: the *Capricho* in this new edition is inserted between the *Sonata in G* and the *Sonata in A*, whilst in the original MS it follows the *Pieza de Clave* as item no. 2. In the original MS, the 3-movement piece following the *Stracto de Polacca* is untitled, but here it is called *Sonata* (which it clearly is) without a note that the editor has chosen to call it so. The 10th item in the original MS is entitled simply *Andte*, here it is called *Rondo* (which again it clearly is).

The editor has given the individual sonatas a 'C.A.C.' number (Catalogación Alberto Cobo) which is helpful, but fails to state why he has apparently reversed the order of the sonatas which feature as items 18 and 19 in the original MS. (C.A.C 12 and 11 in the modern edition) With regards to the music itself, there are some pieces which contain virtuosic elements including passages for the LH in octaves (*Sonata in G minor* and the *Minuets Afandangados*), wide leaps for the RH and crossed hands (In the *Pieza de Clave*) which hark back to Scarlatti and Albero, as well as Soler, although the faster tempos are frequently modified by "non molto". Many of the movements marked minuet in the sonatas

also contain RH octave passages as well as the slow movement of sonata C.A.C. 9. and the Coda of the *Minuet Afandangado in G minor*. The *Capricho* shows some kinship with the set of 15 preserved in MS 770 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid which are marked "para órgano"- the bass does not descend below C which makes it playable on the organ, although the instrument at which López presided did possess 16foot contras which made lower sounding notes playable. The great majority of the sonatas show an awareness of the Viennese style, particularly Haydn whose pieces were well known in the Peninsula, successfully combining melodic resource with Alberti basses.

There is no proper discussion of style; although Albero and Gallés are mentioned in passing, there is no attempt to develop López's assimilation of their style (in his long life we should remember that he would have been 15 when Scarlatti died, and 14 when Albero died, he was only some 13 years younger than Soler, and also he would almost certainly have been aware of the 30 virtuosic sonatas by Vicente Rodrigues 1690-1770, Cabanilles' successor at Valencia).

His undoubted acquaintance with the work of Haydn is recognised, it being stated that the beginning of the first movement of the *Sonata no C.A.C. no 7 in C* is a transcription of Haydn's *Symphony no 56*, however the observation that *Sonata C.A.C. no 12 in C* is essentially no different stylistically from that of Haydn does not go on to explain that this is because it is a somewhat free transcription of Haydn's *Symphony no 75 in D*. A valuable and indispensable article about this area of López's work is: *Félix Máximo López, Franz Joseph Haydn and the Art of Homage* by Professor Espinosa, published in *Early Keyboard Journal* Vol 16/17 1998/9, pp 133-92.

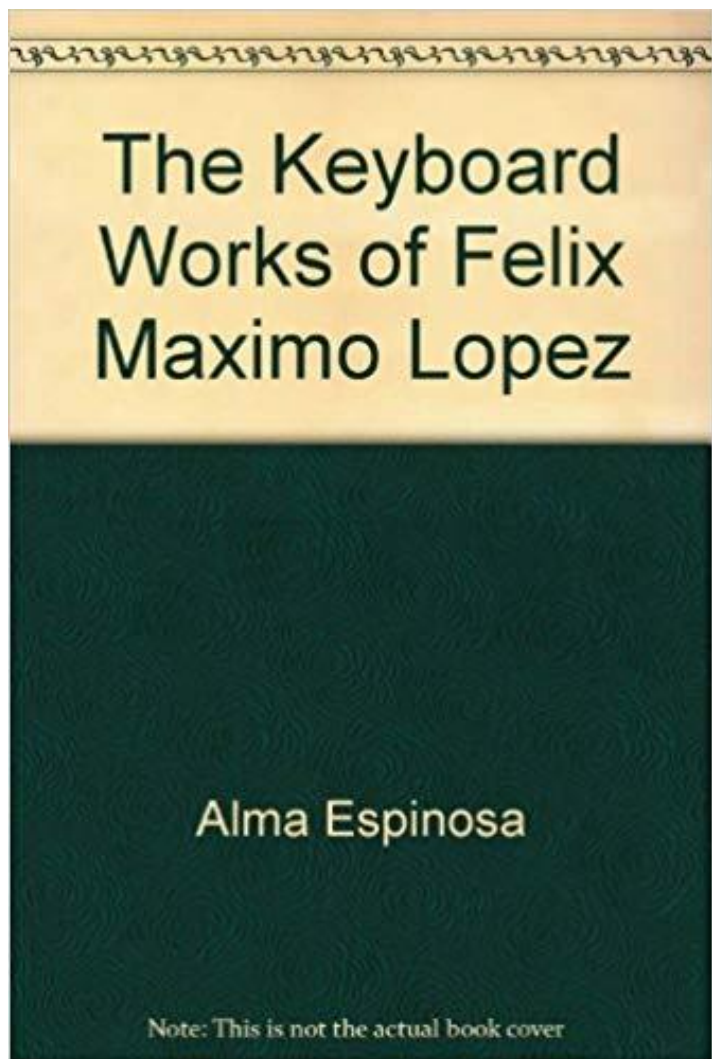
Neither are there discussions about the instruments upon which this repertoire could have been played, (how for instance might López have played the passage on p101 commencing in bar 151 where there is a pedal A to be held in the bass for 4 bars- the brief comment in a footnote in the introduction about 2 pianos with pedals can hardly be considered as helpful in interpreting this type of passage, also how to interpret the comments "Más despacio mancando" on p140 bars 25-29).

Most of the pieces published here are written in the pianistic style also used in pieces clearly intended for organ, although several of them include LH passages which descend below the lowest note C on the organ keyboard. In such instances it was not unknown for the organist to re-arrange the notes to fit! A discussion of the potential for realisation on the clavichord would have been invaluable.

The problem of ornamentation is also left undiscussed- some advice upon the *appoggiaturas*, main-note and upper note commencements of trills as well as the possibilities of introducing extra ornamentation would have been most helpful to non specialists who wish to investigate these splendid pieces.

Whilst some fingering has been added, it would have been helpful to have tried to place fingering processes in a contemporary context; to the best of my knowledge López himself does not mention any procedures in any of his MS including his treatise on accompaniment. But perhaps the biggest drawback to the amateur player is the use of the

old C-clefs; whilst it would be marvellous if every player could read these as fluently as the G and F-clefs, this is sadly far from the case, and as nearly every movement contains quite lengthy passages in these C-clefs, the desire to retain the graphology of the original, laudable though it is, will surely lead to a considerable reduction in the number of players who will purchase this edition; it is quite difficult enough to wrestle with the virtuoso crossed-hands passages in the *Pieza de Clave* without having to contend additionally with unfamiliar clefs.



Alma Espinosa, *The Keyboard Works of Félix Máximo López*. © 1983 by Rowman & Littlefield.

Castronova, instead of Castronovo, which echoes the misprint in Professor Espinosa's dissertation.

It is also remarkable that the brief account of the composer in the new edition is rounded off by a quote from Severio which is also used by Professor Espinosa to conclude chapter one of her work. There is no reference to the location of the unpublished Papers by Barbieri at the Biblioteca Nacional, and the list of pieces presumed missing as well as those held at locations other than the Chapel Royal is also easily accessible in Appendix 2 of Professor Espinosa's work. Both Professor Espinosa and Mr Cobo quote the same *décima* from López's poetical writings, clearly this particular poem speaks most profoundly to all of his researchers.

With regards to the details of the events in the life of López, it is really remarkable that so much of the introduction is so similar to points made by Professor Espinosa in chapter one of her thesis cited above, including details of his 1st marriage made in secret (incidentally, the English translation errors in locating the ceremony as taking place at the magistrate's office, it ought to read Iglesia magistral de San Justo y Pastor in Alcalá), the uncertainty about how he earned his living prior to 1775 and the description of the difficult examination (*Oposición*) which musicians had to pass in order to be admitted to the Chapel Royal. Mr Cobo does not mention the lengthy poem by Iriarte which describes these tests in detail. There follow further amazing similarities in comments about the actions of the 2 sons of López during the French occupation, as well as the privations suffered by court musicians during this period. There is a misprint in the new edition where the reduced salary of the 2 organists is shown as 808 reales, not 12,808 reales. However, in what is an astounding coincidence, the name of the other organist at the Chapel Royal is printed as

Certainly this well-produced edition has done much to fill the gaps in our knowledge of 18th century Spanish keyboard music, but for the reasons stated above it satisfies neither the scholar because of its lack of a critical apparatus and bibliography, nor the enthusiastic amateur who will not wish to wrestle with page upon page of C-clefs after paying out 5000 pesetas (30 euros)

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