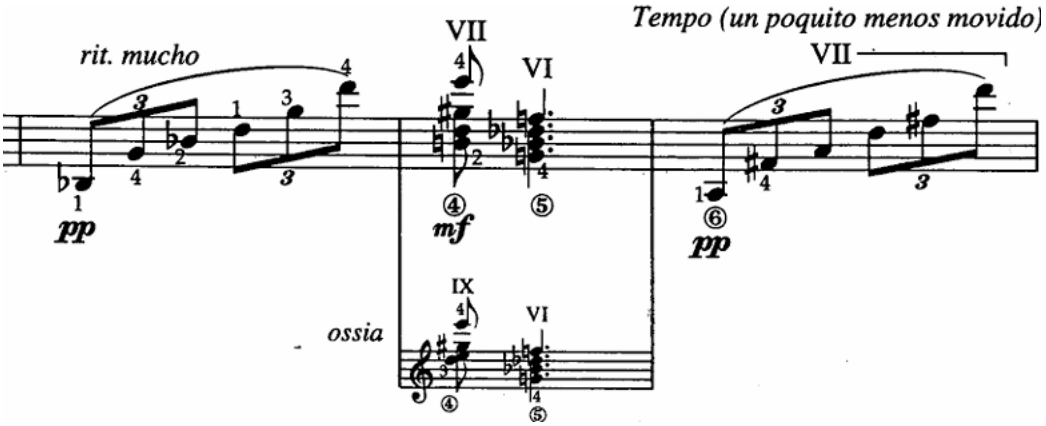
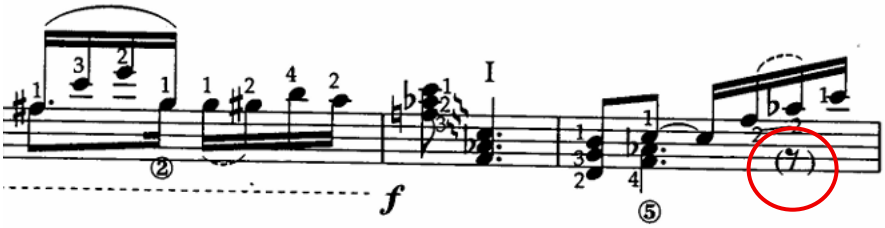
A. José – Sonata para guitarra
I. Allegro Moderato

Notes

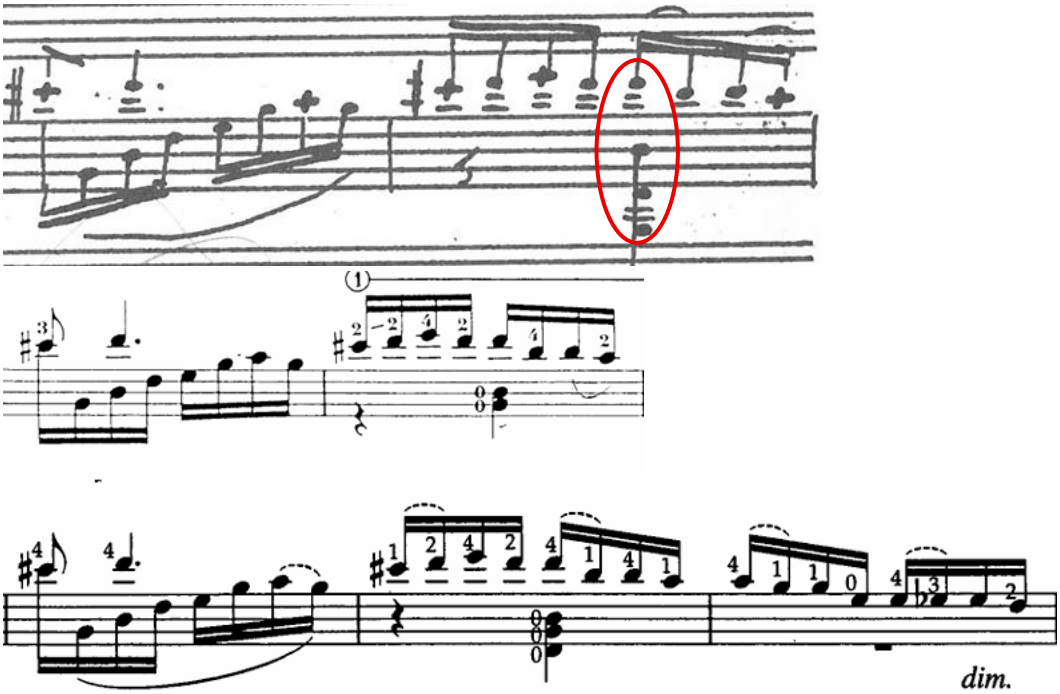
The *Sonata* of Antonio José, the most famous piece of the few he wrote for guitar, was only discovered a few decades ago. Since its discovery, there was some discussions around the performance of the piece as two manuscripts existed. The two of them were used by guitarist Ricardo Iznaola, former pupil of Regino Sainz de la Maza, the dedicatee of the piece. He had played it for years after the passing of his master in 1981, and made a *premiere* recording in 1990. However, he only published the edition later, as well as a comparative analysis of the two manuscripts (Iznaola, 1996). Angelo Gilardino started to look into this piece exactly around 1990, but with only one manuscript in hand, and offered *his* edition of the *Sonata* (José, Sonata para guitarra, 1990). After publishing it, he was made aware of the existence of Iznaola's work, contacted him, and ultimately could gather both manuscripts and create an edition with his *Edizioni Musicali Berbén* that corrected the playing issues in the score and that would show the impossibilities of the manuscript and suggested solutions. This edition is contained in a book where the 'final' manuscript (José, Sonata para guitarra, 1934) is included, and some insight and context, as well as the history and life of the composer, is shared (Gilardino, 1990).



In Iznaola's comparative study, we can see he suggests two possibilities, as the chords construction varied on the two different manuscripts : bars 54-56



Here, again in Iznaola's study, we can see that José's desired length of the chord isn't really possible, but Iznaola's still included the original idea, and then suggested that it should actually be cut sooner in order to play the rest : bars 145-147



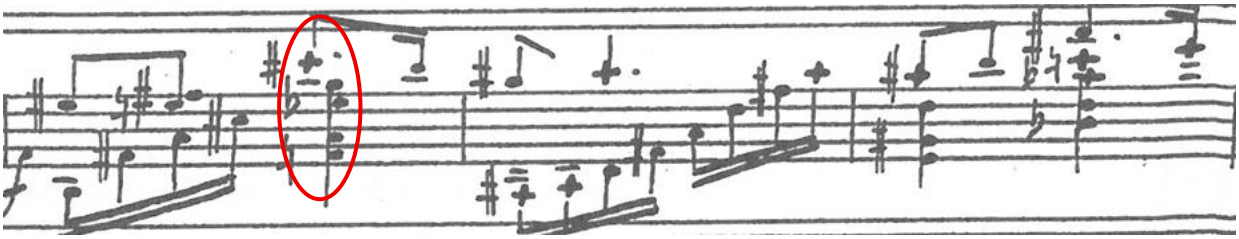
- Manuscript :The chord is unplayable as the fingers cannot stretch that far : bars 33-34
- Gilardino : He decided to re-arrange the chord and cut the D off : bars 33-34
- Iznaola : He also re-arranged the chord, but only changed the order and kept the notes : bars 33-35

Tuning

7=D / 8=Bb

Non solvable issues

Very often in this movement, the main problems are in the chord constructions, where José wrote either too many notes or notes in an order that makes it impossible to play. Unfortunately, most of these problems cannot be solved, as they are in medium or high range, and the extra basses cannot help in any way.



Here, there are five different notes, and they should all be played by a different finger. Unfortunately, we only have 4 available fingers on the left hand, and the notes are all in medium/high range, so we cannot use the extra basses : bars 29-31

Possible improvements

In this piece, as we mentioned above, most of the problems are in the chord construction, and often we cannot solve them. Luckily, it is still sometimes possible to play what's written with the help of the 8-string guitar, where it would have been impossible on 6 strings.

- Bars 33-34 – 2) : The chord is unplayable as the fingers cannot stretch between the low G and the high D. With 7=D, the performer can actually the low G, in position V. It then allows him to keep the bass ringing during the rest of the bar, as indicated.
- Bars 47-49 – 4) : The chords are unplayable because of the amount of notes and the stretch necessary. By playing the low Bb as a harmonic in XII position of the 8th string (tuned in Bb), we can change the fingering and play the chord as written.
- Bars 67-69 – 5) : The chord is unplayable as the fingers cannot stretch between the low G and the high C#. With 8=Bb, the performer can play the low G, in position IX (8th string). It then allows him to play the chord and keep the bass ringing during the rest of the bar, as indicated.
- Bars 119-120 – 7) : The chord is technically playable, but would break the legato of the melodic line on top just to be played. With 8=Bb, we can actually play this chord as a barré VII and two extra fingers (the G in position IX), allowing us to use the other finger to insure a carefully directed melodic line.
- Bars 188-189 – 10) : The chord is technically playable, even though it's not super easy to keep the melodic line continuity and direction, but most importantly, it cannot be kept ringing for the whole bar. By playing the low Bb as a harmonic in position XII on the 8th string (tuned in Bb), we can ensure that at least the bass keeps on ringing.

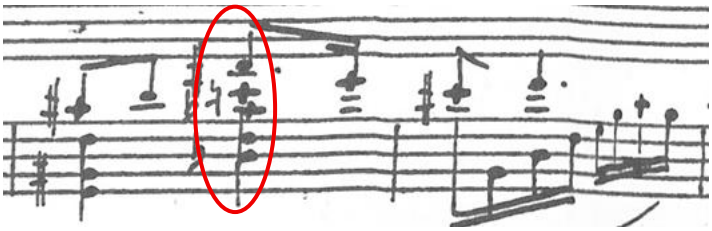
Alternatives

Some alternatives can also be found, where we cannot exactly play what is written but, with the help of the 8-string guitar, we can offer new ideas to find a closer way to the original score. These possibilities are of course a suggestion, as every artist could have a different opinion on these artistic choices.

- Bars 31-32 – 1) : The chord is unplayable here as all five notes require a different finger. If we play the Bb one octave lower as a harmonic in position XII of the 8th string (tuned in Bb), we can use the other fingers to play the rest of the chord, and the harmonic can be played with the nose. It could technically be possible to play the harmonic with the nose in position V, and we would get the right pitch for the Bb, but it is quite difficult to make the harmonics in position V sound, let alone with the nose, so it depends on the ambition of the performer.
- Bars 43-44 – 3) : The first chord is unplayable because of the amount of notes and the stretch necessary. By playing the low Bb as a harmonic in XII position of the 8th string (tuned in Bb), we can change the fingering, cut off the high F and play the chord in a closer way. Because of the amount of notes, the chord will probably need to be arpeggiated. The second chord can be played in a similar manner even if playable anyway, to ensure coherence.

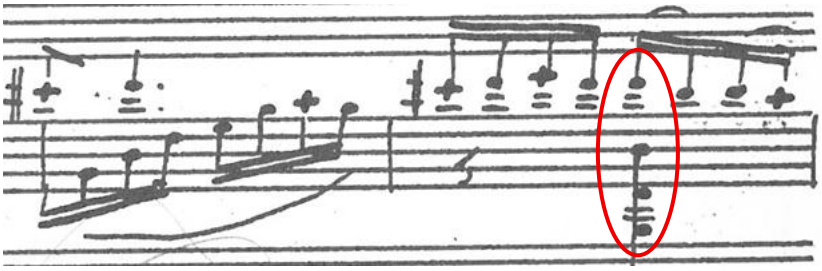
- Bars 81-83 – 6) : The chords are completely unplayable as they are, even with the help of the extra strings. However, we can find a closer way to play them, with the 7th string tuned in D. By taking out the medium Bb, we can play a barré IV and play the rest of the notes.
- Bars 148-149 – 8) : The first chord is completely unplayable as it is, even with the help of the extra strings. However, we can find a closer way to play them, with the 7th string tuned in D. By taking the medium Ab out, that is already in the bass at all times anyway and the high Eb, that is a doubloon, we can now play the rest of the chords as written, with the low Ab in position VI.
- Bars 153-154 – 9) : The chords are completely unplayable as they are, even with the help of the extra strings. However, we can find a closer way to play them, with the 7th string tuned in D. By taking the medium Ab out, that is already in the bass at all times anyway, we can now play the rest of the chords as written, with the low Ab in position VI.
- Bars 198-201 – 11) : The chords are completely unplayable as they are, even with the help of the extra strings. However, we can find a closer way to play them, with the 7th string tuned in D. With the medium D written, it limits the capacity of the chords to 4 notes, as the D will need to be played as open string on the 4th string, and José wrote 5-notes chords. If we octaviate the medium D down to the 7th string, tuned in low D, we can now play the rest of the chord every time.

Interesting sections



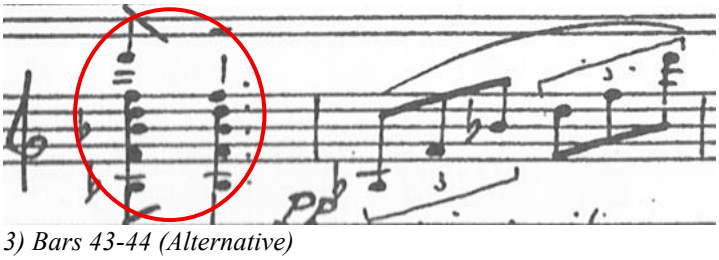
1) Bars 31-32 (Alternative)

With 8=Bb, we can play the Bb as a harmonic in position XII with the nose.



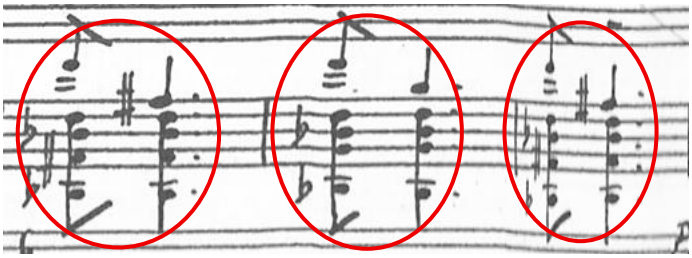
2) Bars 33-34

With 7=D, it's possible to play and keep the low G ringing in position V.



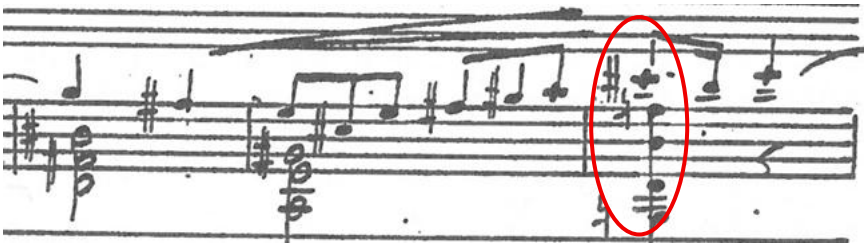
3) Bars 43-44 (Alternative)

With 8=Bb, we can play the low Bb as a harmonic in position XII with the nose, and we can cut the high F of the first chord.



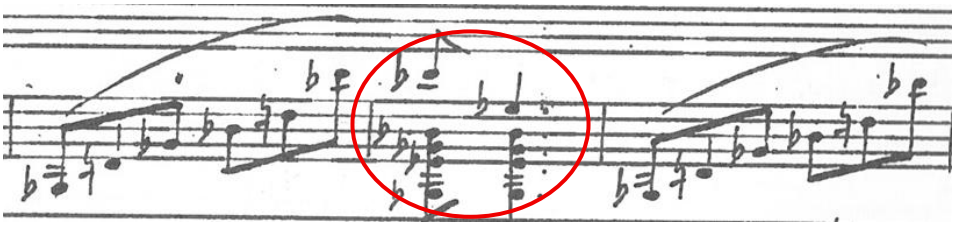
4) Bars 47-49

With 8=Bb, we can play the low Bb as a harmonic in position XII with the nose.



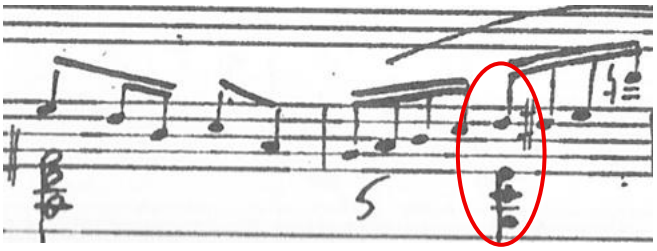
5) Bar 67-69

With 8=Bb, the chord can be played with the low G in position IX.



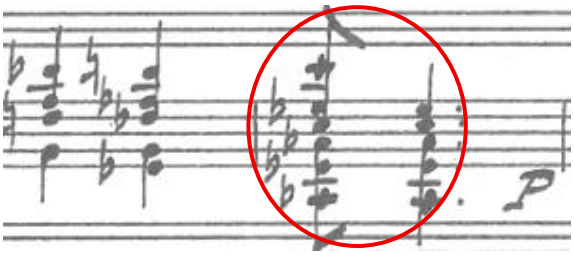
6) Bars 81-83 (Alternative)

With 7=D, and by taking out the medium Bb, the chord is playable in a closer way with a barré IV.



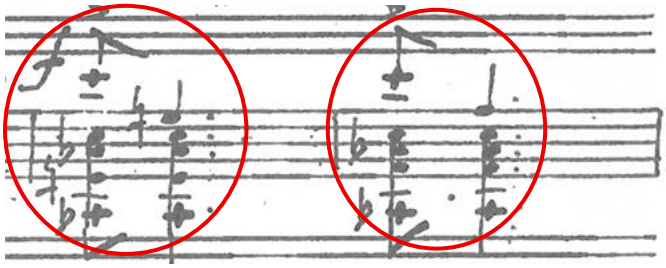
7) Bars 119-120

With 8=Bb, the chord is playable in a barré VII with the low G in position IX and can be kept ringing.



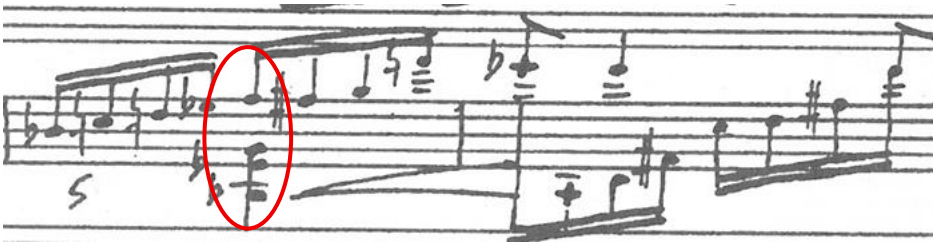
8) Bars 148-149 (Alternative)

With 7=D, and by taking out the high Eb (first chord) and the medium Ab (both), the chords are playable in a closer way with a barré VI.



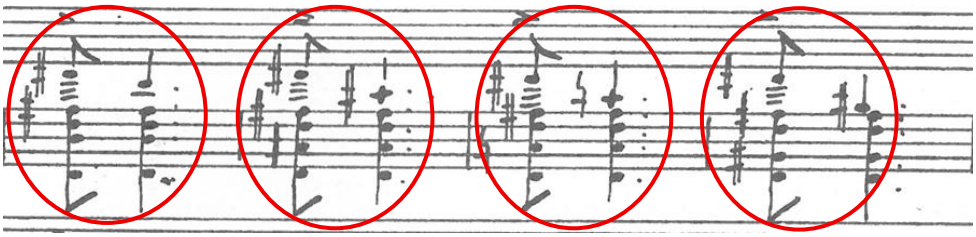
9) Bars 153-154 (Alternative)

With 7=D, and by taking out the medium Ab, the chords are playable in a closer way with the low Ab in position VI.



With 8=Bb, we can play the low Bb as a harmonic with the nose in position XII so it keeps ringing.

10) Bars 188-189



With 7=D, we can octaviate down the medium D and play the rest of the chord as written.

11) Bars 198-201 (Alternative)

Works Cited

Gilardino, A. (1990). *Antonio José - Sonata para guitarra : nuova edizione a cura di Angelo Gilardino e Ricardo Iznaola*. Ancona, Italy: Edizioni Musicali Bèrben.

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José, A. (1934). Sonata para guitarra. *Sonata para guitarra, a mi querido amigo Regino Sainz de la Maza*. Burgos, Spain.

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