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“SPIRITUAL” (1926) BY PIERRE-OCTAVE FERROUD: REFLECTIONS AND CRITERIA FOR CONSTRUCTING A PRACTICAL EDITION

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ABSTRACT: The present article explores the methodology, the resources, and the transcription procedures used in the creation of a practical revised edition of the solo classical guitar work “Spiritual” (1926) by Pierre-Octave Ferroud (1900-1936). The work, originally destined to Andrés Segovia but never revised nor played by him, was later recreated by Ferroud for other instrumentations in 1927 (piano four hands) and in 1928 (orchestra). The new solo classical guitar transcription was prepared under directives that are grounded in the concepts of thème et version by Pierre Schaeffer (1966), together with the speech acts theory by John Langshaw Austin (1962), a combination that was used by Bittencourt (2020) to determine the nature of a music score and its function inside the communicative process between composer and interpreter. Thus, the transcription process attempted to triangulate a new solo guitar version for that work from its three different instrumental versions existent in score, summarizing the composer’s line of evolution through the identification of a possible “original idea” imagined by him. Throughout the process, the memory of the composer and the sound space in music were explored, with these elements being connected by means of an interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Transcription Procedures, Solo Classical Guitar, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, Thème et Version, Interdisciplinary Approach.

“SPIRITUAL” (1926) PIERRE-OCTAVE FERROUD: PRATİK BİR BASKI OLUŞTURMAK İÇİN DÜŞÜNCELER VE KRİTERLER

ÖZ: Bu makale, Pierre-Octave Ferroud’nun (1900-1936) solo klasik gitar eseri “Spiritual” (1926)’un pratik bir gözden geçirilmiş baskısının yaratılmasında kullanılan metodolojiyi, kaynakları ve transkripsiyon prosedürlerini araştırmaktadır. Başlangıçta Andrés Segovia’ya adanmış ancak hiçbir zaman gözden geçirilmemiş veya kendisi tarafından çalınmamış olan eser, daha sonra Ferroud tarafından 1927’de (dört el piyano) ve 1928’de (orkestra) diğer enstrümanlar için yeniden yazılmıştır. Yeni solo klasik gitar transkripsiyonu, Pierre Schaeffer’in (1966) thème et version kavramları ile John Langshaw Austin’in (1962) konuşma eylemleri teorisi temelinde hazırlanan yönergeler ve Bittencourt’un (2020) kullandığı bir kombinasyon altında hazırlanmıştır. Besteci ile yorumcu arasındaki iletişim sürecinde bir müzik notasının doğasını ve işlevini belirlemek için kullanılmıştır. Böylece transkripsiyon süreci, notada mevcut olan üç farklı enstrümantal versiyondan o eser için yeni bir solo gitar versiyonunu üçgenlemeye çalışmış ve bestecinin evrim çizgisini, kendisi tarafından hayal edilen olası bir "orijinal fikir"’in tanımlanması yoluyla özetlemiştir. Süreç boyunca bestecinin hafızası ve müzikteki ses alanı araştırılmış ve bu unsurlar disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla birbirine bağlanmıştır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Transkripsiyon Prosedürleri, Solo Klasik Gitar, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, Thème et Version, Disiplinlerarası Yaklaşım.

INTRODUCTION

“Spiritual” is a miniature for solo guitar written in 1926 by the prematurely deceased French composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud (1900-1936), originally intended for Andrés Segovia. This piece, an ingenious polytonal miniature featuring rapid statements and a polystylistic mix taking advantage of Beethoven’s principle of thematic variation, remains almost unknown for nearly a century. This text explores the transcription resources used to construct a new, updated practical edition of the piece, exploring the adopted criteria and the methodology employed.

Chronology of Versions

Given the number of existing versions in different instrumental formations, and aiming at a more precise identification of which version will be treated in the comparisons established throughout this article, it is necessary to establish here a chronological cataloging of the five existing versions:

- **V1:** Ferroud’s original manuscript from 1926, version intended for solo guitar (Ferroud, 1926).
- **V2:** The last movement of “Sérénade” in F Major (I. Berceuse, II. Pavane: Lento, III. Spiritual: Molto vivo), transcribed for piano four hands in 1927 (Ferroud, 1927).
- **V3:** The last movement of “Sérénade” in F Major (in three movements with the same subtitles as V2), transcribed for full orchestra in 1928 (Ferroud, 1928).
- **V4:** Practical/facsimile edition based on the 1926 manuscript, prefaced and edited with fingering by Angelo Gilardino for solo guitar (Gilardino, 2001).
- **V5:** Edition/revision (synthesis of versions V1, V2, and V3) by Flávio Apro, for solo guitar (Apro, 2024).

The work thus had several iterations produced over time from the original version for guitar. The author’s subsequent versions for other formations arose from Segovia’s refusal to edit/perform the work, leading Ferroud to explore new instrumentations. Gilardino’s version has the merit of bringing the work to light in a significant publication within the prestigious collection titled “The Andrés Segovia Archive”. However, Gilardino mistakenly assumed that Ferroud was well versed in the instrumental idiom of the guitar, and thus offered a version of the piece which, although supposedly more “faithful” in relation to the original manuscript, is nonetheless problematic in terms of playability. The version presented in this work, at the time of writing, is under discussion for edition and publication by the website, publisher, and virtual store “Acervo Digital do Violão Brasileiro”.

A Brief Description of “Spiritual” (1926)

“Spiritual” is a quite brief work of approximately 2 minutes and 30 seconds, written in a polytonal style conformative to the theoretical description of the original term as formulated by Darius Milhaud (1923). Its musical structure is very economical in the number of motives employed, and in a certain sense it follows the beethovenian principle of variation in a vertiginous and broken way, using cinematographically quick cuts. It presents musical utterances that are fast, vigorous and determined, combining in a curious way elements coming from the various styles practiced in the Paris of the interwar period, like the ones by Stravinsky and Milhaud, alongside of jazz and the circus elements so dear to the aesthetics of composers such as the Groupe des Six.

The harmonic language used by Ferroud makes ample use of the technique of simultaneous, stratified combination of different chords that characterizes the polytonality of the time (Milhaud, 1923), being this writing technique — that lends itself very easily to being applied to the various orchestral choirs — the actual reason for most of the challenges in building a version of Spiritual that is idiomatically appropriate to the solo guitar, while being able to portray in that instrument the same eloquence and brilliance present in its orchestral version.

Theoretical Discussion

The methodology of triangulation from different instrumental versions adopted in our new revised edition would not be justifiable without the use of a theoretical perspective that aimed at deconstructing two recurrent fallacies in the creation and performance of music: the idea that the musical score of a composition corresponds to its complete formalization, and the idea that what is expected from an interpreter is simply his/her maximum fidelity to that score.

As such, the theoretical point of departure adopted here is based in Pierre Schaeffer's (1966) concepts of "Thème et Version", used alongside the speech acts theory by John Langshaw Austin (1962), a combination that was used by Bittencourt (2020) to establish some theoretical grounds regarding the nature of a musical score and how it is used in a larger process in which a composer communicates a musical work to a performer.

Pierre Schaeffer (1966, p. 86-87) tries to explain the concept of the compositional imaginative act considering that the creative musical activity is like the course of a river that flows from the mind of the composer towards the real world. As such, the head of that stream, that is, the mind of the composer, is the place inhabited by what Schaeffer called the "Thème", an abstract entity, a complex mixture of implicit intentions formed and deduced from an intertextual context of practices. In the mouth of that stream there is the real world, a place mediated by the performer and inhabited by what Schaeffer called the "Version", a translation of the "Thème" in the real world of sounds, that is, only something similar to an avatar of the idea of that theme but not itself.

Investigating the process of transformation of the "Thème" into a "Version" as a communicative process involving the composer and his score and the performer and his performance, Bittencourt (2020) argues that such process includes a circuit that is analogous to the one mapped by the speech acts theory by J. L. Austin (1962), developing the idea that the pure and simple contents of a musical score consist in an act of "locutionary statement" by the composer, an act that in its turn includes a latent "illocutionary intention" which is not explicitly formalized in the score and which therefore needs to be hermeneutically inferred by an interpreter from his/her intertextual understanding of the work, what will elicit from that reader the "perlocutionary response" of a musical performance that is, preferably, correct and adequate, that is, one free from "illocutionary infelicities".

Returning to the matter in discussion of how to recreate a solo guitar version for Ferroud's *Spiritual*, since each different score version of that piece is simply a locutionary statement of its Thème, the abstract musical entity imagined by Ferroud, so the problem is not about simply adjusting the immanent dimension of the score so it becomes feasible on the solo guitar. Instead, the transcriber needs to be able to intertextually read the illocutionary intention that is latent in Ferroud's scores and thus infer the Thème proposed by the composer; after that, he/she must translate once again that Thème in the form of a score, as a new locutionary statement of the Thème, which will be with luck this time better equipped to the idiomatic instrumental idiosyncrasies of the guitar, imagining that a third "good" reader will be capable to produce from his/her reading of the new score an adequate musical performance that is a full Version free from infelicities of the Thème by Ferroud.

From these theoretical grounds, the suggested hypothesis here is that Ferroud, like a person who investigates the same object from multiple points of view, managed at each new version of *Spiritual* to distill with more precision the Thème he envisioned. Thus, the possibility of determining this Thème from a triangulation process using the three different instrumental versions of the piece (namely, the one for solo guitar, the one for piano four hands, and the one for orchestra) became an intriguing possibility.

This being so, with these theoretical considerations in mind, what would actually be the Thème by Pierre-Octave Ferroud, given the three versions he himself wrote, which are so different from each other? Certainly, we cannot affirm categorically that it is actually possible to reconstitute the exact Thème imagined by Ferroud, and we also can't assert that the last version of *Spiritual*, the orchestral one, was the "best" one. Nonetheless, the theoretical discussion we presented seems to legitimize the use of this triangulation strategy between versions ($V1 + V2 + V3 = \text{"Ferroud}^3\text{-Apro}"$) as an attempt to synthesize the maturing arch of the author in the three years between the 1926 and 1928 versions, aiming at the proposition of a fusion of them all.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological procedure adopted in the construction of this most recent version of the work started from a comparative analysis between the V1 and V4 versions, which was conducted through reading and collating those available sources for guitar. After that, the inspection of V3 allowed us to glimpse a different sound image for V5, one having the orchestra as inspiration and a reference parameter for a very specific guitar sonority. The differences between all versions were resolved using the V2 score as a mediator.

Further interpretative adjustments were also necessary for preparing V5, adopting various technical-musical interventions encompassing aspects such as tempos, textures, ergonomics, octave changes, incorporation of internal triplets, articulations, dynamics, and timbres. These and other procedures will be examined in detail next.

Construction of V5 of “Spiritual”

1. Tempos

The differences in metronomic markings between versions V1, V2, and V3 are significant. V1 presents the following speed measures: Measure 1: Vif (quarter note = 168 bpm; Measure 25: *Lègèrement plus calme*; Measure 77: Vif. Although there is an initially excessively fast metronomic reference for the classical guitar’s acoustic response, the French-adjectivized tempos allow for greater flexibility considering the subjectivity of the performer.

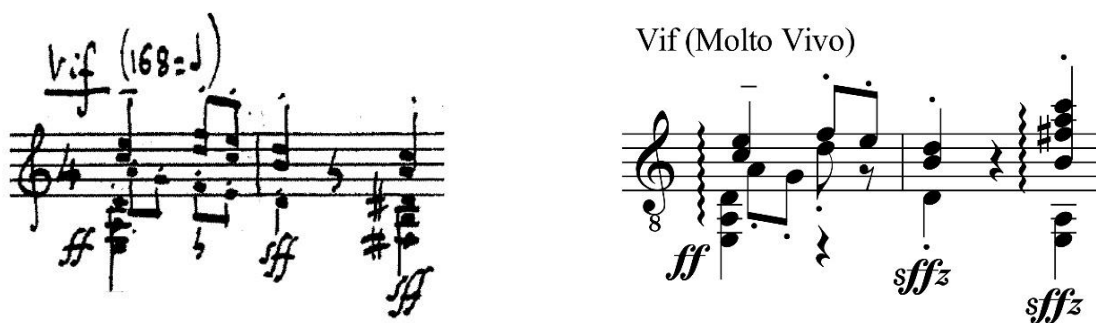
Versions V2 and V3 have the same indications at the same points but using traditional Italian nomenclature and even faster metronomic markings: Measure 1: *Molto Vivo* (half note = 120 bpm); Measure 25: *Un poco meno vivo*; Measure 77: *Molto Vivo*.

2. Textures

Some reductions and enlargements were necessary within the possible scope, allowing them to be realized on six strings. For example, we have the very initial opening, in which the simple reduction of the tenor line on the 2nd beat (notes F and E doubled in the soprano voice) allows for greater agility:

Figures 1 and 2.

Ferroud-V1 (1926), M. 1-2; Ferroud-V5 (2024), M. 1-2.



We highlight here that the omitted octaves would be almost impossible to be executed fluently according to the initial marking of 168 bpm per quarter note given in V1.

3. Ergonomics

During the construction of V5, a permanent endeavor was conducted in favor of stability in the movements of the right and left hands, in opposition to the fingerings proposed in V4, which often hinder the possibility of fluency in performance, as seen in Figures 3 and 4, in which the inversion of the harmony and the substitution of the upper notes in the soprano in line with V2 and V3 bring the two chords to the same left-hand position, aside from sounding lighter in the guitar’s result:

Figures 3 and 4.

Ferroud-V4 (2001), M. 17-18; Ferroud-V5 (2024), m. 17-18.



In Figures 5 and 6, we observe that in the original version the position changes unfortunately cut the duration of the main event, which is the octave melody in the treble:

Figures 5 and 6.

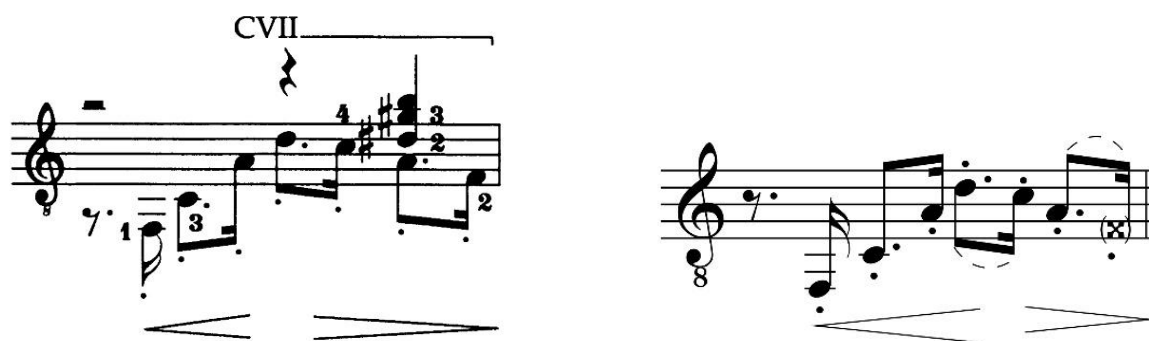
Ferroud-V4 (2001), m. 41; Ferroud-V5 (2024), m. 41.



In Figures 7 and 8, the chord on the last beat of the bar, besides from being omitted in V3 and V4, ends up hindering the fluency of the melodic line. We also opted to adopt the ghost note (appoggiatura) for the second beat in line with the theme presentation (first 4 bars), to reinforce the cyclic thematic treatment:

Figures 7 and 8.

Ferroud-V4 (2001), m. 54; Ferroud-V5 (2024), m. 54.



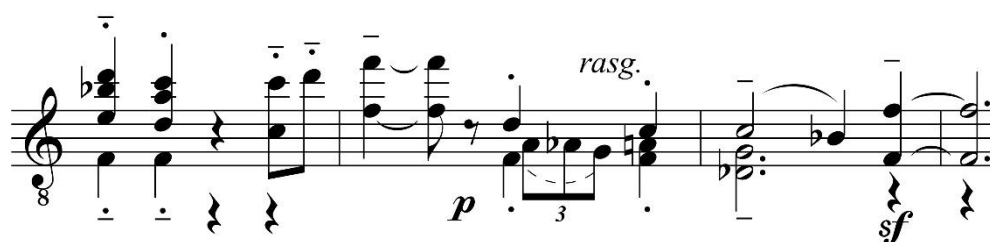
4. Octave Changes

The guitar, compared to the piano and the orchestra, has a restricted tessitura, making it impossible to perform some passages as written in the original piece. When transferring material to the guitar's lowest strings (where the instrument sounds richer), octave changes were necessary. For example:



Figures 9 and 10.

Ferroud-V4 (2001), m. 59-62; Ferroud-V5 (2024), m. 59-62.



5. Incorporation of Internal Triplets

Present in the versions for orchestra and piano four hands but not in the V1 and V4 ones, many internal triplets were also included in V5, as can be seen in one of its appearances in the previous example of figure 10.

6. Articulations, Dynamics, and Timbres

As detailed in Table 1, the editing of the articulations and dynamics observed in V5 is justified by V3. We aimed to transpose the orchestra's sonority to the guitar, with the V2 version serving as a guide:

Table 1:

Editing of Articulations and Dynamics

Measure	Passage	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	Comments
3	Triplets	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Same as in V2 and V3 versions
4	Triplets	-	Staccato	Staccato	-	Staccato	Same as in V2 and V3 versions
7	Triplets	-	Articulation in the 3rd beat	Articulation in the 3rd beat	-	Articulation in the 3rd beat	Same as in V2 and V3 versions
10	p	ff	pp	pp	p	pp	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
13	pp	mf	p	p	pp	p	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
18	pp	f	p	p	pp	p	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
19	pp	f	p	p	pp	p	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
21	pp	f	p	p	pp	p	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
23	Mute	-	-	p	-	p	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
26	Crescendo	-	Crescendo in the 3rd beat	Crescendo in the 3rd beat	-	Crescendo in the 3rd beat	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
29	Triplets	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Same as in V2 and V3 versions
38	C	A	A	A	C	A	Observes the V2 and V3 versions
49	Triplets	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	-	Tenuto in the 2nd semiquaver	Same as in V2 and V3 versions

Concluding Remarks

During this transcription process of bringing “*Spiritual*” back to the sound ambience of the solo guitar, the interdisciplinary approach employed resulted not only in an updated version of the work but also in an investigative journey through two aspects that we consider to be important ones: the memory of the composer and the research of the multiple potentialities of the sound space.

In relation to the aspect of the memory of the composer, the analysis of the scores for the three different instrumental versions and the search for the “original idea” offered clues to the composer's changes of thought throughout time, revealing the changes of direction, his choices and experimentations, and helping us to elucidate his singular creative process. The application of the schaefferian concepts of “*Thème*” and “*Version*” resulted in an approach that considers not only the simple final score but also the subsequent variations and transformations of the musical material throughout time, creating therefore a connection with the memory of that work and its evolution.

In relation to the aspect of the sound space, the inspection of the different instrumental formations used suggests considerations on how the instrumentation choices actually influence each in its own way the spatial perception of the work, with the triangulated solo guitar version of the score, seen in counterpoint with the full and gregarious sonority of the orchestral version, being considered as not just a simple reduction of the orchestral mass but as a different iteration of that text, one that inhabits an alternate sound space which is in some sense enriched by its more intimist specificity. The reconstruction of the work as a solo guitar version, which crossed the gap between a first and never played nor revised solo guitar version and the other sound spaces of piano four hands and orchestra, indeed suggests a maturing arch for the work's text which transcends the mere progression of time.

Thus, our contribution extends beyond just a practical edition; it is also a contextual and theoretical exploration of a nearly forgotten work that deserves a new light in the contemporary classical guitar literature. Future projects could extend this methodology to other pieces, offering further opportunities to study the interplay of memory and space in musical composition and performance.

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