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Summary

Although the guitar has been part of the classical music tradition for centuries, writing for the guitar remains a formidable challenge for many composers. Where orchestral instruments have a long history of scoring guides that help composers develop their craft, the number of studies dedicated to guitar scoring remains scarce. This has led to a myriad of scoring problems in guitar works written by non-guitarist composers, often evidenced in unplayable passages and underdeveloped textures. The present study aims to fill this gap by establishing and developing guidelines for effective use of the classical guitar’s scoring potential. These guidelines are described through the sound-cell-texture chain, a model introduced in this study that identifies building blocks for guitar scoring that are believed to give the composer access to the scoring potential for the guitar. The second aim of this study is to use the findings of the research to compose a set of new etudes for the guitar.

In Chapter 1, an outline is presented of the methodological dimension of my research trajectory. Rather than preparing and cooking a preconceived methodological recipe from the outset, I spent the initial stage of research looking for a suitable way to find answers to the question of how one writes well for the guitar. The combination of research methods I adopted during and after this period of searching arose in a context of existing methodologies both inside and outside the field of artistic research. The relation between my research methods and these theories are discussed in this chapter. In addition, I list the number and types of music scores examined during the research trajectory, and provide an account of the role of triangulation and reflectivity in the research process. Chapter 2 defines the research context of this study through a description of the social, epistemic and ecological situatedness of the subject of research. In this study, social situatedness refers to the social context in which guitarists and scholars have a shared concern for guitar scoring that is expressed through the exchange of knowledge and contribution to existing knowledge. Epistemic situatedness refers to existing knowledge concerning guitar scoring, while the use of the term ecological situatedness in this study primarily refers to the interaction between performer and instrument. Guitarists form a community of practitioners with a number of shared values; what these values are, and the means through which these values are disseminated, shared and exchanged is the topic of this chapter. In Chapter 3, the reader finds the theoretical framework of the dissertation. This framework is described through a critical review of previous studies, and an account of gaps in current knowledge about guitar scoring, the concepts developed in this study, the way these concepts are intended to fill gaps in current knowledge, and the significance of the notion of idiomatic scoring. The model on which the central section of this study is centered, the sound-cell-texture chain, is introduced in this chapter. The sound concept captures properties and characteristics of individual notes, the cell concept captures idiomatic ways in which sounds can be combined both horizontally and vertically, while the texture concept captures the characteristics of the fabric of musical activity over a number of bars. The word chain refers to the hierarchical relationship between the first three concepts. The model serves as a layered platform that allows for an explanation of scoring-technical issues from the larger perspective at the texture level, down to the intricacies at the sound level. Chapter 4 traces the historically problematic relationship
between guitar, guitarist and composer. In the first part of this chapter, I look at the characteristics of this relationship for three different eras of the classical guitar’s development: the Renaissance and Baroque, from the classical era to the Torres guitar, and the era of the modern classical guitar. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to a reflection on the different and often opposing developments in each of these eras. This reflection serves to inform the answer to the question: to what extent can we speak of a current mismatch in the triangular relationship between guitar, guitarist and composer?

Chapters 5-16 describe the twelve sound categories identified in this study. Furnished with a large number of score examples, these chapters give a detailed overview of the possibilities of the twelve sound categories. All score examples are available on video in order to give readers a more complete impression of the examples, and to demonstrate how they are performed on the guitar. The structure of each chapter in this section follows that of the sound-cell-texture model. At first, possibilities at the sound level are described. Examples of aspects considered at this level are pitch range, timbre, dynamics, vibrato, pitch bends and microtones. For vertical cells, attention is given to the structure of the vertical spacing of sounds and its relation to the sonic outcome. On the horizontal cell level, various types of cells are discussed, such as single lines, vertical cell sequences, arpeggios en multiple parts. For each of these types of horizontal cells, an account is provided of its design, resonance, harmonic possibilities, speed, rhythmic possibilities, articulation and embellishment. In addition, examples are provided of non-functional scoring. The discussion of the texture level is primarily intended to demonstrate, through repertoire examples, how composers use sounds and cells to create textures. On all levels of the chain, I aim to provide insight in aspects of performance, and give suggestions for correct notation. In some cases, the widespread proliferation of ambiguous and inconsistent notation practices in the repertoire required me to give suggestions for unambiguous notation, with the case of harmonics notation being the most compelling one. In cases of more rarely used sounds, such as inverted stopping sounds and hammered sounds, I was often able to point at repertoire examples of effective notation in the hope that composers will adopt these practices. In contrast to earlier guitar scoring guides, techniques and sounds that fall outside the range of common use (e.g. scratching sounds) are discussed in the same manner as more commonly used sounds (e.g. plucked sounds). Complex sound events are described in the chapter on the sound category that sets the initial sound in motion.

In Chapter 17, on the twelve etudes written as part of the research trajectory, I give the reader insight in their relation to the findings, and the literary source that served as inspiration. In addition, I give an account of my goal in writing the etudes.

Chapter 18 gives space to a discussion of the outcomes of the research trajectory. In this chapter, I review the scope and limitations of this study, consider the role of tacit and embodied knowledge in the research process, evaluate the sound-cell-texture chain as a theory, and articulate my contribution to the debate on the nature and status of artistic research. For this latter section, I seize the opportunity to plead for artistic research that acknowledges its intrinsically artistic and reflective nature, and values the interaction between these traits without emphasizing one at the cost of the other.

There are six appendices attached to this dissertation. Appendix A presents an account of the possibilities to create vertical combinations of sounds, one of the most challenging issues for composers
wishing to score for the guitar. Appendix B provides a chart for the fingering of harmonics, and indicates how harmonics can be combined vertically. Appendix C compares the dynamic ranges of the twelve sound categories in a relative dynamics chart. The possibilities to change the tuning of the guitar are considered in Appendix D, with suggestions for notation and repertoire examples of common and less common scordaturas. The video files, the recording equipment and the recording dates are listed in Appendix E. The scores of the etudes written with the findings of the research are found in Appendix F.