

Editing Strategies for Overcoming Instrumentation Issues in Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll*

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Abstract: This article looks at contextual and interpretive issues surrounding the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* by Viennese composer Ferdinand Rebay (1880-1953). After situating Rebay within the contemporary guitar developments in Vienna, I contextualize the piece and highlight its significance as a one-of-a-kind Romantic sonata for guitar duo. Next, I look at the potential difficulties of incorporating it into the repertoire of modern guitar duos due to Rebay's use of a near-obsolete instrument, the *Quintbass Gitarre*, while also offering a brief organological investigation. Finally, I describe in detail my attempts to adapt the piece to the instrumentation of my ensemble, the NOVA Guitar Duo. Backed up by an extensive familiarity with the composer's style, I endeavour to intervene in the text, not only for playability reasons but also to rebalance melodic material in the fashion of traditional guitar duo and domestic Austro-German chamber music writing.

Keywords: Ferdinand Rebay, *Großes Duo in a-Moll*, quintbass guitar, performer intervention in the musical text, chamber music.

Resumo: O presente artigo aborda questões contextuais e interpretativas relacionadas ao *Großes Duo in a-Moll* do compositor vienense Ferdinand Rebay (1880-1953). Após situar Rebay no panorama violonístico da Viena de seu tempo, eu contextualizo a obra e destaco sua peculiaridade enquanto uma rara sonata romântica para duo de violões. Em seguida, analiso as dificuldades de incorporá-la ao repertório de duos de violões modernos, em razão da escolha de Rebay por um instrumento quase obsoleto, a *Quintbass Gitarre*, fazendo ainda um breve relato organológico do mesmo. Finalmente, descrevo detalhadamente meu processo de adaptar a obra para a instrumentação de meu grupo, o NOVA Guitar Duo. Embasado por uma profunda familiaridade com o estilo do compositor, proponho intervir no texto musical; faço-o não apenas por razões de tocabilidade, mas também com vistas a reorganizar o material melódico aos moldes da escrita tradicional para duos de violões e também da música de câmara doméstica de origem austro-germânica.

Palavras-chave: Ferdinand Rebay, *Großes Duo in a-Moll*, quintbass guitar, intervenção artística no texto musical, música de câmara.

This article is an elaboration of a case study presented in Chapter 6 of my PhD thesis (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 281–331), wherein I deal with the need for performer intervention during the realization of Rebay's text.¹ As I explain in the introduction of the thesis chapter, this is often the case with repertoire written by non-guitarist composers, many of whom may need expert advice from a professional guitarist in order to reach a satisfactory level of idiomatic writing. This kind of work relationship fits John-Steiner's idea of "complementary collaboration", a process in which "differences in training, skill, and temperament support a joint outcome through division of labor" (JOHN-STEINER, 2000, p. 70). Since in the case of Rebay I was not able to work directly with the composer but have gained enough authority on his music through both research and performance, I have engaged on what I called a "posthumous collaboration". My goal was to "improve the guitar writing and facilitate a satisfying realization for the composer, performer and audiences alike" (MANTOVANI, 2019, p. 295). Although pleasing a dead composer is an elusive idea, the idea of improving Rebay's guitar writing was further justified by the fact that some of his music remained unrevised—and therefore, unperformed—during the composer's lifetime. As we shall see, evidence suggests that this is the case of the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* for two guitars.

In the course of this article I will offer some needed contextualization by drafting a panorama of the Viennese guitar environment of the 1920s (when Rebay started to write for the guitar), as well as introducing the composer. This is necessary because Rebay is still not widely known among guitarists, and my recent PhD research revealed many aspects of his career and works that had not been previously identified. Next, I will focus on the provenance of his *Großes Duo*, situating it in the guitar duo repertoire as well as within Rebay's own guitar output. A particular focus will be given to the piece's instrumentation, which uses a regular guitar and a near-obsolete bass guitar, the *Quintbass Gitarre*. A brief organological survey of this instrument will lead to the next section, in which I raise the difficulties faced by modern guitar duos when performing Rebay's *Großes Duo* and describe in detail my process of adapting the composer's text to fit the instrumentation of the NOVA Guitar Duo. Besides employing *scordatura*, it involved a complete rescoring of the piece, including changing

¹ A summarized version of the case study was also presented as a lecture-recital during the 1st International Conference on Artistic Research in Performance (Manchester, UK) and the 3rd Festival Conference of Music Performance and Artistic Research "Doctors in Performance" (Vilnius, Lithuania), both held in 2018.

its original key and rebalancing melodic material between the two instruments.

1. Ferdinand Rebay and his Viennese guitar environment

The guitar music of Ferdinand Rebay (1880-1953) is a by-product of a major transformation in the way the guitar projected itself beyond its former niches, such as the guitar clubs emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.² Therefore, it is impossible to understand its significance without looking at the circumstances that supported this transformation, particularly those around 1920. That year, Manuel de Falla wrote *Homenaje pour le tombeau de Claude Debussy* in collaboration with Miguel Llobet (1878-1938), which is considered the first significant twentieth-century guitar piece written by a non-guitarist composer.³ Although often associated with the international careers of Spanish guitarists such as Llobet and, especially, Andrés Segovia (1893-1987), local and regional developments also played a role in this twentieth-century guitar renaissance, and Vienna illustrates one of its most unique outcomes.⁴

There, a renewed interest in the guitar and its assimilation into the city's mainstream musical institutions involved not only performance but also scholarly research, conducted by graduates of Guido Adler's musicology class at the Universität Wien. Kreuzberger (1996, p. 28) names Richard Batka (1868-1922) as a forerunner, who in as early as 1909 started working as a *dozent* at the k.k. Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst,⁵ teaching not only guitar performance but also History of Opera and History of Lute and Guitar. Amongst Batka's students, Kreuzberger also mentions Adolph Koczirz (1870-1941) and Josef Zuth (1879-1932) (KREUZBERGER, 1996, p. 32); the latter is the author of *Handbuch der Laute und Gitarre* (1926), one of the first dictionaries of its kind.

² For more on the guitar-club culture in German-speaking countries, see Huber (1995) and Mantovani (2019, pp. 9–57).

³ Llobet's process of collaboration with Manuel de Falla is described by former Llobet student, José Rey de la Torre. For more, see Spalding (1977).

⁴ Another regional development relatively independent from Segovia and that has recently been called to attention is that of the so-called "Generation of 27" in Spain, which was mostly associated with guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza (1896-1981). For more, see Catalá (2007, pp. 12–19).

⁵ In 1909, the former Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde was renamed k.k. (kaiserlich-königlich) Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst, and after WW1 it became the Staatsakademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst, conserving this name until the Anschluss, when it was renamed Reichshochschule. After WW2, it acquired higher-education status under the name Akademie für Music und darstellende Kunst Wien and in 1998 it was finally renamed Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien (HILSCHER, 2008). From now on, however, I will simply refer to it as "Wiener Akademie".

However, the most significant name to have emerged from Batka's class seems to be that of Jakob Ortner (1879-1959).

Ortner was a native of Innsbruck, where he had studied the guitar with Alois Götz, settling in Vienna in 1909. There, he graduated from the Akademie and became a sought-after guitarist, having been often called to perform guitar parts with orchestras such as the Wiener Staatsoper (HACKL, 2011, p. 171).⁶ Following the steps of Batka, Ortner taught at the Akademie under fixed-term contracts since at least 1920, gaining a permanent position in 1924. In my thesis, I speculate that this was the first ever guitar professorship in Europe, therefore ascribing to Ortner a status never before achieved by a guitarist (MANTOVANI, 2019, p. 49). More important, however, is that Ortner was responsible for creating one of the first conservatoire-level guitar programmes to date; an incredible feat, since so far the instrument had not been offered as a main instrument in European conservatoires.⁷ It attracted many young guitarists who sought for a professional education, including soon-to-become Austrian stars Luise Walker (1916-1998) and Karl Scheit (1909-1993). The guitar's presence in the Akademie showcased the instrument to musicians and audiences previously not acquainted with it, generating a demand for chamber music— a quintessential Viennese tradition — and attracting the attention of composers who did not play the guitar, such as Ferdinand Rebay.

Born in 1880, Rebay was one of the first non-guitarist composers to write sophisticated music for the instrument in the twentieth century, starting in 1924. The fact that he did not belong to Segovia's circle may partially explain why his music remained obscure outside of his native Vienna, although the full picture is much more complex, as I discuss in Chapter 2 of my thesis (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 85–90). Rebay was born from a middle-class family and was raised under traditional values, which are reflected in a music that has little in common with his contemporary Schoenberg and the modernist movements, rather continuing a nineteenth-century tradition. His musical education started at home with his parents, continued as a choirboy at the Stift Heiligenkreuz (a Cistercian monastery about 30km from Vienna), and was furthered under three members of Brahms's circle, first privately with Eusebius Mandyczewski (1857-1929) and Josef von Wöss (1863-

⁶ It is worth reminding that by the time Ortner arrived in Vienna, Felix von Weingartner was the artistic director of the Wiener Staatsoper, following the tenure of Gustav Mahler.

⁷ A facsimile of the Wiener Akademie guitar programme can be found in Appendix 3 of my thesis (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 352-353).

1943), and later with Robert Fuchs (1847-1927) at the Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Fuchs, who had also taught luminaries such as Mahler, Sibelius and Korngold, apparently had Rebay in the highest regard, having considered his final work—*Erlkönig*, an overture for orchestra—as the finest student work in his 29 years of teaching career (GAITZSCH, 2006, p. 13). Soon after graduating, Rebay worked for nearly 16 years as a choirmaster, having led important Viennese choirs such as the Wiener Chorverein and the Schubertbund, as well as gaining local and regional reputation as a vocal composer. In 1921, he left his choirmaster positions for a piano professorship at the Wiener Akademie (the former Konservatorium), working at his *alma mater* until retiring in 1946.

Rebay expressly credited Ortner for having awakened his interest in the guitar (REBAY, 1926, p. 2). His passion for the instrument led to an output of nearly 400 works, from solo to chamber music and from miniatures to multi-movement sonatas. Starting in the 1930s, performances of Rebay's guitar music became increasingly associated with the activities of his niece Gerta Hammerschmid (1906-1985), herself a former student of Ortner at the Akademie and a keen chamber musician. This did not prevent Rebay from writing pieces to other guitarists such as Walker, but certainly restricted the dissemination of his music outside Vienna, since Hammerschmid's performing career ended up being a mainly local one.

Prior to his professorship at the Wiener Akademie, most of Rebay's instrumental music had been written during his student years under Fuchs. However, after almost two decades focusing on vocal music while directing his Viennese choirs, the Akademie job seems to have brought him back to writing instrumental music, and he was particularly motivated to write for the guitar upon realizing its current repertoire limitations (REBAY, 1926, pp. 2–3). While most of his guitar music is original, Rebay also wrote many arrangements, including reworkings of his own previous pieces for other instruments. As will be discussed next, the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* is such a case.

2. The *Großes Duo in a-Moll*

Written in 1940, the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (or Grand Duo in A minor) is Rebay's own adaptation of a solo piano sonata from 1902. It lasts over 20 minutes in performance, which even

today is considerably long for guitar standards. Its three movements and keys are:

M1. Sehr bewegtes Zeitmaß (doch nicht hetzen!) [A minor];

M2. Variationen über Schuberts „Morgengruß“. Mäßiges Zeitmaß [C Major];

M3. Frisch bewegt [A Major].

Rebay wrote the original piano sonata while he was still a student of Robert Fuchs. In the words of Pascall, “Fuchs’s compositional technique was always immaculate and showed his formal and contrapuntal skill, particularly in his balanced, polished sonata-form movements and his fugues” (PASCALL, 1977, p. 115). These were certainly qualities Fuchs emphasized in his teaching, and are noticeable in Rebay’s fastidious treatment of the form. Along these lines, what makes the *Großes Duo* special is its formal uniqueness within the guitar duo repertoire, potentially filling a gap.

The repertoire for guitar duo prior to the mid-twentieth century is considerably limited. Although a wealth of music exists, its majority remains in the student or amateur spheres, awakening little concert interest today. Large-scale musical structures such as the sonata are not at the core of a repertoire that privileged variation sets and miniatures and which, as put by Britton (2010, p. 197), “rarely towered above its times”.⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that much of the Classical and Romantic repertoire performed by professional guitar duos today is made up of arrangements of music written for other instruments. Rebay’s *Großes Duo*, on the other hand, stands out as a rare example of an extended Romantic sonata originally written for guitar duo, deeply rooted in the Austro-German tradition. Although the label “Romantic” may sound anachronistic, it is justified by an authentic style which rather than copying past styles—a technique so often seen in the guitar pastiches of the twentieth century—is genuinely grounded in a tradition that reaches back to the Viennese classics. A detailed discussion of Rebay’s style can be seen in Chapter 3 of my PhD thesis, wherein I oppose the concepts of conservative *versus* progressive in light of his contribution to the guitar (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 132–137).

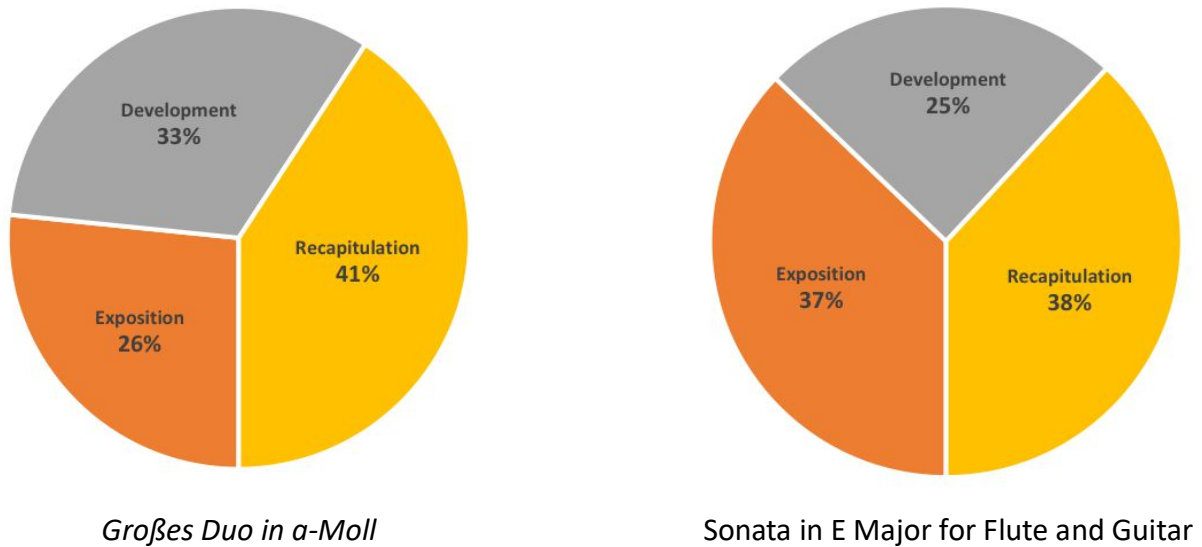
⁸ There are excellent concert pieces for guitar duo from the nineteenth century (e.g., L’Hoyer, Sor, Mertz and others), but they can be considered exceptions when weighed against the bulk of the repertoire.

The *Großes Duo* also stands out within Rebay's own guitar output, particularly when looking at its structure. While the second movement is a simpler and melodic variation set, the first and third movements are extended sonata-form examples, showing a tonal language and structural design considerably more adventurous than that of most of his later sonatas. This can be roughly explained by the circumstances of the original composition for piano, from a time Rebay was still a student in search of his own voice and deeply immersed into the Akademie's conservative, Brahmsian environment. In his later guitar sonatas, he writes from the standing point of a mature composer who knows well the instrument and tends to replicate a successful guitar-sonata model that was perfected along his many years of writing for the instrument.

The structural differences start from the length of the *Großes Duo*'s outer movements. The first movement, for example, is 231 bars long, in comparison to the average 140 bars of the first movements of his sonatas for woodwinds and guitar, most of them written in the 1940s. The distribution and treatment of the sonata-form material is also distinct, as illustrated in Figure 1. When compared with the Sonata in E Major for Flute and Guitar (1942), the *Großes Duo* shows less symmetry between exposition and recapitulation, which is a staple characteristic of Rebay's later sonatas.⁹ This may be explained by a flexibilization of the textbook model through modifications in transition materials and the presence of an extended episode in the recapitulation, based on first-theme material. The movement also presents an unusually long development that even exceeds the exposition's length, a feature rarely seen in Rebay's later sonatas, which show more restrained developments. As a matter of fact, the long developments in the outer movements of the *Großes Duo* turn out to be a fertile ground for motivic development, as well as demonstrating the guitar's potential to handle modulations, an aspect that had already been praised by Rebay (REBAY, 1926, p. 2).

⁹ For a structural overview of Rebay's sonatas and a discussion of his adherence to the textbook sonata model, see Mantovani (2019, pp. 124–132).

FIGURE 1 – Structural design of the first movement in Rebay's *Großes Duo* (1902/1940) and the Sonata in E Major for Flute and Guitar (1942).



A careful look at the music sources provides some useful contextual information about the *Großes Duo*. The autograph score, held at the music archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz and the only known source of the piece, clearly looks like a draft.¹⁰ This is in sharp contrast with his other manuscript chamber music, many of which exist in neatly prepared scores and separate parts.¹¹ The fact that the *Großes Duo* could be a draft suggests that the piece was neither revised nor performed during Rebay's lifetime, a hypothesis supported by my survey of Rebay's guitar-music performances between 1925 and 1955 (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 78–81). Therefore, based on currently available evidence, the first ever performance of the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* must have been given by the SoloDuo in the first decade of the 2000s, to which followed the ensemble's recording of the piece (MICHELI; MELA, 2010).

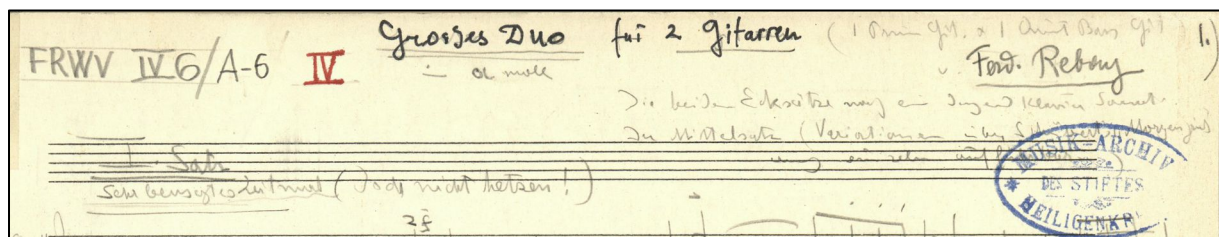
In the first page of the autograph score, Rebay gives important information regarding the *Großes Duo*'s provenance (Figure 2). There, he specifies that the piece was written for two different types of guitar, a *Prim Gitarre*—the regular instrument—and a *Quintbass Gitarre*, a variant of the

¹⁰ In addition to Rebay's notation, the autograph score of the *Großes Duo* contains annotations from a second hand, probably that of his sister Emilie Rebay (1887-1963), a professional copyist and piano teacher who often prepared copies of Rebay's music for performance and sale.

¹¹ A detailed discussion of the sources for Rebay's guitar music can be found in Chapter 4 of my thesis (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 141–159).

regular guitar that will be scrutinized later in this article. Rebay also confirms that the outer movements were written after a youthful piano sonata and states that the middle movement can be performed as a single work.¹²

FIGURE 2 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score), showing the title and other written-out information.



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

It is not clear why Rebay decided not to adapt the original second movement of the piano sonata (*Adagio, sehr ausdrucksvoll*), but using a set of variations as the slow sonata movement was a usual procedure for Rebay (as was for Brahms) and his great acquaintance with Schubert's music may explain the choice of a lied by the latter as the theme.¹³ Although Rebay usually dates his pieces in the last page of the autograph scores, this is not the case with the *Großes Duo*. The middle movement is dated, however, and shows 18 May 1940. Overall, the calligraphy looks the same for all movements and the same manuscript paper was used throughout. Therefore, it is safe to assume that all three movements were conceived around the same time.

The *Großes Duo* is not the only adaptation of an own youthful piano work. The Piano Sonata in D minor (1901) was also reworked as the *Sonate in einem Satz* for guitar solo. These adaptations suggest that even at a later age Rebay still valued his student works, and may have thought that they would find a more perennial place within the guitar repertoire. Figures 3 and 4 show the beginning

¹² The original reads “Die beiden Ecksätze nach einer Jugend Klavier Sonate | Im Mittelsatz (Variation über Schubert's Morgengruß) | auch einzeln ausführbar”.

¹³ Besides leading the Schubertbund and writing hundreds of lieder in the Viennese tradition, Rebay often accompanied Viennese singers, including Hans Duhan (1890-1971), the first to make complete recordings of Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*. In 1928, Rebay gave a series of lectures at the Wiener Akademie, titled “Schubert and his Peculiarities in the Domain of Songs, Choral Works and Piano Music, with an Emphasis on the Four-Hand Works” (MANTOVANI, 2019, p. 92).

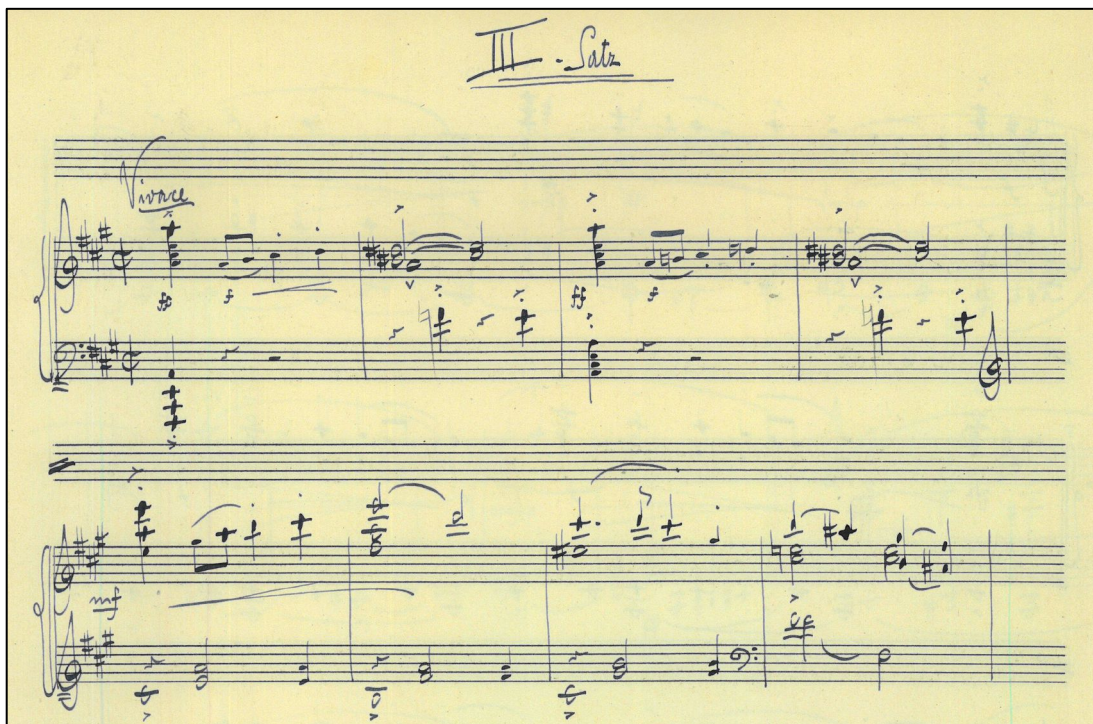
of the third movement of the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* and its equivalent passage in the Piano Sonata in A minor from 1902, taken from a 1944 self-made copy.

FIGURE 3 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score), M3, bb. 1-9.



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

FIGURE 4 – Excerpt of Rebay's Piano Sonata in Am (autograph score), M3, bb. 1-8.



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

By comparing the two versions, it is possible to trace Rebay's own strategies for adapting a piece originally written for his main instrument, the piano. For example, the excerpts show two different tempo indications for the same passage (*Frisch bewegt* and *Vivace*), and the guitar version has some chordal filling and revoicing. Given the length of the subject, however, this aspect will be explored in a future article.

However unique it may be, the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* remains unfamiliar to most guitarists and audiences, even after its first publication by Bergmann Edition (REBAY, 2017). At the time of writing, I know of only three professional ensembles publicly performing it, and the SoloDuo's album referred to earlier is still the only commercial recording of the piece to date. The reason for this is surely related to its original instrumentation, particularly Rebay's choice for a *Quintbass Gitarre*.

3. The *Quintbass Gitarre*

Also known as the *Quinto-Basso-Gitarre*, this was an early-twentieth century development of the regular guitar in German-speaking countries, specifically tailored for reaching a bass register in ensemble playing. Figure 5 shows the forerunner Münchener Gitarrenquartett in 1912 and their unique instrumentation, clearly remindful of a string quartet: two *Terz Gitarre* (tuned a minor third above the regular guitar), one *Prim Gitarre* (the regular instrument) and one *Quintbass Gitarre* (tuned a fifth below the regular guitar). According to Buek (1926, p. 134), this ensemble was formed in 1907 by members of the *Gitarristische Vereinigung* in Munich and led by Heinrich Albert (1870-1950), the most influential guitarist in German-speaking countries at the time. In the picture, a seven-string *Quintbass Gitarre* can be seen with Hermann Rensch, the second player from right to left.¹⁴

¹⁴ For more on the Münchener Gitarrenquartett, see Huber (1995, pp. 169–171).

FIGURE 5 – The Münchener Gitarrenquartett (from left to right): Heinrich Albert, Fritz Buck, Hermann Rensch and Karl Kern, 1912



Source: HUBER (1995, p. 169)

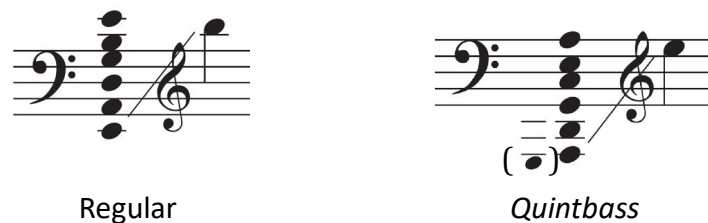
Although variants of the six-string guitar existed since at least the nineteenth century and included instruments with an extended bass range, the creation of the *Quintbass Gitarre* is credited by Riegler to the Münchener Gitarrenquartett, during their search for the ideal instrumentation. According to him,

Initially they played with the four usual instruments, the regular guitars, tuned the same way. However, the sound was too uniform and could not satisfy a musical ear. Next, they assigned for the first and second voices the so-called *Terz Gitarre*, which is tuned a minor third higher and has a shorter fingerboard than the regular guitar. The result was very favourable, however a solution for the bass voice had still not been found. The first attempt was to use the so-called *Schrammelgitarre* with seven added open [free-ringing] basses, but the clash of bass sounds did not fit their kind of ensemble playing. Finally, Dr Rensch instructed Munich-based instrument-maker F. Halbmeier to build a new instrument, the *Quinto-Basso-Gitarre*, which has a slightly larger shape, tuned a fifth lower than the regular guitar and above all has the greatest and new advantage of having the bass notes stopped in

the fingerboard; therefore, every note's length could be controlled. With this instrument, the most difficult issue in the quartet's instrumentation was solved and in the best way. (RIEGLER, 1912, p. 100, my translation).¹⁵

Albert (1924, v. 3, p. 7) gives further details about the instrument, describing it as slightly larger than the regular guitar, with a string length of 70cm.¹⁶ Its tuning follows the same intervallic relationship as the regular guitar but a fifth lower, as illustrated in Figure 6. Occasionally, it could have a seventh string (such as seen in Rensch's guitar), unstopped and running parallel to the fingerboard.

FIGURE 6 – Tunings and ranges of the regular guitar and the *Quintbass Gitarre*

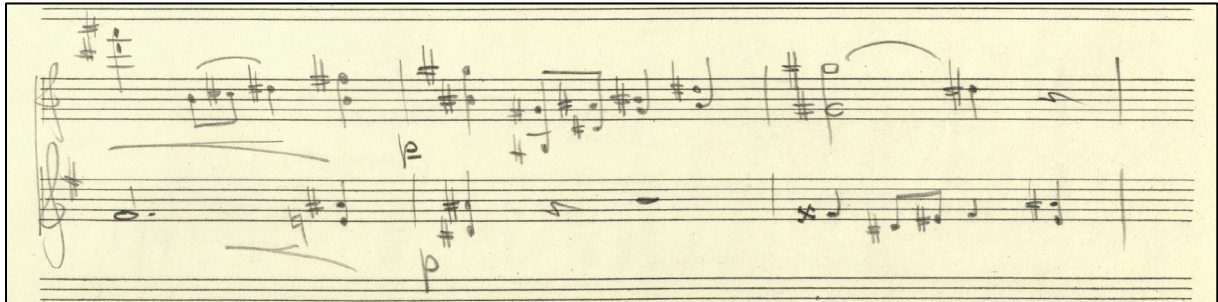


Finally, like other variants such as the *Terz Gitarre* and the *Quart Gitarre*, the *Quintbass Gitarre* is a transposing instrument, sounding a fifth below written. This is the reason why Rebay uses different key signatures in the two staves of the *Großes Duo*, as shown in Figure 7. The idea was that any player who mastered the regular guitar could automatically read music for the *Quintbass Gitarre*, without worrying about transposition and fingering changes.

¹⁵ “Zuerst wurde mit vier gewöhnlichen Instrumenten, Primgitarren, in gleicher Stimmung gespielt. Die erzielten Tonwirkungen waren jedoch zu einförmig und konnten ein musikalisches Ohr nicht befriedigen. Der nächste Versuch brachte für die erste und zweite Stimme die Verwendung von sogenannten Terzgitarren, die um eine kleine Terz höher gestimmt sind und ein enger geteiltes Griffbrett als die Primgitarren haben. Das klangliche Ergebnis war sehr günstig, dagegen mußte noch eine Lösung für die Baßstimme gefunden werden. Die hier zunächst gebrauchte Gitarre, eine sogenannte Schrammelgitarre mit sieben freischwebenden Baßsaiten, eignete sich wegen des starken Ineinanderklings der Baßtöne nicht für diese Art des Zusammenspiels. Da ließ Dr. Rensch bei dem Münchner Instrumentenmacher F. Halbmeier nach eigenen Angaben ein neues Instrument, die Quint-Basso-Gitarre, bauen, die in der Form etwas größer, um eine Quinte tiefer gestimmt als die Primgitarre ist und vor allem den großen und ganz neuen Vorzug hat, daß alle Baßnoten gegriffen und dadurch in jeder vorgezeichneten Tonlänge erzeugt werden können. Mit diesem Instrument war die schwierige Frage der instrumentalen Besetzung des Quartetts endgültig und in der besten Weise erledigt”.

¹⁶ Hannabach and Pyramid currently offer strings for *Quintbass Gitarre*, designed for guitars that match Albert's description.

FIGURE 7 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score) showing the different key signatures employed in the two staves, M1, bb. 111-113.



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

The repertoire for *Quintbass Gitarre* is mostly restricted to guitar ensemble music, such as Heinrich Albert's two guitar quartets (F Major, 1911; C minor, 1913), written for the Münchener Gitarrenquartett's instrumentation. It is also featured in music by Bruno Henze (1900-1978), who wrote the *Suite in D minor*, Op. 100 (1949) and arranged his *Burleske Fantasie*, Op. 110 (1951) for his own Berliner Gitarrentrio (*Terz*, *Prim* and *Quintbass Gitarre*), besides other arrangements.¹⁷ Other composers who employed the instrument in ensemble music include Georg Stöber (1879-1926), Matthäus Roemer (1871-1954), Armin Kaufmann (1902-1980) and Theodor Hlouschek (1923-2010).¹⁸ In addition to the *Großes Duo in a-Moll*, Rebay also included the *Quintbass Gitarre* in the *Quartet in G minor* (1925) and the *Trio* (1940); however, unlike its Munich counterpart, Rebay's quartet is scored for one *Terz*, two *Prim* and one *Quintbass Gitarre*.

4. Modernizing instrumentation

Rebay's writing in the *Großes Duo* makes such idiomatic use of the *Quintbass Gitarre*'s bass register that no easy solution—such as playing basses one octave higher—is feasible without impairing the musical text. Although nowadays it is possible to order a *Quintbass Gitarre* to a few guitar makers (and there are even affordable student/amateur models in guitar shops), performing regularly with these instruments poses practical obstacles to most of today's professional guitar duos.

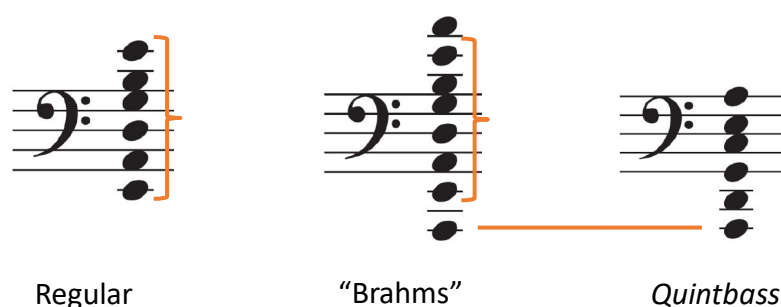
¹⁷ Some works by Albert and Henze that use the *Quintbass Gitarre* can be heard in an album by the Cantomano Quartett (ESCH et al., 2012).

¹⁸ Thanks to Andreas Stevens for providing information on these composers, as well as the year of composition of Albert's second guitar quartet.

Programming Rebay's *Großes Duo* together with more traditional guitar duo repertoire would mean bringing at least three different instruments to the concert venue, a situation potentially worsened if it involves travelling within a tour, for instance.¹⁹ Therefore, the option of performing with the *Quintbass Gitarre* is more appropriate to ensembles that wish to revive its use and explore the original repertoire, as well as arranging music with this particular instrument in mind.

When I ran across the *Großes Duo* during my PhD research in 2016, I immediately recognized its significance and programming potential for my own ensemble, the NOVA Guitar Duo. However, there was no space for acquiring a *Quintbass Gitarre* and bringing it along to our concerts, because the rest of our repertoire did not use this instrument. The only solution was to adapt the piece to our current instrumentation, which uses two different kinds of guitar: a regular one and an eight-string instrument that has a higher and a lower string, in addition to the customary six strings. This guitar was invented in the 1990s by the Scottish guitarist Paul Galbraith, in collaboration with English maker David Rubio (GALBRAITH, 2020). It is known in the guitaristic circles as the “Brahms guitar”, after Galbraith's arrangement of Brahms's Variations on an Original Theme in D major, Op. 21 No. 1, and is today used by a few soloists and ensembles such as the Brazilian Guitar Quartet and the Dublin Guitar Quartet. Figure 8 shows the tuning of the “Brahms” guitar next to that of the regular guitar and the *Quintbass Gitarre*.

FIGURE 8 – Tunings of the regular guitar, “Brahms guitar” and *Quintbass Gitarre*

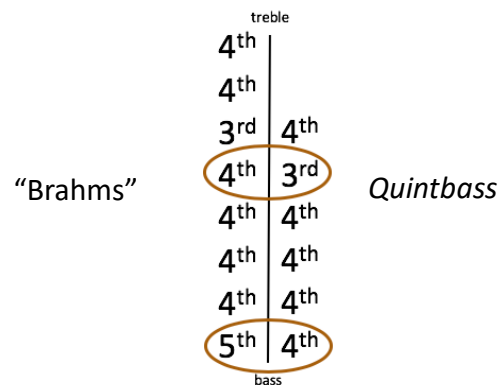


As indicated by the braces, the inner strings of the “Brahms guitar” are tuned exactly like those of the regular guitar, with an added string tuned to A₄ and another one tuned to A₁, which is also the

¹⁹ In private correspondence from 2018, the members of the SoloDuo confirmed that they had to travel with three guitars when they included the *Großes Duo* in concert tours, and this was at the time the only piece in their repertoire that required this instrument.

Quintbass Gitarre's lowest note.²⁰ Therefore, by using the “Brahms guitar”, the entire bass range in the *Großes Duo* would be covered. However, as Figure 9 illustrates, the string intervallic relationship between the two instruments remained an issue.

FIGURE 9 – Comparison of the string intervallic relationship between the “Brahms guitar” and the *Quintbass Gitarre*



While it is still possible to attempt a realization with an unaltered “Brahms guitar”, the different intervallic relationship compromises the idiomatic quality of the music, leading to awkward fingering and even a few unplayable chords. An obvious solution would be to retune all but the lowest string, mimicking the exact tuning of the *Quintbass Gitarre*. This way, it would be even possible to read from Rebay’s autograph without any modifications, making use of the transposing notation as described above. However, this solution would be impractical for concert situations, because it would demand extensive retuning between the *Großes Duo* and the other pieces of the programme. Furthermore, by tuning the strings a whole step down, they would become too loose, potentially affecting volume and tone colour, besides being prone to excess buzzing in louder passages.

In order to match the string intervallic relationship of the *Quintbass Gitarre*, another attempt involved transposing the piece a fifth above. On the occasion, I have used the slower and lyrical second movement as a practice laboratory, taking advantage of the high register of the “Brahms guitar”, which goes up to F6. Thus, I have transposed the movement from its original C Major to G Major (Figure 10). As it is clear from the first bars of the theme, the chordal accompaniment kept its idiomatic quality and would even be feasible on a regular six-string guitar. Despite a few passages in

²⁰ I have used the American Standard Pitch Notation throughout this article.

which material needed to be redistributed between the two guitars because of range issues, the piece worked well and was featured as a stand-alone work in some of our programmes (following Rebay's own suggestion).

FIGURE 10 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* transposed to G Major, M2, bb. 1-10.

Tema
Mässigzeitmaß

(vibrato)
p

(sehr zart begleiten)
pp

mf
p
pp
p (>)

However successful, this solution was not entirely convincing because of both expressive and technical issues. In the new key, the theme melody had to be transposed almost one octave higher than the original lied by Schubert, which comes from the cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* and is normally sung by a male voice. It demanded the six-string guitar to play on top strings and lesser-resonant positions, robbing the theme from its lush, tenor-like quality which would be better explored in the middle register of the guitar. Furthermore, Rebay's original bass register was gone, even though the "Brahms guitar" would have it available. For these reasons, and also for predicting technical difficulties due to extremely high fingerboard positions in the faster and more virtuosic outer movements, a third solution was attempted.

From the past attempt, I had already learned that an ideal solution needed to keep the same intervallic relationship of the *Quintbass Gitarre* with the least retuning possible; therefore, not in

absolute but in relative terms. This was finally achieved by a simple *scordatura*: raising the lowest string of the “Brahms guitar” a whole step to B1 and lowering its third string a half step to F#3, as illustrated in Figures 11 and 12. This *scordatura* is not at all foreign to the instrument, since the lowest string of the “Brahms guitar” is often retuned according to key demands and tuning the third string to F#3 is a common procedure for any guitarist who ever approached Renaissance repertoire for the lute or vihuela.

FIGURE 11 – Tunings of the “Brahms guitar” (after *scordatura*) and the *Quintbass Gitarre*

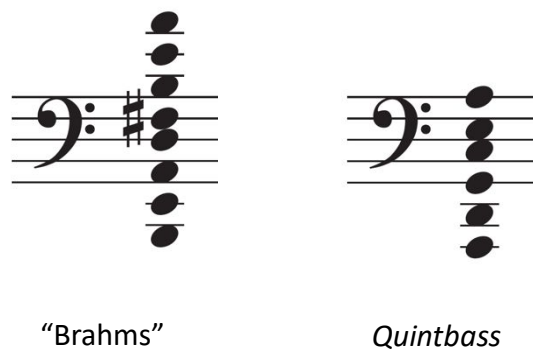
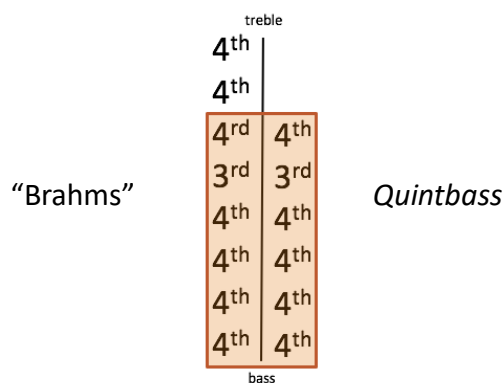


FIGURE 12 – Comparison of the string intervallic relationship between the “Brahms guitar” (after *scordatura*) and the *Quintbass Gitarre*



Once solved the issues of range and intervallic relationship between the two instruments, the next step was to adapt the music to the new tuning. This turned out to be a straightforward process, achieved simply by transposing the whole piece a major second above. This way, the chordal accompaniment did not lose its idiomatic quality on the “Brahms guitar” nor the colours of the bass register were severely affected. The new keys of B minor (M1), D Major (M2) and B Major (M3) did

not prove problematic for the six-string guitar as well, as long as its sixth string would be tuned to D (also a well-known *scordatura*).²¹ Figures 13 and 14 show an excerpt of the first movement in its original key and after transposition.

FIGURE 13 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score), M1, bb. 69-76.



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

FIGURE 14 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* after transposition, M1, bb. 69-76.



²¹ It should be considered that key suitability is much less of an issue in guitar ensemble than in solo playing, since the texture tends to be less dense in the former, often splitting melodic and accompaniment roles among the instruments.

While now it would be perfectly possible to perform the whole piece with a regular guitar and a “Brahms guitar”, a further step was taken to rebalance melodic material, as well as to solve a few technical issues that could not possibly be predicted by a non-guitarist composer.

5. Rebalancing melodic material

When Rebay conceived his *Großes Duo in a-Moll*, he did so for two instruments tuned a fifth apart (akin to a viola and a violoncello). The ranges—and melodic roles—were thus conditioned by the instrumentation and the *Quintbass Gitarre* remained at what would be the normal range of the pianist’s left hand in Rebay’s original sonata for piano. However, given the fact that the “Brahms guitar” still counts with two extra high strings when compared to the *Quintbass Gitarre*, there would be little reason for not having it performing in the higher register as well. Therefore, I decided to employ a more conversational texture throughout the piece.

As a matter of fact, a branch of the original nineteenth-century repertoire for guitar duo presents no obvious hierarchy between parts, with both instruments continuously exchanging melodic material at the same octave. This can be seen in many guitar duos of Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841) and Adam Darr (1811-1866), for example. Conversational textures, in which lyrical melodies are constantly passed along to various players are also a trademark of much of the nineteenth-century chamber music repertoire associated with domestic and amateur playing by composers such as Kuhlau, Spohr and Onslow (SUMNER LOTT, 2015, p. 85). A conversational texture also permeates most of Rebay’s chamber music, as can be seen from my analyses of his sonatas for woodwinds and guitar (MANTOVANI, 2019, pp. 124–132). This textural treatment is exactly what makes them interesting for the guitarist, who, rather than accompanying a melodic instrument most of the time, often shares melodic material with the chamber partners. Thus, modifying the text of the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* in order to rebalance melodic material seemed correct from both historical and stylistic points of view.

Such alterations worked particularly well in passages that feature thematic repetitions, like in the second theme area of the first movement (Figures 15 and 16). In the original passage, Rebay repeats the melody almost note by note, both times played by the first guitar. Given the pitch range

of the accompaniment, there was no difficulty in swapping parts, a procedure that was repeated accordingly in the development and recapitulation, as well as in similar contexts elsewhere in the piece. After the redistribution of melodic material, the *Großes Duo* gained more melodic balance among the two instruments, becoming even more interesting to performers and audiences, who may enjoy a frequent exchange of roles instead of a hierarchic texture that always focuses on the first guitar

FIGURE 15 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score), M1, bb. 25-40.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for guitar and piano, consisting of two systems of staves. Each system has a guitar staff on top and a piano staff on the bottom. The score is written in a cursive hand and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system is marked with a Roman numeral 'I.' and the second with 'II.'. There are several blue rectangular highlights over specific sections of the score, and orange rectangular boxes around the guitar staves. Handwritten annotations in red and blue ink are visible at the top of the page, including the words 'molto rit.' and 'Ein wenig mehr als das letzte (Rebay)'. The score is on aged, yellowed paper.

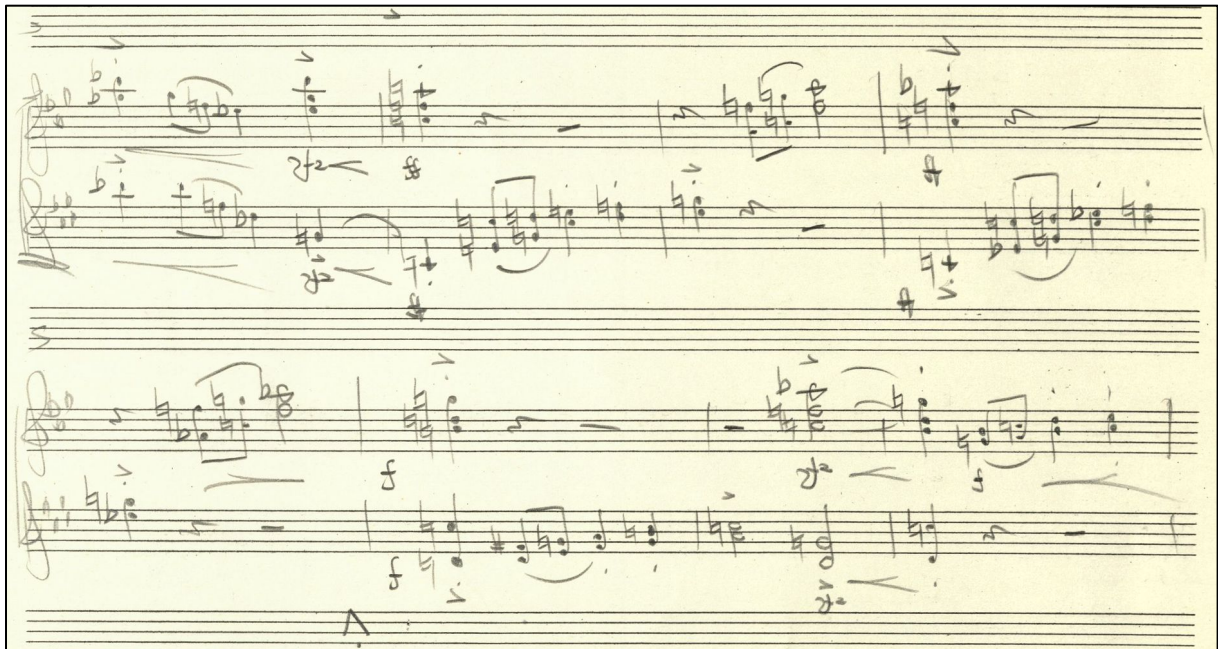
Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

FIGURE 16 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* after modification, M1, bb. 25-40.

The image displays a musical score excerpt for Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* after modification, M1, measures 25-40. The score is in A minor and 8/8 time. It features two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The music is divided into four systems, each with a blue shaded area highlighting specific passages. The first system (measures 25-28) has a first ending bracketed and marked *mf*. The second system (measures 29-32) is marked *f*. The third system (measures 33-36) has a first ending bracketed and marked *p*, with the second ending marked *pp*. The fourth system (measures 37-40) is marked *pp*.

Finally, redistributing melodic material also provided technical relief in a few passages of the piece, such as the one shown in Figure 17. Here, both guitars are engaged in a motivic interplay that derives from the first theme. However, given the fast tempo of the third movement (*Frisch bewegt*), playing sequences of intervals on one single guitar may hinder speed and clarity of execution. This happens not only because of the right hand's need for repeatedly plucking with the same fingers in the fast quavers but also because of unavoidable left-hand shifting.

FIGURE 17 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* (autograph score), M3, bb. 130-137



Source: Music Archives of the Stift Heiligenkreuz

My solution, illustrated in Figure 18, was to split these intervals among the two guitars, thus facilitating articulation, particularly when Rebay asks for legato. In support of my intervention, a similar procedure had already been adopted by Rebay in b. 130, as can be seen above. While this solution minimized individual difficulty, it potentially created ensemble playing issues due to the parallel voices. However, articulating together is at the core of chamber music playing, making this a perfectly manageable compromise.

FIGURE 18 – Excerpt of Rebay's *Großes Duo in a-Moll* after modification, M3, bb. 130-137

The image displays a musical score excerpt for two staves, measures 130 through 137. The music is in 8/8 time and features a complex rhythmic structure with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes dynamic markings such as *sfz* (sforzando), *ff* (fortissimo), and *f* (forte). There are also accents and slurs over various notes. The notation is dense, with many notes beamed together, suggesting a fast and intricate piece.

The approaches illustrated here were also applied to analogous passages throughout the *Großes Duo in a-Moll*. A realization of the entire piece by the NOVA Guitar Duo can be heard (and watched) on YouTube.²²

Conclusion

This article had a twofold goal. The first was to introduce Ferdinand Rebay and situate his *Großes Duo in a-Moll* within the repertoire and his own guitar output. The second was to identify performance issues derived from the original instrumentation and describe the process of overcoming them, making the piece playable on modern instruments. It involved gaining authority over the piece as a scholar and a performer, which could only happen through familiarity with the composer's style and knowledge of contextual information, including that of organological nature.

At their core, the issues and approaches described here are shared among many musicians, such as those performing early music on modern instruments or dealing with music set in now-obsolete

²² A live recording from a lecture-recital given at the 3rd Festival Conference of Music Performance and Artistic Research "Doctors in Performance" (Vilnius, Lithuania) in 2018 is available at <https://youtu.be/GoHq09dV8xY?t=1060>.

musical notation. When faced with these situations, the performer is called to deliver an informed interpretation and becomes responsible for adapting the musical text to modern circumstances that were not part of the composer's original environment. During this process, often an avenue for "posthumous collaboration" is opened.

In my PhD thesis, I argue that "Rebay's sonatas offer a unique opportunity for guitarists: the chance of thoroughly exercising a genre and form—the post-Beethovenian sonata—previously non-existent for the instrument" (MANTOVANI, 2019, p. 138). As his only sonata for guitar duo, the *Großes Duo* fills a gap in the repertoire and establishes a bridge, even if in a somewhat anachronistic way, between the early nineteenth-century guitar duo repertoire and the Austro-German Romantic sonata.

While my solution for bringing the work to life worked perfectly for the NOVA Guitar Duo's instrumentation, the fact that it proposes substituting an obsolete instrument for one which is equally not widely available may be criticized. However, the procedure described above could potentially work on a seven-string guitar (with the seventh string tuned to B1), which is a fairly common variant of the regular guitar and is already in use by many modern guitar duos. As a by-product of this research, a future publication of the piece under my editorial responsibility would most certainly take this into consideration, thus making the *Großes Duo in a-Moll* available to a wider number of guitar-duo ensembles that do not use either the *Quintbass Gitarre* or the "Brahms guitar".

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