

Finding New Repertoire: Transcribing Mozart's Sonata, K. 292 (196c) for the Guitar

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There is a noticeable lack of effective idiomatic arrangements in the solo guitar repertoire of large-scale works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791). Guitarists since the late eighteenth century have attempted to arrange and transcribe the composer's music with varying degrees of success. Many early efforts are arrangements of smaller pieces or single movements from larger works, while some twentieth-century guitarists arranged complete multi-movement compositions. These existing arrangements, however, tend to be excessively difficult and are arguably of less effect than the original work; in some cases, major passages require severe truncation through editing.

This article presents an exegesis of the decisions made in my own original guitar transcription of Mozart's three-movement Sonata for Bassoon and Violoncello in B-flat major, K. 292 (196c). With this transcription, I aim to expand the guitar repertoire. For many instruments, the late eighteenth century is a major source of material, but this is not the case for the guitar. While recent research has improved the familiarity of the contemporary guitarist with the guitar repertoire of this time, very few works—let alone larger compositions such as full-scale sonatas—are played with any regularity.¹ My transcription seeks to fill this gap in the guitar repertoire by making accessible a large work by a major composer of the era. There

¹ The Spanish guitar was significantly less popular in the late eighteenth century than it had been in the Baroque period; see Harvey Turnbull, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 59–60. Guitar music from this time, though rarely played by non-specialist performers, is often worth investigating. Recordings dedicated to this music in recent years include some by musicologist Thomas Schmitt; see, for example, *De Gusto Muy Delicado: Eighteenth-Century Spanish Music for Six-Course Guitar*, La Ma de Guido CD LMG2108, 2011.

have been attempts throughout the latter half of the twentieth century to arrange complete Mozart sonatas, but often these arrangements do not suit the guitar and consequently are of an inaccessibly high level of difficulty.

For my transcription of K. 292, I have retained the original key of B-flat major, which is rare for the guitar—even more so in the case of extended compositions. Unlike many previous guitar transcriptions of Mozart's music, this transcription is of a three-movement work rather than a short, single-movement excerpt. This transcription is also intended to be highly playable. I aimed to create a new guitar work that resembles the original composition as closely as possible, despite the shift of instrumentation, and it was found that this Sonata needed only minor edits to maintain its playability.

History of the Sonata for Bassoon and Violoncello, K. 292

There is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the composition of the Sonata, K. 292. Some authors have suggested that it was ordered by Baron Thaddäus von Dürnitz, who had also ordered from Mozart several bassoon concerti, which are now lost.² Very little evidence seems to support this theory. No documents confirming this context exist, nor does the Sonata appear in the catalogue of the Dürnitz collection.³ The autograph manuscript of the Sonata has been lost, and modern editions are instead based only on the earliest printed editions by Breitkopf and Härtel, and Hummel. It is impossible to determine a precise date of publication. The Breitkopf and Härtel edition was first announced in May 1805 and the Hummel edition at some point between 1802 and 1814. While the Hummel plate number seems to suggest 1805, Hummel's plate numbers did not use a strict chronological ordering. Furthermore, the two editions are almost identical, raising the possibility that one of the publications was simply engraved from the other. This means that neither source is able to be identified positively as the original, further confusing the history of the piece.⁴

Several writers have suggested that the Sonata might not have been intended for the pairing of bassoon and cello. Dietrich Berke and Marius Flothuis propose that the original scoring was bassoon and basso continuo.⁵ Wiese agrees, pointing out that the work is not a duo in the sense of two equal instrumental parts: 'The bassoon clearly holds centre stage, while the cello is assigned the function of a continuo instrument. If one compares this work with the [duo works] for violin and viola ... the difference is striking.'⁶ The change in instrumentation is perhaps simply due to the publishers, as the phrase *basso continuo* was out of date at the time of publication, and a duo sonata would potentially be more financially successful.⁷ This could be the most plausible explanation for the unusual combination of instruments, though there are other theories; Robert Gutman, for instance, quotes Kenneth Cooper's anecdotal suggestion that the Sonata might be a practice reduction of one of Mozart's missing bassoon concerti.⁸ Another oddity in the piece is the restricted range of the bassoon part. While the bassoon in

² Robert W. Gutman, *Mozart: A Cultural Biography* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 333.

³ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Duos and Trios for Strings and Winds*, ed. Dietrich Berke and Marius Flothuis, Neue Mozart-Ausgabe, Series VIII, Chamber Music, Work Group 21 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), 8–9.

⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata in B flat Major K. 292 (196c) for Bassoon and Violoncello (Basso Continuo)*, ed. Henrik Wiese (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2005), 4.

⁵ Berke and Flothuis, eds, Mozart, *Duos and Trios*, 8–9.

⁶ Wiese, ed., Mozart, *Sonata*, 8.

⁷ Wiese, ed., Mozart, *Sonata*, 8.

⁸ Gutman, *Mozart*, 333.

Mozart's Bassoon Concerto in B-flat major, K. 191, covers three octaves, the bassoon in K. 292 covers only one and a half octaves. It is possible that the Sonata was intended for a *fagottino*, or small bassoon, but this does not explain the lack of a high range in the bassoon part.⁹

Compounding the ambiguities of this piece is the fact that there is no evidence that it is by Mozart at all. No autograph manuscript survives, and there is not even a contemporary reference to the composition. Nevertheless, as Stanley Sadie states, 'it is perfectly plausible as a work of Mozart's with its touches of wit in the bassoon writing in the opening movement closely akin to those in the concerto, its eloquent Andante and a number of characteristic compositional features.'¹⁰

Mozart, the Guitar and Guitar Arrangements

Mozart did not compose original music for the guitar, but he did compose for another plucked instrument, the mandolin. Mandolin accompaniment is included in three Mozart compositions: the canzonetta 'Deh vieni alla finestra' from *Don Giovanni* and two songs, 'Die Zufriedenheit,' K. 349 and 'Komm, liebe Ziether, Komm,' K. 351.¹¹ The complete absence of the guitar in Mozart's output may have been for the simple reason that, at the time, the Spanish guitar was more popular in the Mediterranean than in Austria.¹² Instead, Mozart is more likely to have encountered the English guitar.¹³ Several composers in Mozart's circle wrote for this instrument. Johann Christian Bach, who had a close relationship with Mozart,¹⁴ composed a sonata for the English guitar with violin accompaniment.¹⁵ Similarly, Franz Xaver Süssmayr, who completed Mozart's Requiem, K. 626, wrote a Serenade in C major, SmWV 601, for violin, English guitar, oboe, English horn and cello. Neither Bach nor Süssmayr are known to have written for the Spanish guitar.

Even though Mozart never composed any original music for the guitar, this did not deter guitarists from writing arrangements of, as well as fantasias and variations on, his music. Stefan Hackl has created a comprehensive survey of the links—albeit tangential—between Mozart and the guitar. Hackl reports 153 nineteenth-century guitar arrangements of Mozart's music published in Germany alone, and he suggests that this number could be higher given the frequency of composers using thematic material without attribution.¹⁶ The most well-known guitar work based on Mozart is Fernando Sor's *Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart*, op. 9. The theme used in this piece—noted in Sor's edition as 'Das klinget so herrlich' from *Die Zauberflöte*—was also used in at least twenty other guitar compositions.¹⁷ Among the most prominent are Mauro Giuliani's *Tre tema favoriti con Variazioni di Mme Catalani*, WoO G-3, and

⁹ Wiese, ed., Mozart, *Sonata*, 4.

¹⁰ Stanley Sadie, *Mozart: The Early Years, 1756–1781* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2006), 365.

¹¹ The mandolin accompaniment in 'Deh vieni alla finestra' is sometimes substituted by a *pizzicato* violin.

¹² Stefan Hackl, 'Mozart and the Guitar: A Contribution to the Mozart Year, 2006,' *Soundboard* 31, no. 4 (2006): 25–33.

¹³ The English guitar had six strings tuned to C E GG cc ee gg. The top four strings are paired courses rather than single strings. See Hanu Annala and Heiki Matlik, *Handbook of Guitar and Lute Composers* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 2007), 30.

¹⁴ Adena Portowitz, 'The J.C. Bach-Mozart Connections,' *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 5, no. 2 (2006): 89.

¹⁵ Annala and Matlik, *Handbook*, 39.

¹⁶ Hackl, 'Mozart and the Guitar,' 28.

¹⁷ Fernando Sor, *Variations Op. 9 on a Theme from Mozart's Magic Flute for Guitar*, ed Fabio Rizza (Bologna: UT Orpheus, 2011), 2.

Matteo Carcassi's *Air des Mysteres d'Isis*, op. 24. Sor also arranged for guitar a set of *Six airs choisis de l'opera de Mozart: Il Flauto Magico*, op. 19, which contains a different arrangement of the same 'Das klinget so herrlich' theme used in his op. 9. In addition, Sor published a set of three arias from *Don Giovanni* with the accompaniment arranged for guitar: 'Batti, batti,' 'Deh vieni alla finestra' and 'Vedrai carino.'

Later guitarists arranged some small works by Mozart but restricted themselves to very short excerpts rather than collections like Sor's op. 19. For instance, in the late nineteenth century, Francisco Tarrega was instrumental in creating a large repertoire of effective guitar arrangements and transcriptions. Tarrega's efforts were a means of expanding his own repertoire; however, only two of his arrangements are of Mozart's music: the Minuet and Trio from the String Quartet in D minor, K. 421 (417b) and the Minuet and Trio from the String Quintet in D major, K. 593. Students of Tarrega also contributed Mozart arrangements: Miguel Llobet arranged the aria 'Vedrai, carino' from *Don Giovanni* and the Andante from the Piano Sonata in C major, K. 330, and Daniel Fortea arranged slow movements from the Piano Sonata in F major, K. 280 (189e), the Piano Sonata in E-flat major, K. 282 (189g) and the 'Coronation' Piano Concerto in D major, K. 537.

In the mid-1920s, Andrés Segovia began to publish his own arrangements and transcriptions but only ever wrote an arrangement of one short Mozart work.¹⁸ No details of the Köchel catalogue number are given in Segovia's original publication, which gives the title only as Minuet, but this transcription can be identified as the second Minuet from the Serenade in E-flat major, K. 375. More ambitious is Vahdah Olcott-Bickford's 1938 collection entitled *Mozart Album for Guitar*, op. 132. This publication contains several of Olcott-Bickford's own transcriptions of Mozart pieces—among them, the slow movements of the Piano Sonata in D major, K. 311 (284c) and the Piano Sonata in F major, K. 332 (300k)—as well as Sor's previously mentioned opp. 9 and 19. Intriguingly, a letter to Olcott-Bickford refers to an all-Mozart programme for the guitar, though the contents of this programme have been difficult to locate.¹⁹

While these existing arrangements are successful in their effectiveness as transcriptions, methods of programming a concert have shifted since the early twentieth century. The small scale of these single-movement arrangements might now be more appropriate as encore pieces rather than as part of a full concert programme. For instance, Hackl has written that, despite the high number of guitar arrangements works by Mozart, 'not many substantial contributions to the guitar's repertoire have emerged.'²⁰ In terms of length, more-recent guitar arrangements of Mozart's music tend to be more ambitious than much of the guitar arrangements produced in the nineteenth century. Such an approach, however, can come at the expense of playability.

Guitarists Julian Bream, David Tanenbaum and Eliot Fisk have each separately arranged parts of Mozart's Five Divertimenti, K. Anh. 229 (439b), originally written for three basset horns. Bream transcribed the Larghetto third movement and Allegro first movement of the Second Divertimento as a contrasting pair of pieces; Tanenbaum also re-worked the same divertimento but as a whole, while Fisk has arranged the Fourth Divertimento. Both the Bream

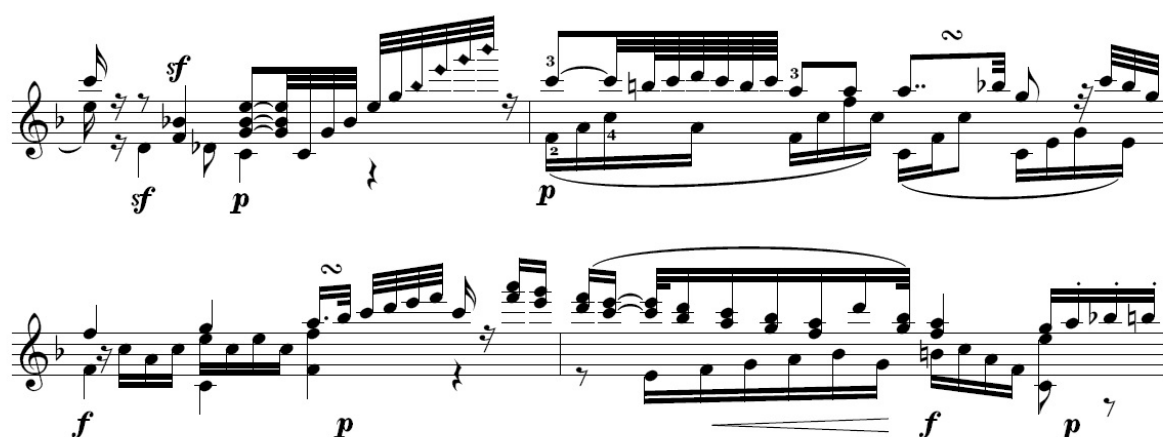
¹⁸ Graham Wade, *A Concise History of the Classic Guitar* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 2001), 113.

¹⁹ Gloria Ramsey to Vahdah Olcott-Bickford, February 14, 1956. See Vahdah Olcott-Bickford, 'Letter from Gloria to Vahdah,' CSUN Oviatt Library Digital Collections, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://digital-library.csun.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/VOBCorr/id/289/rec/2>.

²⁰ Hackl, 'Mozart and the Guitar,' 25.

and Tanenbaum arrangements have been published, but the Fisk is not available; it is difficult, therefore, to judge the effectiveness of Fisk's arrangement.²¹ Similarly, Manuel Barrueco has recorded—but not published—an arrangement of the Piano Sonata in G major, K. 283,²² and William Kanengiser has published an arrangement of the well-known Piano Sonata in A major, K. 331.²³ Notwithstanding its high quality, Kanengiser's arrangement is extremely demanding. Despite the fact that most of the chords in the original piano music have been reduced or cut down, for a guitarist to play the complete Sonata at a similar tempo to a pianist—of even moderate ability—would be a considerable challenge. Likewise, Tristan Manoukian has recently published a transcription of the Piano Sonata in C minor, K. 457. Many issues are shared with Kanengiser's arrangement in that tempo becomes a major issue. The first pages alone of Manoukian's arrangement need to be significantly slower on the guitar than on the piano. The difficulty level of this transcription is high, and several passages are unlikely to sound exactly as notated. Note in bar 17 the hemidemisemiquavers in combination with the semiquavers in the accompaniment or in bars 18–19 the passage in thirds; both moments are technically playable but very difficult (see Example 1).²⁴

Example 1. Mozart (arr. Manoukian), Sonata, K. 457 – II. Adagio: bb. 16–9



A comparison of the extreme difficulty of this and other recent guitar transcriptions of Mozart's music may be made with original guitar works—non-transcriptions—of Viennese composers utilising a similar stylistic approach to Mozart. Although Simon Molitor's *Große Sonate*, op. 7 was written as late as 1806, it can be taken as fairly representative of the textures found in guitar writing of the time. In sharp contrast to most recent guitar transcriptions of Mozart's music, Molitor's writing is comfortable and suits the instrument well (see Example 2).²⁵

²¹ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Larghetto and Allegro*, ed. Julian Bream (London: Faber, 1969); and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Divertimento K.439b, No. 2*, ed. David Tanenbaum (San Francisco: Guitar Solo Publications, 1986).

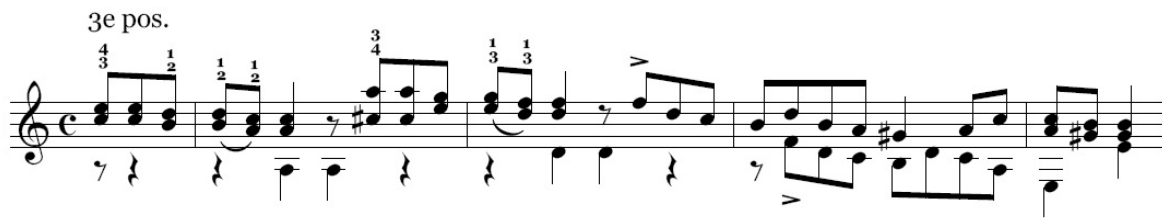
²² Manuel Barrueco, *Mozart and Sor*, EMI Classics 5 66578 8, 1997, compact disc.

²³ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata K. 331 in A Major*, ed. William Kanengiser (San Francisco: Guitar Solo Publications, 1989).

²⁴ Typeset after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata KV. 457*, ed. Tristan Manoukian (Québec: Les Productions d'Oz/Dobermann Yppan, 2011), 12. All musical examples in this article have been typeset by the author.

²⁵ Typeset after Simon Molitor, *Große Sonate, Op. 7*, ed. Josef Zuth (Vienna: Anton Goll, 1922), 4.

Example 2. Molitor, *Große Sonate*, op. 7 – I. Agitato ma non troppo Allegro: bb. 1–4



Differences in texture between idiomatic guitar works and recent guitar transcriptions of Mozart's piano music becomes particularly clear when compared with Mozart's original piano writing. Even a work that Mozart designated as for beginners, such as the Piano Sonata in C major, K. 545,²⁶ contains many passages that, without major editorial work, would be very difficult to play on the guitar at a fast tempo. The following passage, for instance, could not be performed at an appropriate tempo and untransposed at the written pitch (see Example 3).²⁷

Example 3. Mozart, Sonata, K. 545 – III. Rondo: bb. 1–4



Mozart's piano works tend to suffer on the guitar for two reasons: tempos are generally beyond the capacity of the vast majority of guitarists, and many figures that are idiomatic on the piano are less straightforward on the guitar. Even simple accompaniments, such as the Alberti bass, require the removal or modification of notes in order to fit comfortably on the six strings of the guitar. According to Richard Yates, transcribers need to be conscious of what can easily fit the guitar as 'pieces which comprise dense counterpoint or rely on a pianist's luxury of playing rapid passages with each hand simultaneously are unlikely candidates.'²⁸ Hackl argues strongly that most Mozart arrangements for the guitar are not successful and 'in general have always been a bit dubious, at least reducing—and, in the worst case, mutilating—the original.'²⁹ Transcriptions made from the piano risk sounding excessively thin once written for the guitar. Given that the music most suitable for the guitar has a relatively light texture and is not excessively rapid, non-piano works with a two-part texture—works written for two single-line instruments—are among the most appropriate candidates for guitar transcription.

The *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* lists six duo pieces by Mozart that do not include piano: the early Sonatas in C major, K. 46d and F major, K. 46e for violin and continuo; the Sonata under discussion; the Duos for Violin and Viola in G major, K. 423, and B-flat major, K. 424; and the

²⁶ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Keyboard Sonatas Volume 2*, ed. Wolfgang Plath and Wolfgang Rehm, *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, Series IX, Keyboard Music, Work Group 25 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1986), xviii.

²⁷ Typeset after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Piano Sonata No. 16 in C Major*, K. 545, ed. Wolfgang Plath and Wolfgang Rehm (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1986), 130.

²⁸ Richard Yates, *The Transcriber's Art* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 2001), 7.

²⁹ Hackl, 'Mozart and the Guitar,' 25.

Twelve Duos for Two Horns, KV 487 (496a).³⁰ Texturally, these compositions are ideal in that a piano part—often fairly complex—does not need to be reduced to six guitar strings. While it would be possible to arrange several of these duo works for solo guitar, tempos or rhythmic durations in the music for strings are often much faster than can comfortably be controlled on the guitar. It would be theoretically possible to arrange the following passage of the Duo in G major for violin and viola, K. 423, for a single guitar (see Example 4).³¹ Some difficulties, nonetheless, would be presented for the guitarist, as the top line can be played far more rapidly on the violin than would be possible on the guitar.

Example 4. Mozart, Duo, K. 423 – II. Adagio: bb. 24–5



Further passages that would produce an equally high level of difficulty in a guitar arrangement are frequent in both duos for violin and viola. The Sonata, K. 292, however, does not have any of these preliminary issues, making it a prime candidate for arrangement and performance on the guitar.

Considerations of Key in Transcribing the Sonata, K. 292

A number of elements must be considered when crafting any transcription. A difficult decision in guitar arrangement or transcription is whether to alter the piece from its original key. In fact, a significant number of guitar arrangements are transposed into guitar-friendly keys: A major, D major, E major and G major, and A minor, B minor, D minor and E minor.³² These keys are those in which the open strings of the guitar (E, A, D, G, B and E) tend to fall on the first, fourth and fifth scale degrees.³³ As a result, guitar transcriptions have a tendency towards keys with sharps in the key signature, as this permits the largest number of comfortable open strings. In contrast, keys with flats in the key signature become more difficult to work with almost immediately. F major—one flat—is not difficult, but B-flat major and E-flat major—two flats and three flats respectively—restrict the player to far fewer open strings.

Julian Bream mentions key relationships in conjunction with development sections when discussing the sonata repertoire of the guitar:

³⁰ Of these, the Horn Duos perhaps work best as guitar transcriptions. Karl Scheit published a transcription of four selected movements from these duos for solo guitar, and the complete set has been arranged for two guitars. See Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Allegro – Andante – Menuet – Allegro*, ed. Karl Scheit (London: Universal Edition, 1973).

³¹ Typeset after Mozart, *Duos and Trios*, 23.

³² Jonathan Godfrey, 'Principles of Idiomatic Guitar Writing' (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2013), 26.

³³ Olga Amelkina-Vera, 'Solo Lyra Viol Music of Tobias Hume (c. 1579–1645): Historical Context and Transcription for Modern Guitar' (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2008), 19.

One of the unfortunate things about the guitar is that it's limited in the ways it can transpose. This is very indicative in the nineteenth-century sonatas.³⁴ I can hardly think of a guitar sonata that has a development section. And key relationships do play such an important part of classical sonata form; they create part of the tension of the music. A thematic idea in one key sounds so different in another, and the guitar finds it difficult to cope with that in terms of musical development.³⁵

Fernando Sor's sonatas, for instance, have previously been singled out as lacking development sections. This erroneous belief, however, has been thoroughly dismissed. Yates points out that this argument stems from Newman's *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, which was then quoted by Harvey Turnbull in *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day*.³⁶ In turn, both of these major texts by Newman and Turnbull cite a dissertation by William Sasser, 'The Guitar Works of Fernando Sor,' which blames the guitar's 'limited resources' for a lack of developmental sections.³⁷ Yates notes, though, that the sonatas of both Anton Diabelli and Wenzel Thomas Matiegka do include traditional development sections.³⁸ Bream is correct, nonetheless, in that there are significant changes in the timbre of the guitar depending on what key is used, and this might indeed be an important reason why extended guitar works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are generally in sharp keys, which permit the use of the most open strings.

Composers of the time certainly seemed to have been aware of the timbral disparity of different keys on the guitar and simply wrote around the issue. One example that demonstrates highly effective guitar writing can be found in the first movement of Mauro Giuliani's Sonata, op. 15, first published in 1808 in Vienna.³⁹ In this sonata, the timbre of the second subject is similar in the exposition, where it is stated in G major, and the recapitulation, where it is stated in C major (see Example 5).⁴⁰

Example 5. Giuliani, Sonata, op. 15 – I. Allegro spirito: bb. 34–8 (top); bb. 159–63 (bottom)



³⁴ Bream is presumably referring here to the sonatas opp. 22 and 25 of Fernando Sor and Mauro Giuliani's op. 15. Other guitar sonatas of the early nineteenth century, such as the works of Wenzel Thomas Matiegka, were little known at the time.

³⁵ Chris Kilvington, 'Julian Bream Interview,' *Classical Guitar Magazine* 121 (2014): 17.

³⁶ Stanley Yates, 'Sor's Guitar Sonatas: Form and Style,' Stanley Yates, accessed November 18, 2017, www.stanleyyates.com/writings/sor.pdf, 1–2. See also William Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 663–664 and Harvey Turnbull, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 89.

³⁷ See William Sasser, 'The Guitar Works of Fernando Sor,' PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1960.

³⁸ Yates, 'Sor's Guitar Sonatas,' 1–2.

³⁹ Mauro Giuliani, *Sonata Op. 15 for Solo Guitar*, ed. Brian Jeffrey (London: Tecla Editions, 1986), 2.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey, ed. Giuliani, *Sonata*, 2–4.

The timbral similarity between these two passages comes about because the statements in the dominant and tonic are arranged to use the same area of the fingerboard. Both passages emphasise open strings; in the dominant excerpt, every D under the staff is open, and in the tonic excerpt, every G is open. Moreover, the passage in the tonic is simply one string across from the passage in the dominant. The very similar physical location of the notes in these two excerpts helps to maintain a sense of consistency that would otherwise be lacking if this sonata were written in another key.

In my transcription of Mozart's Sonata, K. 292, I have chosen to retain the original key of B-flat major. B-flat major is a key rarely found in extended works for the guitar, and it would be considerably more common to transpose the music down one semitone to the key of A major. Despite this, it is not difficult, in my transcription, to outline tonic, subdominant and dominant harmonies—B-flat major, E-flat major and F major—even though B-flat major is not among the usual keys for the guitar. The relative ease in the execution of these harmonies is simply due to the two-voice texture. As in the Giuliani Sonata, op. 15, above, these harmonies are relatively close physically on the instrument.

An element of which I was aware in maintaining the original key of the Sonata, K. 292, was the fact that there is an extreme paucity of extended material for the guitar written in flat keys. There are many examples of shorter works in flat keys,⁴¹ but longer works are much harder to find. In the guitar repertoire of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the *Première Fantaisie*, op. 5 by François de Fossa is one of the better-known works, but it lasts less than ten minutes in a typical performance. Mozart's Sonata is around fifteen minutes long.

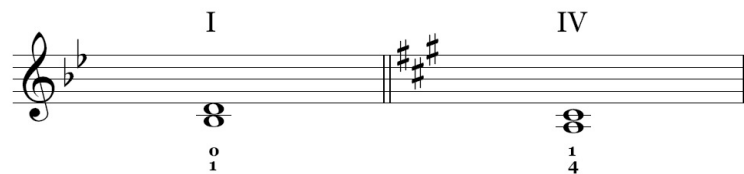
Despite Bream's belief that flat keys sound somewhat muted on the guitar,⁴² retaining the key of B-flat major was found to be highly effective in transcribing the Sonata, K. 292, for the guitar, as this key allows for the exact replication of the majority of the original piece. Transposition is standard in guitar arrangements, although, in this case, transposing the Sonata down by a semitone to the often-used key of A major creates more problems than it solves. To achieve low notes found in the original cello part of the Sonata, the guitarist must use drop-D scordatura no matter what key is chosen.⁴³ But this retuning causes issues in the key of A major. The change of a semitone means that several notes would fall even below the extended drop-D-scordatura compass of the guitar and would then require transposition by an octave. While octave transposition is a common solution in guitar transcriptions, the closeness of the bassoon and cello parts in this Sonata would result in voice crossing not present in the original piece. Additionally, the change of tuning for the sixth string means that some common harmonies become more difficult. In the key of A major, the first and third scale degrees are only performable through an awkward leap to fourth position—assuming the use of drop-D tuning. In the key of B-flat major, the guitarist can keep the original cello part without octave transposition and still have comfortable access to the first and third scale degrees, which are performable in first position. B-flat major also allows for the use of an open string (see Example 6).

⁴¹ Sor's Étude no. 1 in B-flat major and Étude no. 10 in E-flat major from the op. 29 set are particularly fine.

⁴² Kilvington, 'Julian Bream Interview,' 17.

⁴³ Drop-D tuning involves retuning the sixth string of the guitar to D. The complete tuning therefore becomes D, A, D, G, B and E.

Example 6. First and third scale degrees of B-flat major (first position) and A major (fourth position) assuming the use of drop-D tuning



Changes and challenges in the transcription

Some short passages in K. 292 required modification for successful performance on the guitar. A brief four-bar passage in the Rondo third movement is considerably easier to play on guitar when the cello part is transposed down one octave (see Example 7).⁴⁴ In the duo format, the two parts can cross over each other with ease, but two overlapping parts are far more difficult on a single instrument. Lowering the cello part by an octave also has the added advantage of making the call-and-response effect of this passage much clearer.

Example 7. Mozart, Sonata, K. 292 – III. Rondo: bb. 79–82

Octave transposition was a solution also used in bars 37 and 38 of the first movement, where much of the cello part has been transposed down an octave, other than the initial F initial (see Example 8).⁴⁵ This is simply because the rapid semiquavers of the bassoon part become impossible to play when the cello part is in close proximity—a problem easily solved by lowering the cello part. The same approach was again used for a similar passage in bars 102 and 103 later in the first movement (see Example 9).⁴⁶

Several sections are possible to play on the guitar as Mozart originally wrote them but present a performance challenge. In the third movement, the opening phrase—repeated multiple times throughout due to the rondo form of the movement—contains a very rapid shift from first position to third position and back to first position (see Example 10). While it would be possible to transpose either the melody upwards or parts of the bass downwards,

⁴⁴ Typeset after Mozart, *Duos and Trios*, 13. In Examples 7, 8 and 9, the original is in the system above and the transcription is in the system below.

⁴⁵ Typeset after Mozart, *Duos and Trios*, 8.

⁴⁶ Typeset after Mozart, *Duos and Trios*, 10.

this would mean that the piece overall would become disjointed, as material transposed here would therefore necessitate modification of similar subsequent material. Barring further editing the excerpt is not impossible but does require some practice to achieve fluidity.

Example 8. Mozart, Sonata, K. 292 – I. Allegro: bb. 37–8

Example 8 shows the first system of music for measures 37–38 of the first movement of Mozart's Sonata, K. 292. The score is written for three parts: Bsn. (Bassoon), Vc. (Violoncello), and Gtr. (Guitar). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The Bsn. part features a rapid sixteenth-note scale. The Vc. part has a slower, more melodic line. The Gtr. part includes a complex figure with triplets and slurs, indicating a difficult technical passage.

Example 9. Mozart, Sonata, K. 292 – I. Allegro: bb. 102–3

Example 9 shows the second system of music for measures 102–103 of the first movement of Mozart's Sonata, K. 292. The score is written for three parts: Bsn., Vc., and Gtr. The key signature is one flat. The Bsn. part continues with a rapid scale. The Vc. part has a melodic line with some chromaticism. The Gtr. part features a complex figure with triplets and slurs, indicating a difficult technical passage.

Example 10. Mozart, Sonata, K. 292 – III. Rondo: bb. 1–2

Example 10 shows the first system of music for measures 1–2 of the third movement of Mozart's Sonata, K. 292. The score is written for a single staff in 2/4 time. The key signature is one flat. The first measure is marked 'I' (first position) and the second measure is marked 'III' (third position), indicating a rapid and awkward shift between positions. The melody is simple, but the position change is a technical challenge.

A similarly difficult jump appears later in the third movement at bars 83–85 (see Example 11). In this case, a rapid and awkward shift between first position and sixth position is required; as in Example 10 above, a straightforward transposition of either the melody or bass parts is not possible. Nonetheless, these few brief excerpts are by far the most difficult moments in my transcription. For much of the three movements, the Sonata, K. 292, fits the guitar well.

Example 11. Mozart, Sonata, K. 292 – III. Rondo: bars 83–5**Conclusion**

This transcription of Mozart's Sonata for Bassoon and Violoncello, K. 292, attempts to fill a gap in the guitar repertoire, as the standard guitar repertoire includes very little music from the late eighteenth century. On one hand, older guitar arrangements or transcriptions of Mozart's music are primarily short: single movements and not extended works. On the other, recent arrangements of Mozart's longer compositions have tended to be excessively difficult and not to suit the instrument.

There is no evidence that Mozart ever wrote for the Spanish guitar; nonetheless, there is historical precedence in that his music has been adapted for the guitar since the early nineteenth century. I propose that my guitar transcription of the Sonata, originally for written for bassoon and cello, is considerably more effective than previous guitar transcriptions of extended Mozart works. This is due to the fact that the Sonata required only relatively minor editing to make it comfortably playable on a single guitar. In addition, because of the severe lack of extended guitar works in flat keys, the use of the Sonata's original key of B-flat major in my transcription has the potential to broaden recital programming for guitarists.

While there are only a handful of Mozart pieces for two instruments without piano, there are many other composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who wrote for this combination. This is fertile ground for future guitar transcriptions, as the texture of two instruments without a piano fits the guitar particularly well and requires less editing than more complex scores. Such material is worthwhile exploration for the creation of new guitar repertoire.

About the author

Paul Ballam-Cross is a composer and classical guitarist. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music in Performance and has studied privately with both Karin and Isolde Schaupp. He holds a Master of Information Studies degree, majoring in Librarianship, and is currently completing doctoral studies in Musicology.

[Editorial note: As originally published, this article included a score of the complete transcription. This was withdrawn by the author in 2022 in preparation for separate publication.]