

## A. Tansman – Variations on a theme by Scriabin

### Notes

While Segovia did in fact publish his edition of the piece, the most commonly played version is the one edited by *Alvaro Company* (Tansman, *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*, 1972). Everything there is of course playable on 6-string guitar and offers a valid substitution to the manuscript, that is unplayable. The manuscript is however available (Tansman, *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*, 1972), and we can find there a lot of problems that can be solved by an 8-string guitar. In some places, **the use of a 7<sup>th</sup> string is really obvious**. You can find a low D written even though the piece is supposedly written for a 6<sup>th</sup> string tuned in E, and some chords necessitate two 6<sup>th</sup> strings to be able to play some notes simultaneously. It therefore offers a great opportunity for the 8-string guitar. Below you can find an example of the solutions found by the editors : sometimes the chords are reorganized or octaviated, and when necessary some notes are simply deleted, which can lead to the loss of colors and ideas that the composer initially wanted.

From *manuscript* (Tansman, *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*, 1972)

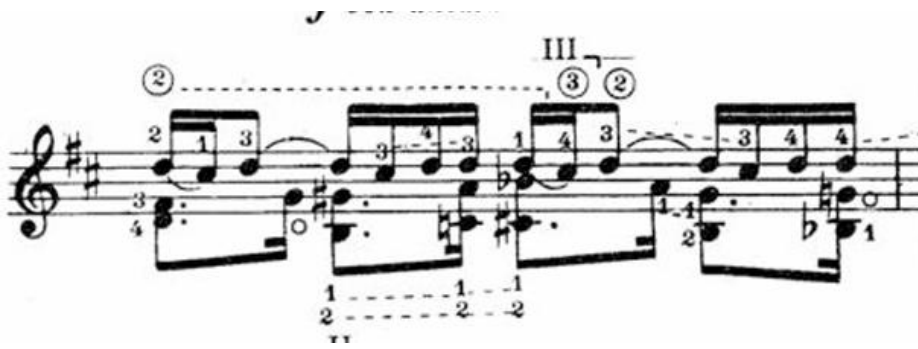


Here, you can see the lowest note of the chords is a low D ; the only way to play that note on a 6 string guitar is to tune the 6<sup>th</sup> string (E) to D. However, the whole piece has been written in a way that you need the open E bass to be able to play the piece, and 2 notes are only playable on the 6<sup>th</sup> string (low D and low G).

From *edition by Alvaro Company* (Tansman, *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*, 1972)

A photograph of a printed musical score. It shows two measures of music, labeled VII and VIII. The notation includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and armature markings (Arm. 12, Arm. 16, Arm. 19). The chords are reorganized so that the lowest note is a medium D instead of a low D. The notation is clean and professional.

Here, we can see the solution found by the editor has been to rise the whole chords one octave higher so that the low D is now a medium D and the G can be played elsewhere.



*In this simplified version (first line), we can see that the bass has simply been dropped, and even some top notes, that are playable, were taken out – Var. III : bar 39*

## Tuning

7 = D / 8 = B

## Possible improvements

In Variations III, IV, V and VI, there are new possibilities specifically offered by the 2 extra basses, without any need to change the original text.

- Variation III - 1) : in those multiple examples, the 7<sup>th</sup> string tuned in D allows that low D to be played at that exact pitch with a 6<sup>th</sup> string still tuned in E, as in the editions the chord has to be rearranged. This stays valid for the whole section (multiple occurrences).
- Variation IV - 2) : in those multiple examples, the 7<sup>th</sup> string tuned in D allows that low D to be played at that exact pitch with a 6<sup>th</sup> string still tuned in E, as in the editions the chord has to be rearranged. That stays the same for the chords with a low Eb.
- Variation IV - 3) : here, the use of the 7<sup>th</sup> string takes a new turn, as playing a chord with both a low D and low G (or G#) is impossible on a 6-string guitar even if the 6<sup>th</sup> string is tuned in D, as both those notes are only playable on the 6<sup>th</sup> string. The use of a 7<sup>th</sup> string here allows new unheard harmonies on a classical guitar with both notes sounding simultaneously.

- Variation V - 4) : in this specific case, the ornamentation causes the problem, but is technically possible on a 6-string guitar, if played on 2 strings. However, to have a coherent progression with the following ornamentations, which are played on one string (2<sup>nd</sup>) with slurs, it should also be played on one string. The stretch between D and E and the 2<sup>nd</sup> string is close to impossible for the fingers 3 and 4 (other fingers being taken by the rest of the notes), and I therefore found a solution using the 8<sup>th</sup> string in B. By playing the whole passage with a full barré in positions VII, then VI and V, it is possible to find a much more convenient stretch for the ornamentation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> string while also being able to play the bass on the 8<sup>th</sup> string. This might lead to another problem for some people, as the full barré on 8 strings requires a certain size and strength of the left hand, could not be adapted to every physiology.
- Variation VI - 5) : in those multiple examples, the 7<sup>th</sup> string tuned in D allows that low D to be played at that exact pitch with a 6<sup>th</sup> string still tuned in E, as in the editions the chord has to be rearranged.

## Alternatives

In this piece, there are no places where alternatives (using an octaviated bass) can be used as a way to clarify the musical intention or complete the playable notes. The extra basses can be used to enhance the harmonies and ‘improve’ subjectively the piece, but they will be an option chosen (or not) by the performer.

## Interesting sections



With 7=D, it is possible to play these examples with the open string, as there's no low D in the original 6-string tuning.





1) Variation. III : bars 39 ; 42 ; 46-49



With 7=D, it is possible to play these examples with the open string, as there's no low D (that also allows the Eb) in the original 6-string tuning.

2) Variation IV : bars 50-53 ; 54 ; 57 ; 65



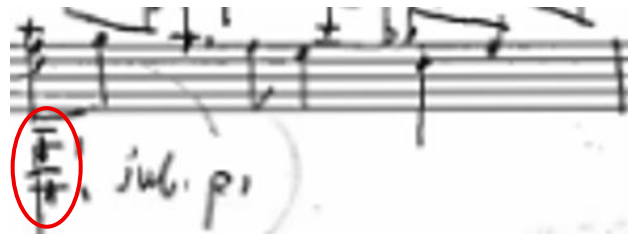
Here, the 7<sup>th</sup> string in D allows to play the low D, and also to play the full chords, with the low G and G# played on the 6<sup>th</sup> string.

3) Variation IV : bars 71-73



It is possible to play this with the correct and coherent ornamentation as a full Barré VI, so the bass is played by the 8<sup>th</sup> string.

4) Variation V : bars 76-77



With 7=D, it is possible to play these examples with the open string, as there's no low D in the original 6-string tuning.

5) *Variation VI : bars 92 ; 100*

### Works Cited

Tansman, A. (1972). *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*. (A. Company, Ed.)

Tansman, A. (1972). *Variations sur un thème de Scriabin*.