

THE GUITARIST AS POLY-INSTRUMENTALIST

*An investigation into the challenges and possibilities
found in the periphery of a contemporary guitar
practice*

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Abstract

Using the heterogeneous approaches to instrument technique found in contemporary music as a vehicle, the thesis explores the possibility of the classical guitarist assuming a new performer role — a role characterized by new instruments, instrument variants, or ways of approaching their instrument. The new role is investigated through three case studies that transgress the borders of the classical guitar practice: *Rerendered* by Simon Steen-Andersen, *Trash TV Trance* by Fausto Romitelli, and *Severance* by Chris Dench. Each case is given a distinct perspective, highlighting technical, instrumental, and interpretative challenges respectively.

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Preamble

When I applied for the master's program in *Performance and Research* at the Norwegian Academy of Music, a large part of my reasoning behind choosing the program and research area was a personal bias towards experimental and explorative musical practices. By the end of my bachelor's degree in classical guitar performance, I had broken away from classical repertoire and presented an exam program without any canonical guitar works such as transcriptions by baroque composers, classical-romantic repertoire, or the post-romantic works commissioned by Andre Segovia and Julian Bream. My bachelor's recital was instead dedicated to quite radical contemporary music, with most of the pieces requiring extended playing techniques, and thus explored music which was not the central curriculum. I had also started teaching myself to play the theorbo, from a desire to explore early music on a historically correct instrument, which opened up areas of the baroque repertoire which are not easily transcribed for classical guitar, such as the toccatas by Kapsberger, the suites by de Visée, and the vocal music of Caccini, Monteverdi, and Purcell.

As someone with a deep interest for musical instruments in and of themselves and for exploring sounds, techniques, and musical solutions on any instrument, I must admit a certain envy of the percussionists' large instrument park, which became a sort of ideal for me. I saw a wealth of repertoire which, although often presented as percussion repertoire, seemed approachable to me. In addition, I had a background as a rock guitarist and felt a need to reconnect with the electric guitar, which I had spent many hours exploring and performing on during my teenage years.

Although I was a classical guitarist on official papers, I felt that the role of classical guitarist, at least for me, could be a lot more than what I saw among many of the professional guitarists I had admired when I first started studying my bachelor. Thus, the master's project, and my wish to play *non-classical* repertoire, sprang out of a need to depart from the usual path a classical guitarist takes, both in terms of the music studied, the instrument, the performer role, and the career path often associated with conventionally trained guitarists. It should be mentioned that it was as late as my entrance into the bachelor's program in guitar performance that I was exposed to the classical guitar practice of today and its habitus. One could argue that I spent only two years as a properly "classical" guitarist.

1 Introduction

Composed art music since 1945 has challenged classical performers in new ways. From new compositions spring new demands regarding interpretation, technique, and the instruments themselves. One of these new challenges is the demand for performers to accept new instruments, instrument variants, or ways of approaching their instrument, into their work, and thus to transgress the borders of their established instrumental practice. This shift of focus, a move from being a performer on one particular instrument within a more or less well-established tradition to a performer forced to embrace variation, or even transformation, now constitutes a new performer role in which the performer needs to be reflected, multi-faceted, and even multi-instrumental.

My thesis centers around this “new” role and investigates how it is constituted in different musical works, and the ways in which it relates to, and transgresses the traditional role. As I have primarily been a guitar player, my point of departure will be the classical guitar and the borders crossed are, in my case, the borders of the classical guitar and its associated performance practice.

1.1 Research question and general research methods

Although the focus of the thesis is on a new role for the guitarist, and the music discussed is not “classical” in a traditional sense, the classical guitar is nevertheless a point of departure for the project. The focus of the investigation is however more on the *relation* of classical guitar to tradition and the avantgarde, and using this reflection as an avenue of development. This process is then a transgression of established borders, into a “new” practice.

My central research question is:

“How do contemporary performance practices challenge the traditional notion and habitus of the classical guitarist?”

While this initial question encapsulates many of the issues that I discuss in this thesis, it only covers part of the research. This is simply the nature of my subject — when one starts to untangle the web of issues, a seemingly endless flow of new questions arises. Thus, it seems

logical to simply allow the research to unfold in this way, where the questions grow naturally from the music which is studied.

Below, I situate my research generally, following Henk Borgdorf's definitions of research on, for, and in the arts. I go on to describe some of the key methodological perspectives used in the thesis, namely my three case studies and their application, the analytical grid which is used to distinguish challenges in the case studies, and Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept — a perspective which becomes particularly important in chapter 4.

1.2 Artistic research or research on practice?

Henk Borgdorf poses three kinds of research related to art; *research on the arts*, *research for the arts*, and *research in the arts* (Borgdorf, 2007, p. 6). The last of the three categories is what is commonly referred to as artistic research — a research where the art practice itself becomes part of the research method and the project's results are partly artistic. Although my research draws from my work as a performer, the results of the project are not the performances. As such, I do, however, not frame my work here as artistic research, but rather as research *on* artistic practice.

I see my work as falling more broadly into the two former categories. Initially, my focus was on the idea of describing or developing practice methods for musicians to employ within multi-instrumental work. As such, the work would be what Borgdorf calls *research for the arts*, an endeavor of developing “insights and instruments that may find their way into concrete practices in some way or other” (Borgdorf, 2007, p. 6). Elements of this perspective are still part of the thesis.

As my project developed, my work became more analytical, attempting to understand the performer role which is the subject of this research. This falls in line with Borgdorf's definition of *research on the arts*, “research that has art practice (...) as its object” (Borgdorf, 2007, p. 6). Although the art practice which forms the object of my research is my own practice, I situate my research within research *on* art practice.

1.3 Methodological arc — On the choice of music

I chose three composed musical works as case studies to investigate the new practice which is the subject of the thesis. The three case studies were chosen to highlight different aspects of learning and re-learning an instrument, namely the pragmatic technical challenges faced in learning a piece, the exploration involved in understanding a novel instrumental apparatus and solving instrumental challenges, and the reflection involved in exploring musical questions. These distinctions will be discussed in more detail in the next section. As such, each case study contains its own subset of questions which are posed at the start of their respective chapters.

The three pieces have been selected to be manageable within the scope of a two-year master's program. To keep my work focused and within the scope of a master's project, I chose to investigate only pieces from the field of contemporary composed music, rather than also including my work with early music, performed on historical plucked instruments. In addition, I have practiced many additional works of contemporary music which are part of the practice I am discussing, and which have had an influence on the project. Of note are *Algo* by Franco Donatoni, *Fantasia per Liuto* by Aldo Clementi, *2-Metre Harmony: Uncertain Chorales* by Laurence Crane, *b* by Simon Løffler, and *Mikrophonie I* by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

My reason for investigating my subject with three case studies originated in the somewhat evasive nature of the practice I am describing, which seems to escape definition. The pieces themselves do however pose challenges that push the performer towards new instrumental approaches, and thus a description of the practice is built from the ground up, and not imposed on top of the practice. This approach is important to the study because the issue of which skills and approaches that are part of the cases will only be examples. With different case studies, one would find different skills and approaches. **Other case studies could nevertheless give similar entries into the practice, and contribute to a decentered conception of the subject at hand.**

Upon the initial structure of the three case studies, I wished to pose different perspectives which would give distinct purpose to each case study. I will describe this in the next section.

1.4 Analytical grid — Technique, Instrument, and Music

To aid myself in the work of navigating and solving problems within the new practice, and indeed to give a distinct perspective to each chapter of the thesis, I devised an analytical grid for understanding the challenges faced while studying a piece of music. **Using the analytical grid, I was able to bring perspectives that are usually not discussed clearly and explicitly to the surface.** The distinctions implied by the grid are also used to structure the thesis. While all three types of challenges are found in all case studies, the grid thus allows for a separate focus in relation to each case study. The focus will be on *technical* challenges in chapter 2, *instrumental* challenges in chapter 3, and *musical* challenges in chapter 4.

Notice how these challenges are also temporally distinct — technical challenges are most relevant during playing, instrumental challenges must usually be solved before playing begins, and musical challenges must be considered before, or as part of, solving technical and instrumental ones.

Technical challenges

Technical challenges relate to how the performer's body acts upon the instrument in question. **Solving a technical challenge means finding the best way to execute an action and learning said action effectively and safely.** For a guitarist, figuring out which fingers of the right and left hands to use, and in what order, at what angle, and at what speed they should attack the strings of the guitar for a complicated polyphony or rapid linear passage is part of solving technical challenges. To then repeat these actions such that they are internalized and can be executed according to one's musical intent when performing the piece of music is also a significant part of solving technical problems.

Questions of technique permeate the practice of classical, contemporary, and early-music performers, and are relevant to all my cases. As Steen-Andersen's *Rerendered* constitutes a process of learning a (to me) new instrument, the question of how to navigate new playing techniques is part of chapter 2.

Note that I understand technique as being essentially non-hierarchical, that is, different approaches to technique are not discussed as being *good* or *bad*. I am instead assessing how

technique can be more or less appropriate for a certain musical situation. The only case in which technique can be intrinsically *bad* is if it is harmful to the player.

Instrumental challenges

Instrumental challenges are challenges relating to how the instrument itself works, how it functions as a sound-making object, and how we as musicians set up and prepare the instrument to do what we want it to do. In some cases, the human body¹ is also part of these problems, for example when a guitarist files the fingernails of their right hand in particular ways to produce a desired sound when plucking the strings of the guitar.

It has proved especially important in this study to distinguish instrumental challenges from technical ones, as some challenges must be solved by adjusting the instrumental apparatus, prior to adjusting *how* it is acted upon. Historically, the development of instruments has been related to the development of musical styles, for instance in the relationship between Beethoven's piano music and the piano's development². Within classical music today, however, there is little focus on the creative power in adapting, adjusting, and developing the instrument. The filing of a guitarist's fingernails is discussed as a pragmatic issue, and not as a possibility for personal, creative development of the instrument. We see this tendency for instance in the technique books by Käppel (2016) and Tennant (1995) who, unlike Pujol (1960), present nail shape as an issue already solved, and not a domain of continuing experimentation.

A discussion of instrumental challenges forms the center of chapter 3. *Trash TV Trance*, which is the focus of chapter 3, is particularly suited for this discussion, as the equipment needed to perform the piece — a complex chain of effects pedal — shows the parts of the instrument clearly, and grants us easy access to altering of the instrument.

¹ Within the field of contemporary music, it is not uncommon to view the body as part of the instrument, or as *the* instrument. Since certain branches of contemporary music overlap with performance art to a significant degree, it has become a given to consider the relationship between body and instrument in discussions of the performance practice of this music. I will not go deep into this subject, however.

² Tilman Skowronek writes about the relationship between Beethoven and his instruments in his 2010 book "Beethoven the Pianist" (Skowronek, 2010, pp. 9-85).

Musical challenges

Zooming out from the details of the instrument to focus on the details of the work of music itself, we find *musical* challenges, also referred to as interpretation. Examples from the classical repertoire are questions of phrasing, tempo, dynamics, and articulation. Solving these questions is seen as the true goal of interpreting a piece of music. Traditionally, the technical and instrumental challenges are seen to arise only when we try to realize our musical intent, and thus we need to know how we wish the piece to sound before we can know how to achieve that result³. This notion will however be challenged throughout the thesis.

Generally, musical questions are posed along the lines of, “what is important in this section of the piece?”, “what kind of sound do I want in this passage?”, or “how can I make this aspect of the music perceptible?”. That being said, questions of technique, instrument, and music all feed into each other, and I do not wish to present these distinctions as hierarchically structured. To explore this, the central discussion in chapter 4 revolves around a central aspect of interpretation on the classical guitar, namely timbre. Timbre is a topic in which technique, instrument, and musical interpretation are intrinsically linked.

Pierre Bourdieu’s habitus concept will serve to contextualize my discussion on the established guitar practice in chapter 4, and is therefore presented in the next section.

1.5 Bourdieu’s concept of habitus

In his book *The logic of Practice*, Bourdieu describes how the practices of individuals are generated and organized by embodied systems of durable dispositions, called *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52). The term practice here denotes the actions of the individual. In other words, our *habitus* structures the ways in which we act, feel, and think. Likewise, the classical guitar practice represents such a habitus, which generates the thoughts and ideals of our practice, the things we strive for, and the way we play our instrument. In Bourdieu, the concept of habitus allows for discussions on taste, class, and social mobility, but in my

³ This will be apparent when we investigate the piano method of Karl Leimer in chapter 2 (Leimer & Giesecking, 1932, p. 43).

project, I use the concept to study how practical matters, such as tone production, are structured and reproduced in the general playing of classical guitarists.

Pierre Bourdieu states, in the preface to the Norwegian edition of *Distinction*, that he uses France during the 1970s as the case of his sociological study simply because he knows it well and has studied it for a long time (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 30). I will allow myself a similar freedom regarding the discussion on the present state of the classical guitar practice which will be part of chapter 4.

1.6 Sources / Previous research

Contemporary performance practices that transgress instrumental boundaries have been the subject of study of many researchers before me.

Following the evolution of interest in so-called “extended playing techniques” in contemporary music, particularly after World War II in the music of John Cage, Mauricio Kagel, and later Helmut Lachenmann, the use of extended techniques went beyond novel coloristic effects. Significant work has been done to describe and categorize new sounds and their techniques, an early example being Bruno Bartolozzi’s 1967 book *New Sounds for Woodwinds* (Bartolozzi, 1967).

For the classical guitar, John Schneider’s “The Contemporary Guitar” (Schneider, 1985), Seth Josel’s “The Techniques of Guitar Playing” (Josel & Tsao, 2014), and Wilhelm Bruch’s entry in the “Pro Musica Nova”-series (Bruch, 1991) are reference works on playing technique in contemporary music.

Of primary interest is nevertheless literature relating to varied or new instrumental practices. Sources on heterogenous lute practices, such as Spencer (1976), Tyler (1980), North (1987), and Van Edwards (2023), have been relevant to my project. The PhD dissertations of Tanja Orning (Orning, 2014) and Håkon Stene (Stene, 2016) have been particularly influential, and provide thorough context about new approaches to one’s own instrument and to entirely new instruments respectively. Anders Førisdal’s PhD thesis on radically idiomatic instrumental practice (Førisdal, 2017) and his article on Aldo Clementi’s

Ricerca (Førisdal, 2019) are relevant to the discussion of the contingent relationship between technique, instrument, and music.

1.7 Outline

As mentioned earlier, the three main chapters of this thesis (chapters 2, 3, and 4) each investigate a case, the preparing and performing of a piece of composed music, which has been chosen in order to emphasize certain aspects of the new practice. Each work is investigated with the goal of unraveling the challenges a performer might face. As such, each chapter contains its own set of sub-questions which spring out of my work with the pieces, and within the practice as a whole.

Chapter 2 explores Simon Steen-Andersen's chamber musical piano piece *Rerendered*, in which three players create sounds together on a grand piano. The chapter shows how traditional methods of learning music, can be refined and used to acquire new technical skills in relation to entirely new instruments. I discuss the aesthetic, the challenges, and the performance tradition of Steen-Andersen's music, enabling a reflection on the role of the guitarist in music written for instruments that are not directly related to the guitar.

Chapter 3 investigates the differences between the technical and instrumental challenges found in Fausto Romitelli's electric guitar solo *Trash TV Trance*. I show the relations between performer, score, and instrument, and investigate how to seek solutions when a challenge is not strictly related to technical proficiency. My own experiences and artistic choices regarding *Trash TV Trance* are put into perspective of the performance tradition of the piece using paratextual analysis and Herbert Heyde's structuralist model for analyzing instruments. Ultimately, the discussion of *Trash TV Trance* highlights some of the skills required to perform the contemporary repertoire for electric guitar and shows the importance of experimental practice methods and reflections around the borders of the instrument.

In chapter 4 I return home to my main instrument and use Chris Dench's guitar piece *Severance* as a jumping-off point into discussions on how the guitarist might approach their own instrument as if it were a novel one. I give examples of how *Severance* forces the guitarist to re-invent and experiment with their approach to timbre on the instrument, and

subsequently how the piece highlights a synthesis of musical, instrumental, and technical perspectives.

Thus, the empirical results of the project will serve to create a deeper understanding of this practice and descriptions of certain tactics that can be employed to better work within this practice. The focus of the study is not primarily the artistic results or the inner workings of the pieces of music I have studied, although these subjects are also brought up, but rather *how* new pieces demand new performance practices, *how* one works with new instruments, and *why* this is an important and enriching development. This is all summarized in the final chapter.

My working title for the project was initially “the guitarist as multi-instrumentalist”, as the initial focus of the project was on multi-instrumentalism more broadly, including my practice as a performer of historical plucked instruments. Eventually, the project evolved into something different, where the focus was on a more abstract understanding of this new practice — a practice which involves multi-instrumentality, although not necessarily. I came to the conclusion that because the same project could have been carried out as an investigation of three pieces for classical guitar, and still pertain to my assessment of a new practice, the term multi-instrumental was not fitting to my project, even though multi-instrumentality does form part of the new practice.

Håkon Stene postulates the term “post-percussion” in relation to his work with non-percussive music (Stene, 2016). Although Stene’s work has had an influence on my thinking and on this project, I was not content with this term, as the prefix “post” indicates a succession, something *after*. Post-percussion would then succeed percussion, and thus cease to be percussion. I see my project as more focused on the growth and transformation of a practice, which in my case, still has the guitar at its core, and is in constant dialog with itself and its past.

Since my subject is a practice which is intentionally ever-expanding into new instrumental territories, but is not necessarily post-, or multi-instrumental, I will tentatively suggest a new term; “poly-instrumentalism”. I am using the prefix “poly” (meaning “many”) rather than “multi” (meaning “more than one”), as it denotes a network of instrumental practices relating to each other, rather than several independent instrumental practices. It could be

compared to the term *polyphonic*, for instance, which refers to music with several independent voices that are nevertheless relating to each other through the rules of counterpoint. A *polycule* refers to a network of people in consensual non-monogamous relationships. *Polyester* is commonly used to denote a synthetic fabric, which uses several *esters* to form a “poly-ester” fiber (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2023). The polyester fibers are interwoven and form the cohesive whole of the fabric. I will return to a discussion of “poly-instrumentalism” in chapter 5.

1.8 On instruments and their practice

“to compose is to build an instrument” (Lachenmann, 1996, p. 77)

My project takes as its starting point the notion, put forth by the German composer Helmut Lachenmann, that every new piece of music itself constitutes a new instrument. If we accept this idea, the implication is that we as instrumentalists, whether guitarists, pianists, percussionists, or singers, are in fact multi-instrumentalists, and should approach studying a new work of music as we would learning an additional instrument. This notion is quite central to the project, as it allows a conception of distinct local practices linked to individual pieces of music.

Every musical instrument has a set of usual techniques, ways in which the instrumentalist acts upon that instrument in order to make sound, and these actions are integral parts of the instrument’s performance practice. We recognize the timbre of a classical guitar not merely because of how the instrument is constructed, but also because of the way it is set up and played. We are used to hearing a guitar in a certain tuning (strings of various thickness tuned E-A-D-G-B-E) and with a certain playing style, namely the guitarist stopping the strings on the neck in various positions with the fingers of the left hand and plucking or strumming the strings with the fingernails or fingertips of the right hand. It is, however, not a given that a guitar *must* be played this way. If we were to instead set up the guitar with only one thickness of string and tune it to one pitch across the whole neck and play it with a slide in the left hand while hitting the strings with the palm of the right hand, it would sound like a totally different instrument. Thus, the performance practice is part of what makes the instrument itself. Without a performance practice, the guitar is merely a box with strings.

While this notion might seem far-fetched, or even radical, when viewed within the field of classical music performance, it is quite obvious from the perspective of the contemporary or early-music performer. An example is the contemporary percussion player who, in addition to their expansive array of standard instruments such as various drums, cymbals, and tuned percussion, is often tasked with performing parts composed for non-percussive, electronic, or newly invented instruments, as well as non-instruments (Stene, 2016). However, as I will discuss further in chapter 2, it is not a given that such parts need to be performed by trained percussionists, even if this might be the prevailing practice.

Within the field of early music performance, the role of lutenist is one of mastering several related instruments (such as the lute and its variants, the baroque guitar, and the theorbo) which, while they seem similar in construction, sound, and playing technique, fill quite different roles within their respective repertoires. When accompanying a singer, for instance, the lutenist might play a renaissance lute, a theorbo, and an archlute quite differently. The same could be said of a lute instrument placed in different contexts — a theorbo fills different roles, and needs to be played with different technical vocabulary, when playing solo, accompanying alone, or playing within a smaller or larger ensemble.

Since the end of the Second World War, we have seen an increase in the use of novel instrumental techniques, new ways to alter the sounds of traditional instruments, and, at the time, completely new instruments in composed classical music. Parallel to this development, composers have found it necessary to make use of new notations in order to convey their intentions and subsequently to write lengthy paratextual⁴ descriptions of what their notations mean and how their instruments should be treated musically. In other words, composers have recognized the necessity of assigning their new instruments distinct performance practices in order for them to function, a process which is now latent to contemporary classical music.

Similarly, one of the most well-known pieces written for the theorbo, the *toccatta arpeggiata* from Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger's 1604 book of tablatures, is a didactic piece

⁴ The term paratext refers to material that surrounds a main text (Genette & Maclean, 1991, p. 261). A more detailed explanation of the term paratext will be part of chapter 3's discussion on the performance practice of Romitelli's *Trash TV Trance*.

showing how to arpeggiate chords on the newly invented instrument, which had only been in use since the 1580s (Spencer, 1976). The piece, consisting entirely of a sequence of arpeggiated harmonies, is clearly showing how the theorbo player must sequence the fingers of their right hand differently than they would on any earlier lute-instrument, in order to hear the highest note of the chord last. Thus, the piece reveals to us the new re-entrant tuning,⁵ which was initially adapted for the instrument due to its construction and as such was part of building the practice of the instrument.

This conception is however not restricted to concretely multi-instrumental practices, such as the practice of percussionists, but is also a mode of relating to one's own instrument in an inventive way, where (going back to Lachenmann) musical works and their corresponding performance practices can be seen as individual instruments. From this view, the work of music is itself an instrument and must be approached as if constituting an entire universe with separate natural laws — a local performance practice for individual pieces. This all suggests a deconstructed conception of the relationship between music/interpretation, technique, and instrument, a conception where the interpretation, technique, and instrument have a non-hierarchical, contingent relationship, which I will come back to throughout the thesis.

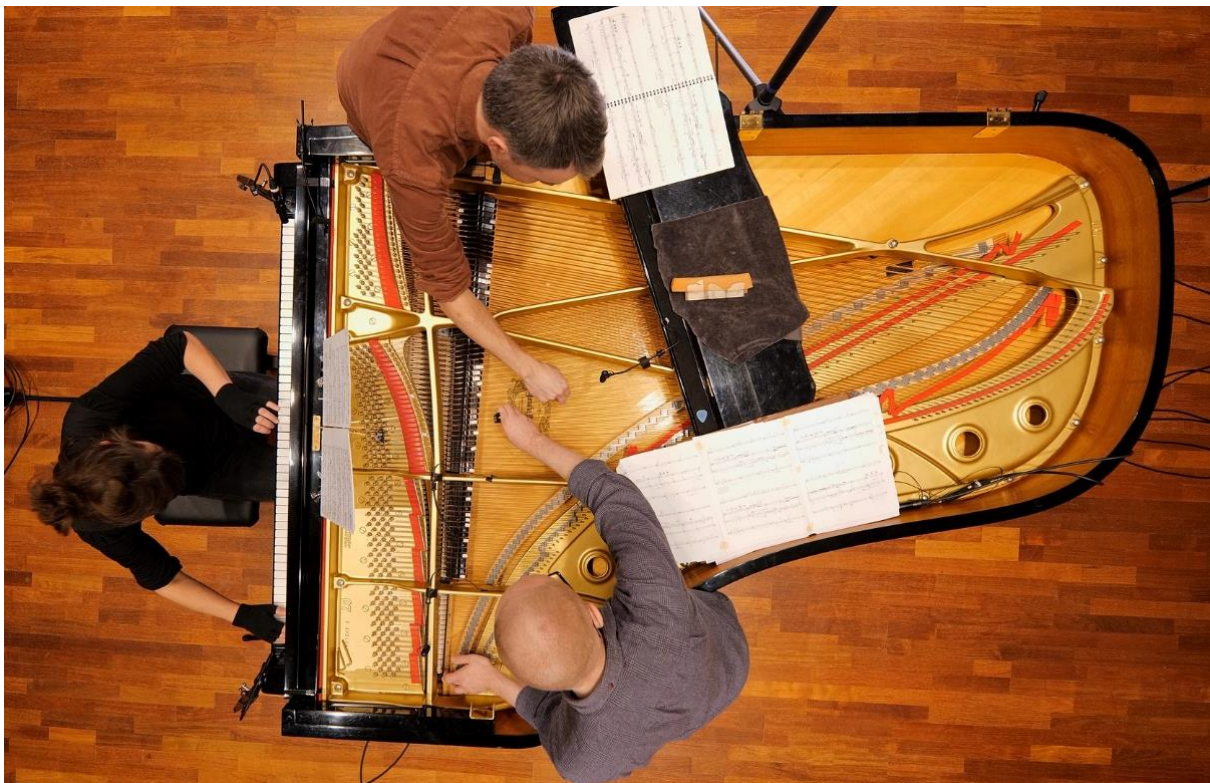
⁵ A re-entrant tuning is a way of tuning a stringed instrument where an initially ascending or descending sequence of string pitches is broken, thus *re-entering* the pitches an octave down or up from where they are expected (Spencer, 1976).

2 Rerendered

The first work I will discuss is Simon Steen-Andersen's *Rerendered* from 2003. *Rerendered* is a piece for three performers — a pianist and two assistants — all acting upon the same grand piano. The pianist plays the piano in a normal way, at least by contemporary music standards, which in this case means that they are seated in the normal position, performing actions on the keyboard and the foot pedals. The two assistants, on the other hand, are using their hands, fingernails, and metal slides⁶ inside of the instrument: on the strings, the tuning pins, and the wooden frame of the piano. In addition, the instrument is amplified with microphones placed on the inside and underside of the body of the instrument and on both sides of the keyboard. The microphones magnify the quiet actions of the piece into loud sound gestures.

In relation to *Rerendered*, I will investigate the gap between traditional methods of practicing and interpreting music and the radical practice that the piece represents. Where do traditional approaches to practicing work and where do they fall short? Do we need to adjust our ideals when studying and performing a piece like *Rerendered*? In which ways does *Rerendered* suggest a distinct, local performance practice? Does such an established practice already exist? How does the new practice relate to my roots as a guitarist? *Rerendered* is a good case study for addressing these questions, because it represents a distinct aesthetic, a new set of playing techniques, and in fact a new and unique instrument.

⁶ A slide is a device commonly used in blues guitar playing that is used to play glissandi on string instruments. I used a slide made from a metal hammer; I cut off the handle and used the head of the hammer to slide along the piano strings.



Example 1 — *Rerendered*. Used by permission of Manuel Madsen, © 2023.

2.1 Simon Steen-Andersen

Simon Steen-Andersen (born in 1976 in Denmark) has been an influential composer of contemporary music since the early 2000s, working within instrumental, multi-medial, and theatrical formats. His work has been characterized by a lasting interest in technology, the human body, the performative aspects of music, and the relations between these factors. Earlier works, like *Rerendered* (2003), *Drownwords* (2003), *Besides* (2003), and *Difficulties Putting It into Practice* (2007) are characterized by the use of amplification of acoustic instruments, thus bringing quiet sounds to the forefront of the musical discourse. This is perhaps most obvious in the guitar concerto *Amongst* which prescribes an “extremely amplified guitar” in addition to a large orchestra. His later works have been increasingly theatrical, approaching the world of music theater, in pieces like *Black Box Music* (2012), *Buenos Aires* (2014), *The Loop of the Nibelung* (2020), and *TRANSIT* (2021). In addition, his works often involve elements like video, electronics, and preparations, for instance in *Study for String Instrument #2*, where a cello is pitched up and down through the use of the Whammy pedal by Digitech, or *Piano Concerto*, where the pianist (playing a well-functioning

grand piano) performs alongside a video projection of himself playing a wrecked piano which had been dropped from a height of eight meters.

Rerendered sits as an important piece in Steen-Andersen's early catalogue and sets the traits of the composer in play against established traits of the contemporary piano's repertoire. In general, Steen-Andersen's music has shown a tendency to create links between disparate areas of contemporary music, often combining aspects of conceptual, complex, electronic, multi-medial, and concrete music, and, in a way, always keeping the dialog between notes and noise open.

2.2 On the instrument

The sound world of *Rerendered* is the equivalent of looking at tiny objects through a microscope. As Steen-Andersen puts it in the preface to the score:

“The general (acoustical) dynamic is extremely soft (~ppppp). The piano should be amplified as much as possible (without being unpleasantly loud) — at least turning the sound of a “normal note” in pppp into a loud forte” (Steen-Andersen, 2003, p. 3).

As already mentioned, the process of extreme amplification is a frequent feature of Steen-Andersen's compositional practice, where sounds that would usually be considered extraneous noise are magnified and participate in the musical discourse alongside the more usual sounds. Following in the footsteps of composers such as Helmut Lachenmann, these sounds take on important positions in the musical discourse and are subjected to minute variations in the same way composers have traditionally created musical variation in the domains of pitch and rhythm. Lachenmann's music is related to Pierre Schaffer's *musique concrete*, where ordinary sounds were recorded to tape and assembled in a music studio and be experienced through loudspeakers. Developed in the late 60s, Lachenmann's *musique concrete instrumentale* moved Schaffer's aesthetic of closely examining sounds outside the normal musical context onto the instruments of the concert hall, and his music started to encompass sounds produced by novel playing techniques, such as bowing on the body of the cello instead of the strings or scraping along the keyboard of the piano instead of depressing the keys.

Steen-Andersen's amplified music relates to the ideas of Lachenmann, but it is also a product of his time. Since the 2000s, music has to an increasing degree been consumed through digital means, distributed through the internet, and experienced via loudspeakers or headphones. The recording studio is the instrument of a lot of artists today. One of the problems with recorded music, however, is that it lacks the presence of a performer in the room, and thus lacks the social energy and communicative power that live music has. In pieces like *Rerendered*, the two worlds are in a way merged. The aesthetic of recorded music — music that is magnified through microphones — is recreated in a live environment and retains its *here and now*.

Integral to *Rerendered* is of course also the playing techniques. The two assistants perform various percussive techniques, like guiro, scraping, and knocking, and also pluck the strings. Most important, however, are the playing techniques which modify the sounds produced by the pianist pressing the keys — damping, glissading (with the slide), and playing harmonics. These effects are a shared effort of the performers, and cannot be achieved, or even practiced thoroughly, without all the performers playing together. This creates an interesting chamber musical situation that demands a lot from the performers, both in rehearsal and performance. Furthermore, several of the playing techniques are highly visual kinds of “anti-actions”, where the sound is produced by lifting the hands or fingers forcefully from the keys or the body of the instrument, rather than pressing or hitting them. These actions produce only faint sounds, which stand in contrast to the visually exaggerated actions required to perform them. The social, visual, and performative aspects of the piece have for the most part been left out of this discussion, however, as they are not within the scope of the thesis⁷.

It is central to view the aesthetic of *Rerendered*, the augmentation of the piano with microphones and amplification, the unique social aspects of the performance situation, and the required playing techniques as integral to the instrument of *Rerendered*, on an equal level as the construction of the piano and its various components.

⁷ Rasmus Holmboe has discussed the visual aspects of Steen-Andersen's work in the article “Har du sett musikken?” (“Have you seen the music?”) in the online journal *Seismograf* (Holmboe, 2014). Furthermore, the social and chamber musical aspects of *Rerendered* have been subject to study in the *Performing Precarity* research project at the Norwegian Academy of Music (Torrence, 2023).

2.3 Contemporary music and established practices

My reasons for studying and discussing *Rerendered* as part of this thesis were not only theoretical, but also practical. I was invited to perform the piece in the fall of 2021 as part of the *Performing Precarity* research project, for their performance at the *Artistic Research Autumn Forum* in Trondheim. I played together with Ellen Ugelvik and Anders Førisdal, as Jennifer Torrence, who was intended to be the third performer, was not available for the rehearsals. After rehearsing *Rerendered*, and performing it in Trondheim, I decided to include it as one of the case studies in my master work, as I felt it was a good representation of the subject matter of my project.

Rerendered, and Steen-Andersen's music in general, has achieved a distinct performance practice today, a practice which has been formed by the performers involved in commissioning, workshopping, performing, and recording his works. One of the performer groups which have been significant in this development is the Norwegian ensemble *asamisimasa*, of which Ugelvik and Førisdal are members. *asamisimasa* have toured *Rerendered*, and recorded it in a portrait CD of Steen-Andersen's music (*Asamisimasa & Steen-Andersen, 2011*), as well as performing and premiering other pieces by him. Additionally, two of my main references in this project have been Tanja Orning and Håkon Stene, also members of *Asamisimasa*, who have both done research on Steen-Andersen's music as part of their respective PhDs ((Orning, 2014, pp. 237-276) & (Stene, 2016, pp. 44-53 & 133-137)).

Thus, my work of practicing and interpreting the piece cannot be seen as an individual effort, but rather as me stepping into an established practice, and learning from the performers who have shaped that practice. As such, many of the solutions to the challenges found in *Rerendered* were already solved for me when I entered the rehearsal studio, such as the manner in which the instrument was amplified, the best tool to use for the glissandi, the nature of execution of the guiro technique, and so on. Furthermore, I learned many things regarding the chamber musical aspects of the piece, how to organize the rehearsal situation, how to divide responsibility during the performance, and especially how to understand the piece as a whole.

2.4 Approaching *Rerendered*

How does one with no experience of playing inside of a piano start to approach a large piece like *Rerendered*? How are the individual musical gestures performed and how are they put together in a musical discourse? What is at the core of learning pieces of music? Where do traditional approaches fall short?

To solve these questions, I decided to study practical literature on methods of practicing instruments. I studied mainly the piano method of Karl Leimer, which I will present in the following section, as a possible answer to the abovementioned questions around technical challenge. I initially practiced and performed *Rerendered* before I had decided to use it as a case study in my master project. My process of practicing it was therefore not preemptively informed by the method of Leimer, and the method was instead retrospectively related to my study of *Rerendered*. I do, however, recognize the main techniques employed in Leimer's method from my own studies of classical music, for instance the technique of chunking music, which I was taught even in my earliest classical guitar lessons. These techniques are to some degree part of all classical musicians' daily practice routines. However, Leimer's method uses these common techniques to form a rigid system for how study of musical compositions should be carried out, and therefore serves as my main source about practicing. Furthermore, the historical figure of Leimer represents a habitus where the technique, the instrument, and the music are already given. As such, he represents an antithesis to my project, while serving as a source of more universal methods of practicing music.

There are of course many other sources on technique and practicing, both historical and modern. The treatises of Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, François Couperin, and Johann Joachim Quantz come to mind. From the same period as Leimer, other sources include Alfred Cortot and Heinrich Neuhaus, whose methods are more well-known today. The Leimer method does however focus particularly on methods of practicing, including also mental practice, which is especially applicable to my study, as the descriptions of practice methods can be repurposed to work with the playing techniques in *Rerendered*, while descriptions of piano technique (as those found in Cortot and Neuhaus) are less relevant.

2.5 A historical model of practicing — The Shortest Way to Pianistic Perfection

In the 1932 book “The Shortest Way to Pianistic Perfection”, Karl Leimer and his pupil, the renowned pianist Walter Giesecking, detail Leimer’s teaching method, under which Giesecking had studied. This book, along with Leimer and Giesecking’s second book, *Rhythmics, Dynamics, Pedal and Other Problems of Piano Playing* (1938), were highly influential pedagogical works. This is the reason I chose the book as an example of how practicing should be carried out, even though my project focuses on contemporary music and Leimer’s book focuses on classical repertoire. From the text itself, it is not clear which parts of the book are written by Leimer and which are written by Giesecking, but as the text makes numerous references to “my method”, and speaks of Giesecking in the third person, I will (for practical reasons) from this point refer to the book as being by Leimer only, even though it is credited as being co-written by Giesecking. This assumption is supported in Louis S. Hehman’s recent doctorate thesis (Hehman, 2022, p. 5).

In the following section, I will present Leimer’s method and subsequently add my own critique as to its shortcomings when applied to the present study. Ultimately, aspects of Leimer’s ideas are put into context of Steen-Andersen’s *Rerendered*, and I provide my own description of how one could approach *Rerendered*.

Visualization

Before even touching the piano, Leimer describes how the student should start work on a piece by “visualizing” it. He explains this at length in all four examples in the book — a Lebert etude, two inventions by Bach, and a whole sonata by Beethoven. What does he mean by “visualization”? In relation to each example, he describes how the student should analyze and understand the score by breaking it up into gestures. Each gesture is identified in such a way that it can be remembered as a musical idea, rather than a sequence of notes on a staff. In the Lebert etude, for example:

“The right hand commences on the second sixteenth note of the first beat, with the sixth: Sixths, in sixteenth notes, now descend through two octaves to the tenor” (Leimer & Giesecking, 1932, p. 14).

Leimer highlights a sort of hermeneutic method of deciphering the dots on the score into musical gestures that can be described, memorized, and understood as physical actions which can be visualized by the student without playing. Each gesture is identified and learned in isolation, making the number of events to be memorized and practiced significantly fewer than the number of notes.

What Leimer describes here has been defined by modern research on the psychology of learning as “Learning by Chunking”. It is described in the *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning* as “[a] cognitive processing that recodes information into meaningful groups, called chunks, to increase learning efficiency or capacity” (Fountain & Doyle, 2012, pp. 1181-1182). When Leimer visualizes the initial four bars of the Lebert etude, he does not conceive the actions as “right hand plays E & C, then D & B, then C & A etc.” but rather as “left hand plays rising C-major triad” and “right hand plays descending sixths, then ascending sixths”. The four bars are thus conceived of as being three simple gestures (or chunks), rather than sixty-six notes in a sequence. The musical gestures are also broken up on a vertical level, as well as a temporal one. I mean by this that different parameters of the piece are separated from each other, such as practicing only one voice of a polyphonic texture, or separating rhythm from the notes being played. For Leimer, who is after all teaching piano technique, this is implicit to the instrument, which is played by two totally independent hands. His method of visualization involves first identifying the actions of the right hand and then the left. As we will see later, in relation to *Rerendered*, the technique of vertical chunking is extremely applicable to work in learning new instruments.

Relaxation & playing technique

Secondly, Leimer describes how the keys of the piano should be played. He emphasizes relaxation as a prerequisite to piano playing, describing how he would lift a student's arm to make sure they were relaxing the muscles. If the arm is relaxed, the student can then press the keys, which should simply be done by letting the hand and the finger drop on the key. Dynamics are achieved by changing the height from which the hand drops. The teacher should guide the student to play the keys in a relaxed manner without excessive movement.

This approach to learning presupposes that there is a teacher present to guide the student in properly executing the correct actions. It is explicitly stated in the book that the main target audience is piano teachers, but the method gives no real explanation of how someone would go about teaching themselves to play.

Practicing

The final part of the Leimer method is to learn to play the piece. For Leimer, this is really a synthesis of the two previous points, visualization, and relaxation, but brought to life in physical performance. His method of practicing is analogous to the method of visualization — that is, that a piece should be practiced by dividing its actions into temporal and vertical chunks, that are manageable on their own, and then pieced together. Leimer's method mainly discusses technical challenges and practice methods, and to a lesser extent, interpretation, or what I have called musical challenges. No instrumental challenges are mentioned. It should be noted that instrumental challenges as I have described them are not missing from Leimer's book because they are exclusive to contemporary music practices. Such problems are for instance frequent in the practice of classical guitarists, lutenists, percussionists, and double-reed wind players, just to name a few. The piano, however, seems to be one of few instruments that have almost no instrumental challenges, since the grand piano is a sort of constant — most pianos found in conservatories and concert halls are by the same maker and of similar construction.

Furthermore, it is striking how little attention is given to the topic of interpretation. For Leimer, interpreting a piece entails a sort of passive reading of the work, in which the correct musical interpretation necessarily correlates exactly and exclusively with the notes and rhythms written in the score. He discusses what he calls *natural interpretation*, which reduces interpretation to a few “aesthetic rules of rhythm, style and form” (Leimer & Giesecking, 1932, p. 43). In his book, this is reduced to a simple explanation of phrasing, which should entail a slight *accelerando* towards the climax of a phrase and a slight *ritardando* afterwards. No more is needed, according to Leimer.

2.6 Technical challenges — Applying the Leimer method

A central concern of musicians working with an expanding multi-instrumentality is how a new instrument can be approached, that is, how one becomes familiar with the instrument, and how one practices its techniques. I have outlined the Leimer method, a representation of traditional practicing, as a possible solution to this problem. I will go on to show how the Leimer method can be used to approach *Rerendered*. Throughout this work however, certain shortcomings of the traditional method of practicing do become apparent, in effect highlighting some of the unique demands on performers who accept new instruments, instrument variants, or ways of approaching their instrument, into their work.

Reading the score — Preparatory work

Leimer suggests that a thorough preparation should be carried out before playing any notes of a piece. He describes how the student should “visualize” the piece prior to playing it and thereby, through deep concentration, learn at least the first couple of bars of the piece by heart. Leimer’s method of visualization presupposes two things: that the signs in the score have meaning to the student, representing both a sound image and the actions needed to realize said sound image, and that the student knows how to execute the actions that correspond to each sign and sound in the first place. In fact, this is quite a privileged position, one not held by a person who is approaching a new instrument, with new notation and playing techniques.

Exactly how the keys of the piano should be played is something usually taught by a piano teacher, someone who is well-versed in the instrument. When approaching a piece for a new instrument with new playing techniques, however, one will not always have the luxury of being shown exactly how to play.⁸ Furthermore, it might not be entirely obvious how the score should be interpreted without the help of the composer or some description of the playing techniques, such as are often found in a preface explaining the signs of the score. When I practiced *Rerendered*, the initial problem was thus to familiarize myself with the language of the score and understand what each sign meant. I did this by consulting the preface to the score, which details the playing techniques employed by each player, and testing them out inside the piano itself, of course with the help of my co-performers, who had significant experience with the piece beforehand. In other words, for me, as a performer exploring a new practice, there was a barrier which had to be overcome before I could begin to visualize the piece.

Leimer on listening

Throughout his book, Leimer frequently emphasizes the importance of “listening” and “training of the ear”, which he describes as the foundation of his method (Leimer & Giesecking, 1932, pp. 9-12). Leimer’s conception of listening and training of the ear is not synonymous with today’s definition of aural training, which is the ability to recognize and execute pitches, pitch intervals, rhythms, and so on, but instead refers to listening for unevenness in the volume and duration of the notes played. Training of the ear, for Leimer, entails fine-tuning the ear to examine how precise the fingers are, with the goal of being able to control the fingers more accurately. His criteria for accuracy are that the notes be played exactly even to each other and that they be held for exactly as long as the composer has written in the score, a point he revisits numerous times throughout the book.

What can we take away from Leimer’s emphasis on listening? In *Rerendered*, the playing technique known as the guiro makes up a large part of the assistants’ performance and is one of the only musical gestures which the three performers perform together, with (at least

⁸ I was however fortunate to have some individual lessons on the piece, and therefore I did not need to figure out all the details myself.

almost) the same playing technique. Leimer's approach to listening presupposes a defined ideal of what we wish to listen for — we need to know how we want our sounds to sound — and this, to Leimer, is quite clear. In relation to the guiro in *Rerendered*, however, the ideal is not perfectly clear purely based on the score. According to Leimer's criteria, it would be sufficient merely to perform the guiro in an even volume for the exact length it is notated in the score. The only information given in the preface is that the guiro should not be too fast (Steen-Andersen, 2003, pp. II-III). When playing or analyzing the piece, however, it is clear that this playing technique is important and should be given thorough attention. How does one decide how to execute the guiro?

In my own practice of *Rerendered*, this question, and questions like it, were solved during the practice sessions with my co-performers, Ugelvik and Førisdal. My process was therefore one of stepping into and partaking in an established practice. Learning to execute the playing techniques in *Rerendered* was done partly through discussion with, and imitation of, my co-performers. This approach is significantly different from the teaching situation assumed in Leimer's method, which is a traditional master-apprentice relationship. While Leimer takes a top-down approach to teaching interpretation, my own experience was less hierarchical, and I had a sense of agency in the interpretation of the piece.

This question regarding the guiro is fundamentally a question of interpretation, a musical challenge, although it intersects naturally with the question of technique. For the time being, I will leave this type of question un-answered, and return to it in chapter 4 in relation to the topic of tone production in Chris Dench's *Severance*.

Etudes

In the final chapter of his book, Leimer takes some time to address a few specific topics regarding practicing technique. The most interesting section here is perhaps his position on etudes. Leimer regards the study of etudes⁹ as superfluous to a student following his

⁹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an etude as “a piece of music for the practice of a point of technique” “étude.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/%C3%A9tude>. Accessed 25 Jan. 2023.

method, as the knowledge and skill gained from studying concert pieces is just as beneficial, and spending time on pieces that are not canonical is simply a wasteful detour:

“It seems to me to be of greater importance that the time at our disposal should be applied to the study of as many classical works as possible, such as sonatas by Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and so forth; and with these also chamber music and orchestral works should be studied” (Leimer & Gieseeking, 1932, p. 51).

If the Leimer method is followed thoroughly, meaning that every aspect of the composition is studied so closely that they are truly mastered, it is true that there is not much use in practicing etudes, although one could argue that the advantage in the study of etudes is that the number of technical obstacles is reduced, or at least focused towards a single goal. As a guitarist wishing to improve the balance of dynamic and tone of the four fingers of the right hand, as Leimer discusses so intensely, one could for instance study the etudes from Leonard Schulz’s collection *L’indispensable* (Schulz, 1927), which focus on the control of balance between the fingers only, instead of performing a whole fugue by Bach and struggling with a number of other obstacles in addition to the balance of the right-hand fingers.

Conversely, the Bach inventions and the Beethoven sonata in the book, although being regarded as concert pieces, do serve the purpose of etudes in Leimer’s methodology. In a way they are large concert etudes, or case studies even, of varying difficulty levels and durations. From this view, I would like to draw the attention to the likeness of Leimer’s methodology to the structure of this thesis, which also uses proper concert pieces as large-scale etudes.

The progression and purpose of studies in Leimer’s book is not quite clear outside of the fact that the pieces get progressively bigger and more difficult. Leimer does not, however, clearly indicate differentiation in the approach to interpretation of the pieces, despite them being by different composers in different styles and eras. If the new practice, the subject of this thesis, is heterogenous, varied, perhaps fragmented, and the instruments of the different pieces of music are distinct, then the need for local, work-specific performance practices and a greater reflection on variation in playing technique, instrument, and interpretation is clear.

2.7 Practicing bars 16–23 of *Rerendered*

Example 2 — Bars 16–19 of *Rerendered* (Steen-Andersen, 2003, p. 2). Used by permission of Edition•S, © 2003.

Example 3 — Bars 20–23 of *Rerendered* (Steen-Andersen, 2003, p. 3). Used by permission of Edition•S, © 2003.

Analysis and visualizing

Let us take bars 16 to 23 in the score of *Rerendered* as an example of practicing. In this passage, the three players are continually playing, employing different playing techniques to form a collective phrase. The initial four bars are constructed into three main layers, consisting of a glissando, a continuous guiro/scrape obligato and a rhythmic alteration of the sustain pedal. The glissando is played together by the pianist (playing the C sharp key in the middle of the instrument) and assistant I (sliding on the corresponding string), and is the main gesture of bars 16-19. Sliding on the C sharp string in question produces a resonant and rich glissando. Assistant I shifts the direction of the glissando independently from the other layers of the piece. The pianist repeatedly strikes the C sharp key insistently in a triplet-based rhythm which ramps up in speed, creating tension towards the first beat of bar 20,

where the phrase reaches its climax. The guiro obligato is a shared effort of the pianist playing guiro along the keys, assistant I playing along the bridge, and assistant II scraping along the length of the low A string. Together, this forms a continuous scraping sound that resolves in assistant II's pick-up gesture in the last three sixteenth notes of bar 19. The accompanying pressing and releasing of the sustain pedal add depth to the phrase by alternately engaging and stopping the instrument's resonance, giving different qualities to the glissando.

The last four bars of the phrase (20-23) suddenly dissolve the clearly layered three-part texture built up in the preceding bars, with a more complex layering of several gestures performed both independently and collaboratively by the three players. On the initial beat of bar 20, the pianist and assistant I perform two independent gestures. The pianist's gesture consists of a rapid arpeggio-pattern in the low and middle register of the instrument, while assistant I's quintuplet gesture compliments it in a slightly higher register with a tritone arpeggio and repeated F sharp. The pianist continues with repeated notes in the high register as well as single impulses in the lower registers and alternating pressing and releasing of the sustain pedal. It all gradually slows down, in a way giving the whole phrase a classical intensity curve. The two assistants add to the pianist's phrase ending by damping and harmonics, as well as disjunct guiro scrapes.

Practicing

We have now identified the various elements of the section. Following the practice methods outlined above, practicing is the acting out of the visualization which Leimer describes. Even when playing an instrument which one masters, it will be difficult to execute all the actions in a score at the same time without practicing, and therefore it is often necessary to chunk the piece into smaller units. Firstly, as mentioned above, this entails familiarizing oneself with the different playing techniques separately from each other. From my perspective as assistant I, the guiro and the plucking could be practiced alone, while glissandos and damping must be done together with the pianist to know the amount of pressure which is needed to achieve a good sound.

Next, the sequence of actions can be practiced, without considering rhythm too much. At the start of our example (bar 16), we place the right hand precisely, with the slide, on the appropriate string and then the left hand on the bridge of the instrument in a good position to perform the guiro. Then the hands each start their actions, until we reach the second beat of the bar, where the left hand stops the guiro and the right hand shifts the direction of the glissando.

This might be too much information at one time, in which case one can separate out the actions of the two hands. The glissando is then practiced separately, with great concentration, before the same is done for the sequence of guiros played by the left hand. This is all without the actual rhythm of the section. In some cases, a score is so dense or difficult to perform that one needs to play only one note, or action, at a time, without considering the rhythm of the section at all, which allows for extreme precision in the execution of each action and the movements between them. When the sequence of actions is mastered, the rhythm can be studied separately, before playing the sequence in rhythm at a slow tempo.

Certain techniques might prove more difficult than others. The quintuplet gesture in bar 20, for instance, is difficult to execute precisely, as both the tritone jump between C and F sharp and the repeating F sharps are quite fast. In such cases, a local technical solution might be necessary. In my case, through discussion with my co-performers, I came to the solution of plucking the C with the pinky of the right hand and the F sharps with the thumbnail, instead of plucking all the notes with the same finger repeatedly. We also re-arranged the distribution of the parts a bit, so that the E flat on the second beat of bar 20 was played by assistant II.

(damp close to peg so that a pitch is still sounding)

Example 4 — Bar 20 of *Rerendered* (Steen-Andersen, 2003, p. 3). Used by permission of Edition+S, © 2003.

When one is able to perform all actions together in sequence with the correct rhythm one can start to assemble chunks of the section, and eventually bring the tempo up to the appropriate speed. Practicing bars 16 to 23 of *Rerendered*, I broke the section into three chunks: bars 16-19, the first beat of bar 20, and then bars 20-23, before I was able to perform the whole section without stopping.

2.8 The guitarist's role in music for non-instruments

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the prevailing sentiment in music composed for new- or non-instruments has been that trained percussionists are the performers best suited to playing parts for instruments that do not have a designated performer group. For instance, pieces that involve lamps, radios or microphones are often conceived of or viewed as “percussion pieces”, even though they do not necessarily entail “hitting things”,¹⁰ and they are often performed by percussion soloists and ensembles. Going back to Steen-Andersen, for instance, we find in the preface to his 2008 piece *On and Off and To and Fro*, which includes three parts for performers with megaphones, the statement that “Megaphone 1 is the most difficult part and should preferably be performed by a percussion player” (Steen-Andersen, 2008, p. 3). While this statement seems curious at first, since the megaphone part is not explicitly “percussive”, it does make some sense.

It seems that the reason percussionists are often skilled in dealing with new instruments is that it is simply a part of their daily practice. Percussion practice *is* dealing with many instruments at the same time. As Stene puts it in *This is not a Drum*, they “have so many instruments that, in effect, they have none to with which the[y] can genuinely identify” (Stene, 2016, p. 1). They can bring forth their experience of coaxing beautiful, interesting, and varied percussive sounds out of a selection of drums and cymbals into other percussive situations, such as playing on household equipment, newspapers, or tables in pieces like John Cage’s *Living Room Music* (1940), which prescribes no percussion instruments or

¹⁰ The word percussion comes from Latin and in essence means to “strike” or to “beat” (“Percussion.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/percussion>. Accessed 20 Dec. 2022.). Similarly, the German word for percussion, Schlagzeug, consists of the words *Schlag*, “strike”, and *Zeug*, “things”.

conventional percussion beaters. We see that musicians are able to use their past experiences to inform new musical endeavors, just like polyglots are often talented in learning additional languages because they already have significant experience with the challenges they are likely to encounter, and have the skills to overcome them. Percussionists learn this skill by default.

There has however been a shift in the notion that music written without a specific performer group should always be performed by percussionists. In recent years, several performers, ensembles, and even composers have specialized in performing music for new- or non-instruments without having formal training in the art of hitting things. Some examples include Nadar Ensemble (Belgium), Ensemble Adapter (Germany), Ensemble Musikfabrik (Germany), and *asamisimasa* (Norway). Composers working in this field have often performed their own music for new- and non-instruments, Karlheinz Stockhausen being an obvious example, performing in percussion pieces like *Mikrophonie I* (1964) despite being trained in piano, violin, and oboe playing. Steen-Andersen has also frequently performed his own pieces.

As a guitarist performing *Rerendered*, I felt that my experience in relating to, and producing sound on, strings was a key skill. So much of my time with the classical guitar was spent trying to produce a desired sound through experimentation, trial, and error. As I will go on to discuss in chapter 4, much of the guitar's strength lies in its ability to produce a myriad of different timbres, characters, and textures, but on its own terms — when Segovia states that the guitar is like an “orchestra seen through the wrong side of the binoculars” (Segovia, 1994) he doesn't mean that the guitar *is* an orchestra, but that it can constitute the heterogeneity of one, according to the guitar's ideals, possibilities, repertoire, and so on. This is one of the virtuosities of the classical guitar.

Using my experience with the guitar, I could easily produce a variety of different plucked tones out of the new instrument — full, thin, loud, and soft — using different modes of attack, different fingers and combinations of flesh and fingernail. For instance, the F sharps in the quintuplet gesture of bar 20 was produced with a series of *apoyando*¹¹ plucks on the

¹¹ *Apoyando* is a plucking technique in which the finger plucks “through” the string and lands on the next one. It is referred to as a “rest stroke” in English.

individual strings of the F sharp by the thumb fingernail to produce a quick, insistent effect that would not only be a distinct gesture in itself, but blend well with the rest of the texture. The B flat in bar 31 was played with an upward pluck of the index fingernail, to give a clear, loud and sustained sound, to an extent mimicking the timbre of the preceding quintuplet-arpeggio while giving a distinct high-point to the phrase.

Tanja Orning speaks of the process of learning new notations and playing techniques in her dissertation *The polyphonic performer*: “Technical interpretation thus includes reading and interpreting scores with novel notation and playing techniques, drawing on previous involvement and experience with various types of notation and methods” (Orning, 2014, p. 308). A performer working with works such as *Rerendered*, and who do so with the aim of assessing the instrument within its own local performance practice, will have certain advantages when it comes to approaching new instruments in general.

2.9 Conclusion — Re-rendering practice

In this chapter, we have examined how the instrument employed in *Rerendered* is itself far more than a piano. While the center of action is the grand piano, the way it is played and amplified sets it apart as a distinct instrument. This creates a unique performative situation. While the technical and interpretative vocabulary has a history in the now established performance practice of Steen-Andersen’s music and in the history of extended techniques of the piano, it is still the case that *Rerendered* enacts a transformation of an instrumental practice — to perform it, the individual practitioner must expand their technical, instrumental, and musical vocabulary.

Using the method of Karl Leimer, we have seen that even complicated pieces with new playing techniques can be practiced with traditional methods of learning. Using and adapting the Leimer method proved a fruitful endeavor in relation to *Rerendered*, albeit with the supplement of a few key perspectives in relation to *how* a playing technique is performed. Leimer’s distant, and somewhat agnostic, position towards the topic of interpretation is also impossible in our work with novel instruments since we are moving into new instrumental territories and thus to a lesser extent deal with established truths and beliefs. This will be

discussed further in the next two chapters. It is however clear that work with new instruments demands a play between both traditional and new skills.

The transformative and expanding aspects of our new practice mean that each performer is coming from a particular background or tradition, and in my work with *Rerendered*, I was able to expand outwards from some of the skills I have from my practice as a guitar player, in the same way that a percussion player knows how to relate to new instruments because they have done it before. Using *Rerendered* as an etude is then part of a continuing process of allowing oneself to be open to the new.

While my focus in this chapter has been on the idea of working with and overcoming technical challenges as a separable problem in our practice, we have met a number of contradictions to this notion. The extended (and to me new) technical vocabulary of the piece creates a barrier which must be addressed prior to the learning process, and since the way in which the new techniques should be interpreted and executed is distinct from that of other pieces, musical challenges permeate the technical ones. They are intrinsically linked, and indicate the contingency, and therefore the non-hierarchy, of technical and musical concerns, which will be the focus of chapter 4.

3 Trash TV Trance

Fausto Romitelli's *Trash TV Trance* is a 2002 work for solo electric guitar which relies on creative use of effects pedals, most notably the use of a loop sampler. *Trash TV Trance* draws heavily on cultural references to popular music, such as rock and electronic music, and the looper is used to record and repeat short phrases over and over, creating trance-like textures reminiscent of rock riffs and techno beats. The rhythmic "grooves" that are created, both with the looper and in normal playing, are often off-kilter and unsteady, and create an uneasy flow which is broken up by noise-based sound gestures throughout the piece.

While the electric guitar might seem analogous to its nylon- or steel-stringed acoustic counterparts, the reality is quite different. In *Trash TV Trance* the difference is expanded in the augmentation of the instrument with pedals and different playing devices. What does the guitarist need to master such new instrumental apparatuses? Can traditional concepts of mastery even be applied to our work with *Trash TV Trance*? How can we understand complex instrumental apparatuses,¹² and how does this knowledge further us in our transgression of traditional boundaries? What consequences does this investigation have on our conception of musical works?

3.1 Fausto Romitelli

Fausto Romitelli (1963–2004) was an Italian composer. He studied initially in Milan and Siena, and in Paris from 1991, with the spectral composers Gérard Grisey and Hugues Dufourt. Romitelli's music shows the influence of spectral music, but also of western popular music and culture, most notably rock music. The opening of *An Index of Metals* (2003), for instance, is strikingly reminiscent of the opening of Pink Floyd's influential 1975 album *Wish You Were Here*. Romitelli wrote extensively for guitars, with several solo works like *Solare* (1983) and *Coralli* (1987) in addition to chamber and ensemble music. The electric guitar is featured frequently, especially in several large ensemble and orchestral pieces like *Professor*

¹² I am using the term "instrumental apparatus" as distinct from "instrument". As a consequence of the assessment of the contingent relationship between instruments and their performance practice throughout this thesis, the two terms cannot be perfectly synonymous. "Instrumental apparatus" denotes the instrument-object, but not the technique or music applied to it.

Bad Trip Lesson I, II & III (1998, 1999, & 2000), *Blood on the Floor Painting, 1986* (2000), and *Dead City Radio* (2004).

3.2 On the instrument

As mentioned, *Trash TV Trance* relies heavily on the use of effect pedals and a few additional playing devices. Contrary to what is often the case with more traditional music, *Trash TV Trance* cannot be arranged for another instrument without significantly altering the nature of the work to the point of becoming an entirely different piece. Aspects of the instrumental apparatus are simply so integral to the music-making that, if altered, the piece would not be the same.

There are a couple of factors contributing to this — the sound world of the piece is, unlike typical classical music, not entirely defined by the pitch structure, but also, to a significant degree, by the timbral aspects, in this case the sounds of distortion and noise. In certain passages, the pitch content in *Trash TV Trance* will vary from performance to performance, not because of the playing of the guitarist or inaccuracies in the score, but because of the nature of the instrumental apparatus. The way the individual units in the sound chain interact are at times random, or at least conditioned by factors outside of the performer's control.

In one of my performances of *Trash TV Trance*, in the Majorstuen Church in Oslo on September 28th, 2022, the effect produced by placing the guitar cable against the strings of the guitar (see *Example 5*), which produces a noise known as ground loop hum, resulted in a clear chord — the interval of a minor third, something I had never experienced prior to playing in this space. The timbre of a ground hum loop will vary based on the electrical conditions of the building one plays in, and it was thus the unique electrical conditions of the Majorstuen Church which resulted in the expected noise sound being heard as clear pitches.



Example 5 — Bar 4 of *Trash TV Trance* (Romitelli & Pauwels, 2007, p. 1).

Other concrete factors include an electric razor, which is used to create a high-pitched buzzing sound (amplified through the guitars pickups) in bars 171-180 of the score. The make of razor and, in my experience, the amount of electricity left in the battery of the razor both influence the resulting timbre and pitch.

Furthermore, variations in timbre and dynamic, and the control thereof, are conditioned by the interaction of the individual parts of the setup, and extend beyond such anomalies as listed above. As with any instrument, all parts of *Trash TV Trance* contribute to its sound and functionality. Since the instrument at hand consists of individual pieces that are connected with audio cables, and that have room for adjustment,¹³ the player has a large degree of control. It is however essential to understand how sensitive the instrumental setup of *Trash TV Trance* is. The network of elements involved in producing and altering sound is long and complex, and, unlike instruments such as the piano or the trumpet, we have significant power over almost all the parts of the network. Where the thickness and material of the sound board of a grand piano is up to the instrument maker to decide, not the pianist, a guitarist can alter the settings, order, and even interchange parts of their instrumental chain in ways that have significant impact on both the way the instrument feels to play and the sound it produces, as the setup is so complex and interrelated, extending from the point of activating the strings, all the way to the speaker membrane in the amplifier. Thus, I am allowing myself to zoom in on the instrumental challenges in *Trash TV Trance*, also because I see instrumental challenges as a neglected perspective in the work of classical musicians.

¹³ Guitars, amplifiers, and guitar pedals all usually have potentiometers which allow the player to adjust certain parameters of that individual unit, such as the EQ, the amount of effect, the volume, and so on. Furthermore, as I will discuss later, the parts of the chain can be interchanged for similar devices that fill the same purpose, albeit with their own sound characteristics.

The idea of viewing instrumental apparatuses as networks originates from the East-German organologist Herbert Heyde in his 1975 book *Grundlagen des natürlichen Systems der Musikinstrumente* (Heyde, 1975), and has recently been the focus of researcher Anders Førisdal in several lectures and papers (Førisdal, 2022). Førisdal's work, partly within the *Performing Precarity* research project, has been of significant impact on the way I perceive musical instruments and performing practice, and I see the present discussion as a continuation of those same ideas, which originate from Heyde's work in the 70s and have been continued by Førisdal.

Heyde's framework presents an alternative to the traditional Sachs-Hornbostel classification system (Sachs & Hornbostel, 1961), and instead assesses musical instruments as networks, where the input energy is transformed through a chain of elements before resulting in sound at the output of the chain. The Heyde system offers an intricate model for analyzing instruments, and serves as a good model for understanding the intricacies of *Trash TV Trance*. Where the Sachs-Hornbostel classification system is based on broad categorizations of the instruments' sound producing material (idiophones, chordophones, and so on) with further classification describing the construction and mode of playing, the Heyde system offers a more flexible, decentered model, as it does not rely on the central organizing principle of the Sachs-Hornbostel categorization. *Trash TV Trance* would be difficult to analyze with the Sachs-Hornbostel system, as the instrument has several sound producing parts from several of the five main categories used in the system — it would have to be at the same time a composite chordophone (Sachs & Hornbostel, 1961, p. 22), several types of electrophone (Sachs, 2006, s. 750), and an idiophone (the electric razor makes sound by shaking a central metallic shaft around inside the machine (Sachs & Hornbostel, 1961, p. 14)). It seems clear that the Sachs-Hornbostel system is not particularly suited to analyzing such instruments as *Trash TV Trance* since it relies too heavily on strict classification and the idea of an organizing center for each instrument, and this understanding would be restricting in our work in this study.

The Heyde system offers the opportunity to analyze the contingency of the elements of the chain, the ways in which they not only affect a core sound from the sound-producing material, but also the ways in which they affect each other and alter the ways in which the whole of the network functions.

Integral to *Trash TV Trance* is not only the guitar itself but also a set of effect pedals, most importantly a loop sampler. A loop sampler, or simply a “looper”, is an electronic device which is used to record and play back sound coming from an electric sound source, in this case the electric guitar. The phrase of music which is recorded will be repeated precisely, in what is called a “loop”. Additionally, the looper in *Trash TV Trance* needs to “reverse” the loop, making it play backwards, which is essential for the two first pages of the score. The score indicates exactly how the looper should be used, making it easy to know when to record, play back, overdub, reverse, and stop.

Other effect pedals are needed, namely a distortion pedal¹⁴ and a wah-wah pedal¹⁵, as well as a few additional tools — an ebow¹⁶, a sponge, a cello bow, a coin, and an electric razor.

3.3 **Approaching *Trash TV Trance***

We face some fundamentally instrumental questions in *Trash TV Trance*. What are the boundaries of the instrumental apparatus? In which ways should the parts of the chain be set up and adjusted? Which parts of the instrument are mandatory, and which can be exchanged? When is each part of the instrument activated during the performance?

To explore some of these questions, I will turn to Gérard Genette’s literary framework of *paratextual analysis* to investigate the relation between the score of *Trash TV Trance* and the paratext of the piece. Using this theory, which is not usually associated with the reading of musical scores, I wish to explore Genette’s notion of paratext as a vestibule in relation to *Trash TV Trance* — the idea of a score’s paratext being essential in our understanding of how the instrument is played and set up.

¹⁴ The distortion effect could also be achieved by using the overdriven sound of a guitar amplifier, but it is more practical to use a distortion pedal, as it is easily turned on and off with a footswitch.

¹⁵ A wah-wah pedal, or wah pedal for short, is an effect pedal which emphasizes certain frequencies of the sound. The wah is characteristic for its movable foot-pedal which sweeps between high and low frequencies.

¹⁶ An ebow is an electric device which creates infinite sustain on guitars with steel strings.

3.4 Paratext as vestibule

In *Introduction to the Paratext*, Gérard Genette states that a text rarely exists without a set of reinforcements and accompaniments, such as the author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations etc. These productions are part of the text's presentation; they make the text present in the world and available to the reader. Genette states that:

“the paratext is for us the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public. Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a *threshold*, or — the term Borges used about a preface — with a ‘vestibule’ which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back” (Genette & Maclean, 1991, p. 261).

We often find that publications of old, canonical, and seminal literary works have scholarly prefaces explaining the origin, context, and significance of the text, or detail the editorial processes like translation or adaptation. For instance, the Wordsworth Classics edition of James Joyce's seemingly impenetrable novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939) starts off with a lengthy introduction written by Professor Len Platt, introducing the reader to the controversy surrounding the work, its difficulty, its form and content, its meaning, and so on. Platt even includes a section titled *Reading the Wake*, where he aims to help the reader approach and understand the work (Platt, 2012, p. XIII). This example falls in line with Genette's notion of paratext as vestibule — a text without its paratext can be like an apartment without a door or without an address. Without an entrance, the content is very difficult to locate or enter.

The published score of *Trash TV Trance* has two sections, the main one being the musical notation itself, handwritten by the composer, and the other being an introductory paratext by Romitelli's collaborator Tom Pauwels (Romitelli & Pauwels, 2007). This preface contains an introduction to the piece with an explanation of how it should sound and how to practice it, a description of the instrumental setup used to perform the piece, and an extended (perhaps exhaustive) section of bar-by-bar performance notes, which details how every action of the piece should be performed. It appears that Pauwels saw the need to write a manual for how the score was to be realized because Romitelli passed away in 2004, three years before the score was published in 2007.

If one would, hypothetically, be tasked with interpreting only the score of *Trash TV Trance* itself, without knowing the piece beforehand, having access to the preface, or knowing the music from which the piece borrows heavily, it seems that it would be impossible to know how the piece should be played. Even if one were to know that the intended instrument was the electric guitar (which the score itself doesn't state), it would be difficult to decipher the playing techniques and certainly the instrumental setup. Thus, the preface is essential to our understanding of what the instrument is and how the piece is to be played — we are dealing with a paratext as vestibule.

Discrepancies between score and paratext

As outlined above, the score to *Trash TV Trance* does not clearly indicate where every effect pedal is used. In addition to the looper, Pauwels suggests a few additional effect pedals that alter the sound of the guitar, namely distortion, delay, and wah-wah. The score itself indicates when to use the wah-wah pedal, but makes no mention of the delay effect, and only signals that the distortion pedal should be engaged on the second beat of the first bar. From that point on, there is no indication of when or how to use the distortion pedal. One would likely assume that the distortion pedal is meant to be engaged for the duration of the piece. This stands in contrast to Pauwels' list of required equipment in the introduction, which suggests not one but two distortion pedals. Furthermore, the ebow is first used in bar 21, according to Pauwels, but there is no mention of it in the score until bar 184. This seems to be an oversight on the behalf of Romitelli, rather than an actual discrepancy, as signs indicating the rhythm in which the ebow is used in this first entry is present in the score, although the indication that the ebow should be used is absent.

Genette distinguishes between authorial (“by the author”) and non-authorial paratexts, highlighting how a preface can be written either by the author or the publisher, or by a third party who is given editorial authority. In our case, Pauwels' preface constitutes a non-authorial paratext.¹⁷ The only definitively authorial information about the instrumental setup of *Trash TV Trance* is what is found in the score, and should as such be the basis of our

¹⁷ I want to emphasize the fact that my aim is not to undermine the instrumental suggestions of Tom Pauwels in the preface, but rather to use the relationship between text and paratext to open up questions regarding the boundaries of the instrument.

exploration.¹⁸ From examining the score, it is, for instance, obvious that the looper is absolutely essential to the piece, but the use of the other pedals (except for the wah-wah) is more up to the performer. Because the preface is non-authorial, the player is forced to examine it critically, taking from it what they feel is necessary, while still allowing themselves some freedom regarding when the parts of the sound chained are engaged, and exactly how each part is adjusted. It is then interesting how we are indebted to the paratextual information, which is essential to our understanding and performance of *Trash TV Trance*. In fact, our apartment metaphor suggests that the preface is necessary to begin approaching the piece at all.

Paratextual analysis and exploration of new instruments

We have gathered that the player needs some form of paratextual information to be able to perform *Trash TV Trance*. In contemporary music practices, some form of authorial paratext is often included to instruct the player in the reading of various new notational symbols, extended playing techniques, or the nature of the instrument at hand. Lachenmann's scores in particular, which have been referenced earlier in this thesis, contain a wealth of information about notation and technique. In this case, with *Trash TV Trance*, the paratext is essentially about the instrument, and guides us in both our understanding and our questioning of the instrumental apparatus. Paratextual analysis serves as a method of reflection about the nature of the instrument.

Working this way is enacting a critique of the notion of *Werktreue*, which is the idea of fidelity to the musical work, and by extension to the score and the intentions of the composer. Tanja Orning brings up the discussion of the notion of *Werktreue* in her dissertation *The polyphonic performer* in relation to contemporary music, particularly the graph music of American composer Morton Feldman (Orning, 2014, pp. 88-112).¹⁹ Orning

¹⁸ Presupposing, that is, that one is interested in performing the piece as the composer intended. I will come back to this in my discussion on the work concept and the notion of *Werktreue*.

¹⁹ Early in his composing career, Feldman worked with indeterminate graphic scores, notated as grids on graph paper, where domains such as pitch were not precisely specified. Instead, he would notate rhythm, playing technique, and the range with which a note should appear. A close discussion of Feldman's work with graph notation can be found in (Cline, 2016).

highlights how (in line with the writings of Lydia Goehr (Goehr, 1992)) the notion of *Werktreue* is linked with the emergence of the work concept around 1800, which assesses the musical work as an independent object, separate from performance. She goes on to distinguish the term *Texttreue* from *Werktreue*, though the two terms had previously been seen to be intrinsically linked. With this notion, she assesses how an interpretation can lean either towards fidelity to the intentions of the composers (*Werktreue*) or towards fidelity to the contents of the score (*Texttreue*). In the case of the *Texttreue* ideal, the notion of the “death of the author” as outlined by Roland Barthes is central (Barthes, 1967), where the text (the score) is interpreted without influence of the intentions and biography of the author (composer). In the previous discussion of *Rerendered*, the composer was very much un-dead, as my interpretation and performances were in many ways received from the established practice I stepped into when learning from and playing with Førisdal and Ugelvik, which in turn had been developed in close collaboration with the composer, and enacting his intentions.

The act of using paratextual analysis as a method in the interpretation of *Trash TV Trance*, constitutes a critique of the work concept, the initial notion of *Werktreue*, and also of the *Werktreue/Texttreue*-dichotomy because it assesses how the central aspects of *Trash TV Trance* (the instrument, its history, and most of all the timbre) is not only hidden in the score, but has to be subjected to study and critique when studying the paratext which one is required to lean on. Subscribing to only one of the two approaches would, as we have seen, not work. The *Texttreue*-ideal is impossible, as the text doesn't provide us with the necessary information to play the piece. Even if we include Pauwels' preface as part of the text, there would nevertheless be gaps to be filled. The *Werktreue*-ideal would also be difficult, as the intentions of the composer regarding the instrument are not perfectly clear to us, and replicating the original instrumental setup used for the would be naïve, as even the preface doesn't state the entirety of the suggested setup. Even if one could replicate that setup, the settings of each part of the chain, the relation with the player's hands, and even the electrical conditions in the room, alter the sounding result of the piece to a significant degree. Not only do we need to move back and forth between (or sidestep) the *Werktreue/Texttreue*-dichotomy in *Trash TV Trance*, but the whole concept of a cohesive work is deconstructed.

In the last chapter of Orning's dissertation, she suggests turning the notion of the "death of the author/composer" on its head, and thus enacting a "birth of the performer." In line with Barthes' invitation for readers to form their own interpretations of literary works, she encourages performers to step into "an integral freedom of interpretation" (Orning, 2014, p. 315). The critique of the instrumental apparatus in *Trash TV Trance* can be seen as one such step.

We are as musicians essentially approaching a larger degree of performer agency, as the investigation of instrumental challenges opens up the possibility (and the necessity) of establishing an individual development of the instrument. This contrasts the practice of classical pianists, for instance, who are dealing with an essentially standardized instrument, which might or might not be appropriate for their repertoire, technique, or physical characteristics, and which therefore limits the performer agency. The investigation of the boundaries of the instrumental apparatus in *Trash TV Trance* does not necessarily supply us with answers, but instead shows us the many variables and possibilities in the world of the piece, and allows to the player the possibility and responsibility of building their own instrument.²⁰

3.5 Instrumental challenges

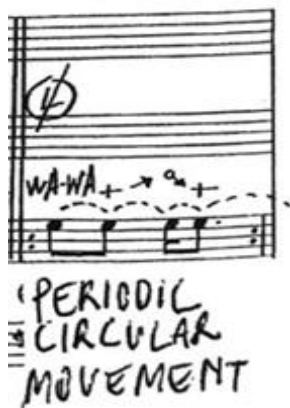
While an instrumental apparatus built up of independent parts, such the one in *Trash TV Trance*, gives the player agency in the shaping of the sound, it is nevertheless complex and thus also unstable, since every adjustment, no matter how slight, makes a difference in how the other parts of the setup function and produce sound. This willingness and need to reflect upon, adjust, and alter aspects of the instrument is one of the new demands on performers, and is a central skill that challenges the traditional role of the classical guitarist. While this is useful and applicable in many contexts (for instance in relation to tone production on classical guitars and lutes) it is explicitly necessary in *Trash TV Trance*.

²⁰ Building an instrument is understood in the Lachenmannian sense, as described in chapter 1.8.

Following these ideas, I will go on to describe some of the instrumental challenges I faced in my work with *Trash TV Trance* in order to show some of the complexities of the instrumental setup and how significant changes are obtained by this mode of exploratory work. These challenges don't form clear questions or problems, but are instead in the form of things to be considered. They are realities I faced in my own practice that serve as examples of how interpretation of *Trash TV Trance* must constitute a dialog between the instrumental network, the indications in the score, and the technique of the player.

The wah, the delay, and the sponge

In bar 54 of *Trash TV Trance*, the player is instructed to perform a unique sound where the strings of the guitar are rubbed with a sponge. The sound from the sponge on the strings is itself quite soft, but is augmented through the instrument. The sponge sound is boosted and distorted through the distortion pedal and then filtered with the wah-wah pedal before going through the looper and into the amplifier.



Example 6 — Bar 54 of *Trash TV Trance* (Romitelli & Pauwels, 2007, p. 3).

I chose to also add the echo pedal to this section, although Pauwels specifies it to be turned off. Since the sponge touching the strings is the initial sound in the chain, it should be observed alone first. When adding the distortion pedal the player notices a drastic change in character. The pedal boosts and adds high frequencies in particular, resulting in a distinct, gritty sound. Distortion pedals, however, often have a potentiometer which adjusts the amount of treble that is allowed through the pedal, allowing for darker or brighter sounds. Adding wah to this sound will emphasize high and low frequencies based on the position of

the foot pedal. This of course depends on the frequency content of the signal coming into the wah-pedal. The player can adjust the sound to be darker, for instance, to make the output of the wah less bright. This adjustment of the distortion pedal would of course also in effect when the wah was disengaged, and as such the base distortion sound of the piece would be different.

Furthermore, the order of the wah- and distortion pedals can be changed, resulting in different sonic results. While Pauwels lists the distortion before the wah, I chose to place the wah first in the chain, which resulted in a less pronounced wah effect, thus making the sweep between high and low frequencies less extreme. The more pronounced high and low frequencies of the first option overpowered the left-hand melody in the following bars, at least with my setup. This was a subjective choice on my part.

Adding echo to this part further alters the sound, obscuring the source sound of the sponge on the strings, resulting in a more reverberant and distant effect. This choice was made partly to make the sound of the sponge more legato, as I had experienced short breaks in the sound when alternating the direction of the sponge movement. Another reason for adding echo pedal was a wish for the high left-hand melody in the bars immediately after to have echo, and engaging the echo pedal before starting to play with the sponge meant I did not need to turn it on in the middle of the section.

The motif (circular movement with sponge and alterations of the wah) is then looped in bar 62. In the bars following this, the guitarist plays over the loop, first with left hand tapping and then also with glissandi with the cello bow and plucked open strings. The amount of sound emanating from the guitar and the looper can then result in the sound image becoming cluttered and compressed, since the overall input volume to the amplifier is increasing. This will be the center of the next sub-chapter.

While the way in which the player plays the sponge is significant, we also see that the player can greatly benefit from the understanding of how the individual pieces of the sound chain interact, which is explored by listening to how each individual part of the chain impacts the sound signal. The process was then a play between studying the instrumental advice of Pauwels and finding my own solutions and preferences to the various challenges.

Polyphony and distortion

The section between bar 70 and 95 presented further instrumental challenges. In this section, a polyphonic passage is developed between the two hands of the performer. The right hand picks up a cello bow and performs a back-and-forth-glissando by sliding the wood of the bow along the low E-string of the guitar, oscillating between a low pitch (the open E or the F on the first fret of the instrument) and a high pitch. Throughout the section the high pitch one needs to hit changes from bar to bar, causing the intervals being played by the right hand to range between a major second and a major ninth.

The left hand performs two parts simultaneously, one consisting of notes played by hammering the fingertip firmly onto the string and a second one consisting of open strings plucked by the available left-hand fingers. This passage is one of the most technically complicated passages in the piece, as the two hands must act totally independently from each other, each with different playing techniques, both across large areas of the guitar neck, which places the two hands much closer to each other than they are when playing the guitar normally.

Example 7 — Bars 85-87 of *Trash TV Trance* (Romitelli & Pauwels, 2007, p. 4).

Pauwels highlights some of the challenges of this section in his preface to the score, stating that: “[practicing this section] is clearly not only a matter of studying the part and the notes. One has to find the necessary playing stability on the guitar (. . .) and find a sound that allows enough sustain for the left hand tapping noises whilst making the bow sound on the sixth string” (Romitelli & Pauwels, 2007, p. III). Here, he acknowledges that the difficulty in performing the section lies partly in playing the notes properly in the right order, but also

involves adjusting the instrument (not only the guitar, the pedals, and the amp, but also the body) to produce the desired texture.

So, what is the challenge in this section of the piece? The act of performing the polyphonic actions with the hands on the fingerboard of the guitar is initially very difficult, but can be solved simply, through temporal and vertical chunking, as described in the previous chapter. The two hands need to be practiced independently from each other (vertical chunking) and then studied together, but only playing very small chunks, perhaps only focusing on half a bar at a time. This can hypothetically be done without the guitar even plugged into an amplifier, as the main technical challenge is to be able to perform the out-of-sync actions simultaneously. Referring to Steen-Andersen's *Rerendered*, it is as if the piano player is practicing their part without the assistants altering the raw piano sounds, and thus leaving aspects of the playing out — they are merely practicing the actions of the piece. As Pauwels states, however, practicing the actions is not enough to produce the textures Romitelli calls for in *Trash TV Trance*, a claim I found to be true while learning the piece. I, too, discovered that when playing the passage in question, even with good accuracy and technique, the texture produced did not at all sound clear or rich, despite having three independent layers produced by distinct playing techniques. Ideally, I wanted to hear the right- and left-hand actions beautifully balanced and distinct from each other, producing a truly polyphonic texture.

There are a couple of instrumental factors here that determine the outcome of this section of the piece. When distortion is applied on a sound signal, an inherent side effect is some degree of dynamic compression. This essentially means that quiet sounds become louder, and loud sounds become a bit softer. Although this is desirable in some cases, it gives us problems in this section of *Trash TV Trance*, as it reduces the control of the dynamic range and the player's ability to bring out the different voices clearly. Furthermore, the amount of distortion and compression intensifies when the input volume is increased. Thus, as the dynamic of the player increases throughout the section, as the number of notes increases, the resulting sound is increasingly distorted and compressed by the distortion pedal. Amplifiers will also potentially produce some amount of distortion and compression in their

different components²¹ when the input volume reaches a certain point and, as such, several layers of distortion and compression cascade into each other. There is therefore a conflict between the dynamics produced by the player's hands and the several layers of compression and distortion inherent to the instrumental network.

Pauwels attempts to give solutions to these problems in his preface. His suggestion is to use two different distortion pedals (each with different characteristics) and also to adjust the settings on each of them during the course of the piece, details which he provides in his bar-by-bar performance notes.

Solving instrumental challenges — Experimentation as practice

In the above sections, I have outlined distortion and compression as an aspect of the instrumental challenges in *Trash TV Trance*. The conflict between compression and clarity needs to be solved, but it is impossible to give a definitive answer to this problem. Playing with distortion is to a certain degree inherently unstable, and the exact results will vary from setup to setup, such that every performer will need to find their own solutions. What skills are needed to solve this problem? It seems to me that exploring and experimenting with the instrumental setup is the only method which can be used in this case — the instrumental challenges need to be overcome by the performer on an instrument-to-instrument basis.

In classical music practices, again, according to the notion of *Werktreue*, there seems to be an assumption that *someone* knows the answers to how we should play, or how our interpretations should be carried out. This sentiment is implicit in the traditional master-apprentice model of teaching, where the teacher, who is the carrier of tradition, knows how music should be played and imparts this knowledge to the student. In the field of historically informed performance practice the authority lies also in historical sources such as treatises, paintings, surviving instruments, and other historical accounts. Exploration, however, is usually only practiced in other genres, such as free improvisation and noise music. In the

²¹ An amplifier consists essentially of three parts, a pre-amplifier (which shapes the sound characteristic significantly), a power-amplifier (responsible for raising the overall level of the signal), and a speaker (which transforms the electric signal into vibrations in the air that we perceive as sound).

case of the instrumental problems found in *Trash TV Trance*, as well as in other pieces, I suggest that exploring and experimenting with the instrumental apparatus is the only solution.

Michael Schwab has written about the relation between experimentation and artistic practices in *Experimental systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (Schwab, 2013, pp. 5-13), using Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's concept of "experimental systems" as a basis. Rheinberger describes experimental systems as consisting of epistemic things, which are the part being investigated, and technical objects, which provide a stable environment for the experiment. If we apply this to our work with *Trash TV Trance*, it might at first glance seem like the instrumental apparatus is the technical object,²² but since the instrumental apparatus is in fact the focus of our investigation, I see it as more logical to look at it the other way around. Instead, we can assess the score, or rather the actions of the player, as the constant, the technical object, and the instrumental apparatus and the resulting sound image as our epistemic things. While I would like to give this subject more space, a deeper study of experimental systems is not within the scope of the thesis, but might be a possible avenue for further research.

3.6 Conclusion — Dialog with the instrument

The electric guitar has since its inception been largely associated with, and even fundamental to, the development of rock music. Nevertheless, it has a growing position as an instrument of composed music, and has been featured in the work of many of the leading composers since the 1950s. Examples range from Brian Ferneyhough to Klaus Lang, Steve Reich to Tristan Murail, and Morton Feldman to Stefan Prins.

In this thesis, *Trash TV Trance* has not only been an important study of the various techniques and sounds of the contemporary electric guitar, but also of the exploration and subtle manipulation of effects and sounds which permeate the electric guitar practice.

²² This is for instance the case in Martin Taxt's recent master thesis about the relationship between architecture and composition/improvisation in his own practice, where he defines his instrument, and the tools used to adapt architectural ideas, as the technical objects (Taxt, 2020, p. 18).

Through such experimentation with the instrument, guitarists involved in workshopping electric guitar pieces have had significant influence on the ways in which the electric guitar has been utilized by composers. For Romitelli, Tom Pauwels was one such important collaborator, instrumental in creating and exploring the sound world of *Trash TV Trance*, as well as his other works with electric guitar.²³ Through applying Herbert Heyde's analytical framework to *Trash TV Trance*, we have seen the contingent nature of the instrument, which provided an important perspective in our work of understanding and manipulating the instrumental apparatus. Gérard Genette's paratextual analysis served as a critique of the boundaries of the instrument, which in turn opened a discussion of the work concept within classical music. We saw how *Trash TV Trance* sidesteps the *Werktreue/Texttreue*-dichotomy which Tanja Orning poses in *The Polyphonic Performer*, and enacts a deconstruction of the classical work concept and the notion of authoritative intention.

In an attempt to conceptualize the work of exploring and solving instrumental challenges, I (however briefly) suggested the perspective of experimental systems, originating from Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and discussed further by Michael Schwab. The need to distinguish technical and instrumental challenges proved important in the investigation of *Trash TV Trance*. Technical challenges could not be overcome alone, but were solved as dialog with the instrument, which supported the notion of a distinguished, but nevertheless interrelated understanding of these two types of challenges. As with the contingent relationship of music and technique discussed in chapter 2, we saw how *Trash TV Trance* demands a non-hierarchical understanding of the relationship of music and instrument.

²³ Likewise, performers like Yaron Deutsch have contributed to the oeuvre of the electric guitar, through significant exploration of the instrument. Deutsch's work has been characterized by a focus on atmospheric sounds, sometimes reminiscent of jazz fusion guitar, while other guitarists have taken on different aesthetic tendencies. His collaborators include composers like Stefan Prins, Clemens Gadenstätter, and Marco Momi.

4 Severance

Severance is a piece for solo classical guitar, composed between 1988 and 1994 by Chris Dench. While it was initially conceived as a guitar concerto, the piece was eventually adapted as a solo piece, Dench's first for the guitar (Dench, 2023). The piece is surprisingly idiomatic, considering it was written by a non-guitarist, and it employs the entire range of expressive possibilities that the classical guitar has to offer, yet without venturing into extended playing techniques. In particular, the timbral aspects are explored in a subtle way, giving both directions and creative impetus to the performer to vary their approach to tone production.

Technique and instrument have traditionally been seen as hierarchically subordinate to the score and interpretation. Within the classical notion of *Werktreue* mentioned previously, the concept of autonomous works of music will always place the technique of the player and the practicalities of the instrument beneath the abstract pitch and rhythmic structure that constitute the work. In the previous chapter, however, we have seen how this notion might not be appropriate within contemporary music practices or for the works discussed in this thesis, as it originates from a different paradigm. What is the consequence for the guitarist if a score suggests a mode of interpretation different from that of their habitus? How can the concept of habitus help the guitarist in redefining their own tone production? Traditionally, technique has been seen as simply serving the player in executing the score, but can technical challenges themselves be creative avenues of interpretation?

4.1 Chris Dench

Chris Dench (born 1953 in England) is an Australian composer of contemporary music. Although he studied music at an academic level during several short periods, he classifies himself as an autodidact composer. In Dench's current biography, published on his personal website, he labels himself as a "Science-Fiction Composer" (Dench, 2023). He has, however, reluctantly been associated with the term "New Complexity".²⁴ His works are often

²⁴ The term 'New Complexity' was coined by Richard Toop in the 1988 article "Four Facets of 'the New Complexity'" (Toop, 1988), in reference to composers such as Michael Finnissy, James Dillon, Richard Barret, and Chris Dench, as well as Brian Ferneyhough and others.

characterized by the intersection of different musical materials, for example in *Severance*, *Closing Lemma* (1986-91), and *The Sadness of Detail* (2002). He is known particularly for compositions for solo woodwinds, especially the flute, through collaborations with Australian flutist Laura Chislett, in works like *Vier Darmstädter aphorismen* (1986-88) and *Closing Lemma* (1986-91). In addition to *Severance*, Dench has subsequently composed several solo pieces for guitar, *Asymptotic Freedom* (1997-99) and *In Chasm City* (2018) being two examples. The guitar also appears in ensemble pieces like *Driftglass* (1990), *ik(s)land[s]* (1997-98), and *Blood Music* (2005).

4.2 On the instrument

In the previous two chapters, the discussion of what the instrument at hand *is* has been mainly a discussion of concrete, physical matters. In chapter 2, I showed how the amplification of the grand piano, as well as the tools and techniques used on it, was part of what made up *Rerendered* as instrument. In chapter 3, I went into how the network of guitar, pedals, amplifier, and additional tools were intrinsic to *Trash TV Trance*. In the present chapter, however, the discussion of *what* the instrument *is*, is of a more subtle character.

The modern classical guitar is today a mostly standardized instrument,²⁵ one which has six strings, usually made of nylon, which plucked with the fingernails of the right hand. With the exception of a few instances, *Severance* uses conventional playing techniques, unlike *Rerendered* and *Trash TV Trance*, which both rely on extended playing techniques or augmenting conventional playing techniques.

If this is the case, how can I frame *Severance* as a distinct instrument? If there are no extended techniques, and the instrumental apparatus at hand is my primary instrument, what is left to distinguish the local performance practice of *Severance*? In the previous chapter, we pursued a critique of the boundaries of the instrument as a necessary step in understanding, studying, and performing *Trash TV Trance*. Is this process possible with

²⁵ The Sachs-Hornbostel system classifies the guitar as a “necked box lute” or a “composite chordophone”. The Sachs-Hornbostel-number is 321.322 (Sachs & Hornbostel, 1961, p. 23).

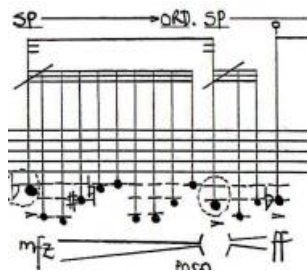
Severance? If we choose to use *Severance* as a basis for experimentation with our musical interpretation, what are our technical objects, and what are our epistemic things? If *Severance* is assessed as a distinct instrument with a local performance practice, how do we realize this practice, and how do we relate it to the established guitar habitus?

I will detail some aspects in the score of *Severance* which point to the piece containing its own distinct performance practice, while comparing it to certain canonic pieces of contemporary solo music for the classical guitar. With this, I aim to show how *Severance*, despite seeming like a “normal” guitar piece in terms of playing technique and instrument, problematizes timbre and thus the technique used to produce it, as well as how it critiques aspects of the work concept through its unique approach to rhythmic notation. As such, questions of interpretation contribute to the local performance practice of *Severance* and its distinction as an instrument.

Rhythmic notation

Severance is notated in an idiosyncratic type of time-space-notation²⁶ which, in addition to signifying rhythmic durations through visual spacing in the score, gives information through traditional rhythmic beaming. Thus, one can observe that a sequence of notes is to be played quickly by the distance between them *and* by the way they are beamed together (for instance as sixteenth notes). Furthermore, Dench utilizes grace notes (denoted by a slash at one end of the beaming) that intersect with the main musical material of the piece. As noted in the preface to the score, the grace notes should always be fast, but varyingly so. The relative quickness of each grace note-grouping is indicated by the beaming, either as eighth-, sixteenth-, or thirty-second notes.

²⁶ Time-space-notation is a way of notating rhythm where, instead of using traditional rhythmic divisions such as whole-, half-, quarter-, and eighth-notes etc., one notates the rhythm of a piece using a visual representation of time, where a certain unit of space (such as 1 cm) denotes a certain amount of time (such as 1 second).



Example 8 — Grace note gesture in *Severance* (Dench, 1994, p. 1). Used by permission of Chris Dench, © 1994.

In addition to the three types of rhythmic notation, the character of each section of the piece is given in writing — Italian tempo indications like “*agitato, feroce e preso*” or “*non troppo presto*” and English character indications like “*fragile: thin and inelegant*” or “*animated initially, but collapsing*” — which further alter the rhythmic aspects of the piece. Dench states in the preface to the score that it “is to be understood as inhabiting a world dominated by interpretive *rubato*” (Dench, 1994, p. 2) but that the rhythmic notation is

“not to be understood as licence to waywardness, the musical substance having been composed as rigorously as ever; the character of the resulting music implies a certain elasticity. An ideal performance, therefore, would be one of considered, and consistent, inexactitude.” (Dench, 1994, p. 2).

From this, we gather that the rhythm, and the network of different rhythmic information, aims at a certain democratization of *Severance*, by giving the player access and agency in the comprehension and realization of the rhythmic notation, without being inexact in terms of composition or notation.

The issue of the realization of complex rhythmic notation has been discussed by many performers and researchers before me, for instance in the work of Steven Schick (Schick, 1994), Tanja Orning (Orning, 2014), Håkon Stene (Stene, 2016), and Gratzuela Bortz (Bortz, 2003) among others. Orning, in particular, discusses the ethics of performing complex music (Orning, 2015). She examines how classical musicians are trained to perform correctly according to the *Texttreue*-ideal mentioned earlier. When the rhythmic structures (as well as other aspects) of complex compositions, which are seen to be so central to the autonomy of the work, are so difficult to perform that they almost approach the impossible, it might seem like the performer is then constantly failing at their job. Since the rhythmic notation in the works of complex composers, such as Brian Ferneyhough, Klaus K. Hübler, and in fact Dench,

is so dense with complicated information, one is forced to play something which will inevitably be an approximation of the score. There is for classical musicians a stark distinction between the playable and unplayable, and thus, playing something almost accurately is still seen as a failure.

It is therefore interesting that *Severance*, while having extremely precise rhythmic notation, does not pose *one* correct realization, but rather suggests a myriad of different solutions which would still be faithful to the score, and to the composer's intention as described in the preface. Still, thorough work with the piece is needed to be able to execute the "considered, and consistent, inexactitude" that Dench advocates for in his preface (Dench, 1994, p. 2).

Compared to composers such as Ferneyhough, Dench's work has received little research outside of a few articles. Laura Chislett has written about Dench's solo flute piece *Sulle Scale della Fenice* (1986-89), where she too emphasizes (however briefly) what she calls a "contemporary rubato" (Chislett, 1991, p. 95) which grows out of the fabric of several types of rhythmic information.

Interestingly, *Severance* is the subject of chapter 7 of Grahame Klippel's PhD thesis on rhythmic accuracy in New Complexity²⁷ (Klippel, 2014, pp. 167-194). Despite having performed *Severance*, Klippel seems to read the score of the piece quite differently than I have in this thesis, and devotes significant room in the text to a critique of the rhythmic notation, assessing it as problematic, rather than as an avenue of performer agency and a deconstruction of the work concept. Where Chislett considers "such a multilayered work" (*Sulle Scale della Fenice*) to invite the player to uncover "new interpretative ideas" (Chislett, 1991, p. 94), Klippel assesses Dench's rhythmic notation to be inaccurate and perhaps "not (...) associated with the rubric 'new complexity'" (Klippel, 2014, p. 171). Klippel is in this respect still *Werktreue*, true to the work, despite the composer's own preface (Dench, 1994, p. 2) and other researchers (such as Førisdal (2017)) suggest that the notation of New Complexity-scores enact a deconstruction of the notion of a unified work of music.

Another thing to note is Klippel's assertion that New Complexity does not have a performance practice. He states that "There is as yet no performance practice of this music

²⁷ I will use the term "New Complexity" here for practical reasons, not necessarily to support the validity of the term.

so performers cannot refer to a canon of writings to form their own views” (Klippel, 2014, p. 4). Not only does a performance practice of complex music exist, but it has been the subject of much research, for instance that of Orning (Orning, 2015), which I have referenced several times.

Indications of timbre

The indication in scores of playing *sul tasto* or *sul ponticello* have become increasingly common in the guitar repertoire, although they are not exclusively *modern* playing techniques.²⁸ They indicate an alteration to the playing position of the right hand on stringed instruments, either over the fingerboard or close to the bridge, respectively. Dench uses these indications frequently in the score, along with the indication of “*ord.*”, signifying a normal plucking position. Frequently, the player is instructed to gradually change from *sul ponticello* to *sul tasto*, or *vice versa*. Also, for the section titled “*desolato e morendo*” (page 4 of the score) he instructs the player to pluck close to the left hand, in effect producing an anti-ponticello, a quite special sound. We gather from this that *Severance* brings the plucking position of the right hand, and thus timbre,²⁹ to a compositional level. By this, I mean that the timbral variations which are often left to the player to decide upon are instead composed and indicated in the score, and join with parameters such as pitch, rhythm, and dynamic to form part of the composition.

These indications, which indicate plucking position, are usually understood by guitarists today as meaning *soft, full tone, or bright, thin tone*, respectively, and can be produced either by moving the plucking position, as notated, or by varying the angle with which the fingernail attacks the string. An angled, upwards (towards the ceiling) pluck can emulate a *sul tasto* and a pluck with the edge of the nail parallel to the string can emulate a *sul ponticello*, even if the finger plucks at the normal position over the sound hole of the instrument. Thus, there exists an ongoing technical and interpretative question regarding

²⁸ Fernando Sor, for instance, describes variations of plucking position in his guitar method as means of producing different characters and dynamics. He also describes the imitation of different instruments through modes of plucking and articulation (Sor, 1896, p. 5).

²⁹ I will make distinction between timbre and tone production, where timbre is the quality of a sound, and tone production is the way a sound is produced on the instrument.

tone production, which is frankly conditioned by several aspects in addition to the plucking position.

Dench is not alone in articulating alterations in tone color in a guitar piece. Other examples from the contemporary guitar literature include Aldo Clementi's *Dodici Variazioni* (1980) and *Fantasia per Liuto* (1978), where certain musical materials are assigned with a specific position of the right hand;³⁰ Brian Ferneyhough's *Kurze Schatten II* (1983-99), which contains countless indications of hand position; and Richard Barret's *Colloid* (1987-91), in which different musical materials and also sections of the piece have specific plucking positions, such as *sul ponticello*, *sul tasto*, normal plucking, and *sul ponticello* and *sul tasto* at the same time with different fingers. Barret represents a particularly sophisticated approach, as timbre is not only articulated in the score, but also becomes a structural element of the piece.

The most extreme example is perhaps found in Alvaro Company's *Las Seis Cuerdas* (1963) where indications of timbre are notated precisely, with newly invented symbols that not only assign a *sul tasto* or *sul ponticello* position to the right hand, but also describes the angle of the finger, the exact position along the string, the type of pluck (rest stroke or free stroke) and even the amount of nail which should hit the string (whether only the tip of the nail, the nail and the flesh or only the flesh should be used). The words *sul tasto* and *sul ponticello* are never mentioned in the score, only in the preface when explaining the new signs (Company, 1963, pp. 6-9).

Company's notation is quite exhaustive, encapsulating almost all the elements of right-hand technique which affect the quality of the timbre. The notation is interesting, because it highlights the falseness of the *sul tasto/sul ponticello*-dichotomy, and shows the extreme breadth of the guitar's timbral possibilities. The indications are, however, extremely strict, allowing little wiggle room for performer agency. In *Severance* there is instead an interesting conflict between the indications of the hand's position along the string, indications of character and timbre (given in writing), and several other factors concerning the right-hand technique. This issue forms the basis of this chapter's discussion on interpretation.

³⁰ This technique occurs very frequently in Clementi's guitar works, also in *Reticolo: 3* (1975) for guitar trio, where each string of the guitar for each player is assigned a separate timbre and dynamic.

I will go on to describe some musical challenges, issues of interpretation, later in this chapter. First, I will however give a brief framing of the current state of classical guitar playing, particularly tone production, using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus.

4.3 Habitus, embodiment, and timbre

Bourdieu discusses aspects of embodiment and belief in the fourth chapter of *The Logic of Practice*, noting how the ideals of the habitus, the rules of the game, let's say, are unconsciously received as truth (a belief) by practitioners who enter into the practice.

"The earlier a player enters the game and the less he is aware of the associated learning (...) the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. Belief is thus an inherent part of belonging to a field" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 67).

It is interesting to note how both Bourdieu's metaphor of the game in this quote and the concept of the "spoilsport" — the participant who does not wholly believe in the game or who disobeys its rules — align with the concept of "play" in Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 102-110). In both Bourdieu and Gadamer, the act of "losing oneself in the play" is an essential aspect of being a participant in the play, or in the practice, and indicates the unawareness of the practitioner to the structuring structures of their habitus.

In our case, we see that classical guitarists usually play with a certain ideals or goals in mind (such as the range of timbres which are considered "good"), which form part of the "truth" — the "rules" of modern classical guitar. Not understanding and respecting the rules, for instance the boundaries of good timbre, can hinder a guitarist from being successful within the field of classical guitar.

“Practical faith is the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes, not only by sanctioning and debarring those who would destroy the game, but by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of selecting and shaping new entrants (rites of passage, examinations, etc.) are such as to obtain from them that undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68).

We can see this statement from Bourdieu clearly in the practice of playing in guitar competitions. Competitions are for many classical guitarists a central part of developing a career. Many of today’s most famous guitar players have achieved their status through earning prizes in prestigious competitions,³¹ and winning competitions is seen by guitarists as of the kinds of rite of passage that Bourdieu mentions. Competition playing can be seen as a distilled version of the practice as a whole, and adherence to the ideals of this practice is usually a prerequisite for entering, and attempting to “win”, the game.

The state of classical guitar playing

A habitus therefore generates beliefs about what is good or bad and what is desirable. Bourdieu’s description of habitus as embodied points to the way these thoughts are subconscious to the practitioner, who is not usually aware of the structures that structure their practice. A classical guitarist will thus have an immediate reaction to a “bad” sound produced on the guitar, before being able to assess “why” they perceive the sound to be bad. The understanding of good and bad timbre is embodied, but why has the perception of good and bad tone production narrowed in the current generation of classical guitarists, and what is this current distinction?

Classical guitarists, who consider themselves *classical* musicians, subscribe to the values of Western classical music, one of the most central of which is the ideal of beauty. Thus, the term *good* becomes synonymous with the term *beautiful*. The definition of beauty is, however, subjective, and has been interpreted differently through time, something which is

³¹ For instance, Olivier Chassain, Marcin Dylla, and Thibaut Garcia, who have won the Guitar Foundation of America-competition, or Kazuhito Yamashita and Stefano Grondona, who have won the Michelle Pittaluga competition in Italy.

evident if we examine historical sources. Emilio Pujol, for instance, writes about the debate between playing with or without nails on the guitar as late as 1960 (Pujol, 1960). Pujol describes the evolution of the nails/no-nails-debate since the lute's arrival in Europe, and assesses how a mellow and full sound was the ideal for most plucked instruments. Thus, the practice at the time of the lute-instruments fell in favor of playing without nails. The debate continued until the 20th century, when playing with nails became the norm. The change of preference among guitarists follows the guitar's move into the concert hall, largely instigated by Andres Segovia, where a brighter, more projective sound was needed. Pujol, however, was still arguing in favor of no-nails playing, with his teacher Francisco Tárrega as a model, as late as 1960. In his book, titled "The Dilemma of Timbre on the Guitar" (Pujol, 1960), he defines a beautiful sound as being mellow, produced without nails.

What is today's definition of a beautiful sound on the classical guitar? To claim that all classical guitarists play the same way would be an error. I will however argue that, in accordance with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, we are pre-disposed towards certain goals and preferences, and often find similar results — guitarists are not producing the exact same sound, but they are producing them according to the same ideals, which are structured by the classical guitar habitus. In general, the range of different timbres employed is comparatively narrow, so as to focus in on the "good" sound, which today is considered to be loud, sustained, singing, round but clear, not too brittle, and without string noise or buzz. One could argue that those ideals are pianistic, not guitaristic.

The tendency has in recent years moved towards playing with a straight right-hand wrist, such that the fingers attack the strings at an angle, very different from the right-hand technique of Julian Bream, Andres Segovia, and Francisco Tárrega,³² to name a few. We find descriptions of right-hand position in major technique books of today, such as those by Hubert Käppel and Scott Tennant,³³ which clearly depict a straight wrist, with the fingers at an angle to the string and thumb outside. Käppel even goes as far as to state that "questions

³² The norm at the beginning of the 20th century was to angle the wrist such that the fingernails would be parallel with the strings. This can all be observed in photos of Bream, Segovia and Tárrega. The most extreme example is found among French guitar players like Alexandre Lagoya, who angled their wrists to such an extent that the index finger would rest on the high e-string and the ring finger on the g-string.

³³ "The Bible of Classical Guitar Technique" (Käppel, 2016) and "Pumping Nylon" (Tennant, 1995). Both books are influential guitar methods and both Käppel and Tennant have been and still are sought-after guitar teachers.

regarding which side of the nail and type of attack are no longer discussed today” (Käppel, 2016, p. 35), pointing to the general view that guitarists have found the *perfect* way to pluck. If we compare these ideals to Pujol’s in the 1960s, we see a radical change, but where does this change in ideals and playing style come from?

Bourdieu discusses the subject of taste in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984). The word *distinction* has a double meaning, namely to *differentiate* two different things or groups, and to *distinguish* oneself from others³⁴ (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 11) and highlights how individuals or groups might attempt to *distinguish* themselves in a hierarchical sense through their taste or behavior. The desire to climb the hierarchy of the classical music world has in the generations since Julian Bream been enacted through this change in ideals. Where the styles of Bream and Segovia would produce somewhat inconsistent results in live performance because of their extended use of (perhaps spontaneous) alterations of plucking position, with small mistakes and unexpected inconsistencies in the timbre, guitarists today favor playing styles which sacrifice the heterogenous approach to timbre in favor of the perfection of a piano-like sound ideal. This move also coincides with the emergence of the recording paradigm. Essentially, the possibility to record a piece of music, and thus to re-hear a performance, something which had not previously been possible, deeply changed the way we experience and practice music. A thorough discussion of the recording paradigm is not within the scope of this study, but the stark critique by Theodor Adorno in the 1938 essay “*On the Fetish-Character in Music and Regression in Listening*” seem to sum up the state of the “post-phonograph” ways of performing:

“The new fetish is the flawlessly functioning, metallically brilliant apparatus as such, in which all the cogwheels mesh so perfectly that not the slightest hole remains open for the meaning of the whole. Perfect, immaculate performance in the latest style preserves the work at the price of its definitive reification. It presents it as already complete from the very first note. The performance sounds like its own phonograph record” (Adorno, 2002, p. 301).

³⁴ I have mainly used the Norwegian translation by Dag Østerberg published on Pax Palimpsest, which is a condensed version of the original French text and contains a new preface by the author specifically for this edition (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 30-42).

4.4 Musical challenges

In the previous section, I hypothesized how the classical guitar habitus, and thus the practice of guitarists, has changed from valuing guitaristic attributes, such as a focus on varied timbre and idiomatic textures, to valuing pianistic tone characteristics, thus altering the common conception of what constitutes good timbre and subsequently influencing the technique of guitarists on a wide scale. Embodied conceptions of good or bad timbre are a deciding factor in the practice of classical guitar players. To re-invent aspects of tone production, one needs to be aware of the mechanisms which structure our approach to plucking the strings. In the previous chapters, we have seen how technique is practiced and how an instrument is adjusted in order to produce desired results, but to re-invent one's musical interpretations a reassessment of goals and ideals is necessary. We have seen how *Severance* explicitly reconfigures aspects of interpretation, because there is a tension between the practice of guitarists and the particularity of the piece. Thus, *Severance* is a piece which demands its own performance practice.

I will now highlight some of the musical challenges inherent to *Severance*. Notice how these challenges arise when our practice suggests one way of playing, but the piece demands another. I believe this challenge is in fact *the* center of the new practice I am describing in this thesis — the aspiration to do justice to the piece of music and the instrument, which requires the player to stray outside of their own technical, instrumental, and interpretative habits.

Tension between practices

We face conflict between the ideals of the prevailing performance practice of the classical guitar and the ideals of the score. According to my hypothesis of the classical guitar habitus, the main ideal of the classical guitar is the notion of beauty, which is today conditioned by the qualities of modern piano playing. In *Severance*, however, it seems to me that the ideals are those of contrast and surprise. The contrast, the swift cuts between the radically different textures, sometimes murmuring, sometimes gestural and virtuosic, will ideally result in a surprising and rich musical experience. This gives room for local beauty, often short-lived harmonic or melodic fragments, but gives the general impression of

disjunctiveness and instability. This is quite evident from the paratext of the score, both the preface and in the score itself, for instance in the description of the grace note notation. “These motoric gracenotes should always have the psychological effect of an uncomfortable intrusion, whether of agitation or respite” (Dench, 1994, p. 2). It is clear that the composer intends the different textures³⁵ to be played as radical contrasts to each other.

The problem is then whether one should shoehorn *Severance* into the classical ideal of beauty, using conventional technique to produce a beautiful tone, or instead invent technical devices which serve the local timbral indications. One can of course attempt to follow the ideals of *Severance* using a classical technique, but certain important aspects of the composition would then have to be omitted. It is simply not possible to bring out all the dynamic, textural, and formal characteristics of the piece without straying from the conception of beauty within the current practice of the classical guitar. The guitarist needs to expand their technique in order to follow the expansion of the interpretation.

According to the established habitus of the classical guitar today, as described in the previous section, a good tone is understood as having piano-like qualities and should be even in terms of dynamic and timbre, as the ideal is to play with a beautiful tone throughout. In *Severance*, however, certain factors stop us from following this ideal. Already in the first section of the piece, the indications of timbre, speed, and dynamic of the rapid grace note-gestures create a challenge for the performer. The indication of certain timbres, combined with the extreme dynamics and high speed, makes room for mistakes and inaccuracies, and certainly pushes the performance away from what is accepted as a “beautiful” timbre within the current guitar habitus. This suggests the need for a local performance practice — a deviation from the current habitus into a new one.

Furthermore, the issues of dynamic, speed, and timbre are interwoven. If we adjust our dynamic, we will at the same time alter the timbre. If we adjust the speed or rhythm, our approach to dynamic will need to change, and thus also the timbre. If we alter the tone production, the perceived dynamic is altered with it. The act of interpretation is entangled in a web of technical considerations. As such, this contingency might in fact render the focus on

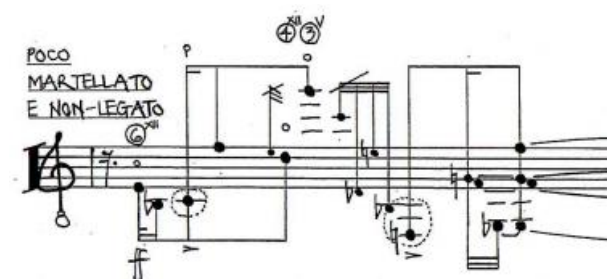
³⁵ In *Severance*, the grace notes always constitute a different type of material or texture and are intersected into the main musical material which is notated without grace notes.

timbre I have presented in this chapter partially redundant, and emphasize the interdependence of instrument, technique, and interpretation.

Classical ideals

Secondly, the harmonic and melodic elements of the piece are filtered through the other parameters, such as the rhythm, dynamics, and playing technique, before they are perceived by a listener. Thus, the musical parameters traditionally associated with beauty are submerged into the textures of the piece and are often completely obscured.

Examples of this are the grace note interventions, the Bartok pizzicatos, and the indications of timbre. The opening gesture for instance (see *Example 9*), consisting of the notes E, B flat and C, followed by a legato line, F, D, and E, contains a traditionally beautiful harmonic writing which is delicately distributed in two voices. This is, however, not necessarily obvious to the audience. The initial motif of E, B flat, and C is too quick and disrupted to be perceived as a melody and is merely heard as a rapid rhythmic gesture. The C is plucked violently with a Bartok pizzicato, and the defined pitch of C is only heard faintly over the string noise implicit to the playing technique. The next four notes, F, D (with grace-note E), and E are a short, calm moment, which is abruptly interrupted by the following grace note gesture. The next bass notes, F and G flat, could have been a melodic continuation of the initial E, B flat, C, D, and the higher notes F/G, F could have been an answer to the opening treble notes F, D, E. The grace-note gesture C, D flat, E, B flat is however a sudden contrast, and obscures the clever two-part writing.



Example 9 — Opening phrase of *Severance* (Dench, 1994, p. 1). Used by permission of Chris Dench, © 1994.

From the privileged position of the performer, we perceive a wealth of musical information which is part of the piece, but not disclosed to the audience. Is our goal then to stretch the music in a way in which each individual harmony is sounded long enough for the audience to

be able to perceive it? Or is the emphasis on texture and contrast more important? The piece's local practice suggests relinquishing traditional beauty.

Practicing, and building a local practice

These musical questions have sprung out of the piece itself. We see that questions regarding tone production lead to subsequent questions of dynamic, articulation, rhythm, and so on. In this way, they are intrinsically linked. These issues are of course also conditioned by the realities of the instrument. Although the previous chapter carried the main investigation of altering the instrumental apparatus, such options are possible here as well, for instance by trying different strings, or most importantly by experimenting with filing the fingernails of the right hand in different ways. In the previous chapter, interpretation was presented as a dialog with the instrumental network; likewise, we can see interpretation in *Severance* as a dialog with the network of technical considerations. Technique is as such a distinctly creative domain for the performer. This further highlights the contingency of interpretation, technique, and instrument.

4.5 Conclusion — Synthesis of instrument, technique, and interpretation

We have seen how *Severance*, through its approach to rhythm and timbre, suggests a distinct local performance practice. The rhythmic notation, together with Dench's own words about it, indicates the need for a new approach to the temporal aspects of the piece, what Chislett calls a "contemporary rubato" (Chislett, 1991, p. 95). Our assessment of the current classical guitar habitus then allowed an investigation of tone production in relationship to *Severance*, where we discovered that the score makes unique demands of the guitarist's technique and interpretational capacities. This points again to a distinct local and work-specific performance practice.

The flexibility of our interpretation in the previous chapter also proved relevant to *Severance*, despite its lack of novel instrumentation. We have seen that the techniques connected with aspects of interpretation such as dynamic, rhythm, and timbre form a

complex network, and that an interpretation necessitates a dialog with technique as well as with the instrumental apparatus.

The traditional practice methods of Karl Leimer presented in chapter 2, have been of importance in my own work with *Severance*, but the notion of a “natural interpretation” as Leimer suggests has been critiqued through this chapter. “Natural interpretation” has in fact been an antagonist throughout this thesis, as we have approached a conception of technique, instrument, and interpretation as non-hierarchical, and seen how technique and instrument can be creative avenues of experimentation.

5 The guitarist as poly-instrumentalist

The aim of the thesis was to open a discussion about the possibilities of the guitarist. When approaching the contemporary repertoire, as represented in my case studies, we have seen that the guitarist needs new skills and approaches to their technique, instrument, and interpretation. By transgression of the traditional instrumental boundaries, the guitarist thus moves towards a new performer role — a new practice.

The three case studies have taken three different instruments as their focus. One piece for a new instrument, one for an instrument variant, and one which demands new approaches to the guitar — *Rerendered*, *Trash TV Trance*, and *Severance*. My case studies have been examples of how to work with an expanding instrumental repertory, but more importantly, they have themselves been the impetus for developments in the domains of technique, instrument, and interpretation, and in my conception thereof, a distinction which originated in my analytical grid. Questions regarding the present state of the classical guitar have been investigated using the habitus concept of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's perspectives applied to the current state of the classical guitar proved especially valuable in my work with *Severance*.

5.1 A new conception of technique, instrument, and music

In the first chapter, I suggested an analytical grid, which I have used to categorize the different challenges posed by my case studies. It was important to initially distinguish issues of instrument and technique from each other in order to properly negotiate them. Furthermore, it was important to see musical challenges as a source of technical, and instrumental exploration. Although this initially suggested a traditional view of the three types of challenges, in which music or interpretation was most important, the model changed during the course of the thesis to suggesting an interdependent understanding of the three categories — the analytical grid underwent a deconstruction when it was applied to the case studies, and throughout the thesis it became apparent that a distinction of the three categories was impossible.

5.2 Re-rendering practice — *Rerendered*

A fundamental question when approaching new instruments was how they could be practiced — how one would work as a multi-instrumentalist. I turned to historical sources on how instruments could be practiced, not only to answer the question of practicing new playing techniques, but also to create a historical backdrop on the work of interpretation within established practices. In contrast to what was the case in the writing of Leimer, we saw how interpreting notational signs and playing techniques could be a significant barrier within the work with new instruments and new techniques. In the work with *Rerendered*, my process of stepping into and learning from an established practice was also significant, and showed how local performance practices might serve as solutions to the challenges of interpreting new playing techniques.

5.3 Dialog with the instrument — *Trash TV Trance*

In Fausto Romitelli's *Trash TV Trance* I encountered fundamental challenges in the instrument itself. By investigating the paratext of the piece, several variables in the instrumental apparatus were identified. The fact that the instrument was inherently unstable and variable, resulted in a deconstructed view of the notion of a unified musical work, and a number of challenges in performing the piece. A possible solution to the question of solving the self-perpetuating instrumental challenges was found in Michael Schwab's use of Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's "experimental systems". Interpretation in *Trash TV Trance* became conceptualized as an intersection of the investigation of the instrumental apparatus and the process of experimenting.

5.4 The ghost of the classical guitar — *Severance*

In the overarching movement from unfamiliar to familiar instrumentation of the thesis, *Severance* by Chris Dench was the most familiar. Through a conscious reflection of the received notions of good and bad timbre of the classical guitar habitus, *Severance* nevertheless proved to pose its own set of distinct challenges. The conflict between the established ideals of the classical guitar and the indications of the score created the need for

a reflected approach to interpretation and thus a local performance practice. My focus was on the considerations of timbre and tone production, a matter where technique, instrument, and music are contingent, and as such form an interpretation together. Technique and instrument proved to be creative avenues, and not simply serving the music.

Questioning of the classical guitar habitus allowed the possibility of consciously moving outside of the boundaries of good tone production and therefore approaching a new habitus, resulting in a decentered performance practice of the guitar, where one of the methods is the conscious deconstruction of established ideals as an avenue of new interpretations. The Heyde system continued to have impact past the initial application in chapter 3, when technique, instrument, and interpretation were assessed as a contingent network in chapter 4. Where chapter 3 entailed a dialog with the instrumental apparatus of *Trash TV Trance*, chapter 4 formulated a dialog with the instrument understood more broadly, including performance practice and its history. As such, the interpretation of *Severance* entailed a dialog with the ghost of the classical guitar, which for me represented an ideal of the past.

5.5 Towards a poly-instrumental practice

In this thesis we have examined three case studies which exemplify a new performer role. At the start of the thesis, I tentatively posited a new term for this new role. I suggested “poly-instrumentalism” as denoting a practice that is intentionally ever-expanding into new instrumental territories. As such, poly-instrumentality entails a play between the tradition and the avantgarde, and suggests a performer role that is heterogenous and subject to continuous change.

Although transgression of the classical guitar practice has been part of my work, established practices play a significant role in the work of the poly-instrumental musician. I discussed the possibility of established local performance practices in contemporary music in relation to *Rerendered* and Karl Leimer in chapter 2. My work within this project quite obviously relates to the work of performers and researchers before me, and in many ways springs out of the developments within the field of contemporary music. As such, poly-instrumentalism might in my case be an equally received practice, like the local performance practice of

Rerendered, or like the classical guitar habitus which I have negotiated throughout my work. The structuring principles of poly-instrumentality, its habitus, will have to be the subject of further research, however. We have nevertheless seen a few key characteristics of the new performer role, which I believe could be part of non-contemporary music practices as well. A fundamental openness to new things is needed, coming both from the music at hand and from the performer's own interest in new ways of playing music. The assessment of local performance practices for each piece of music demands a critical and reflected approach to technique, instrument, and interpretation within the work of the poly-instrumental musician. Furthermore, we have seen how the poly-instrumental practice entails constant change, through the continuous inclusion of new musical approaches. The poly-instrumental musician needs to accept an unstable practice, a practice which is in constant flux.

One could pose the question of whether coining a term for the practice is even possible. Due to its decentered nature, poly-instrumentality seems to evade explanation or definition. My work in this thesis has therefore been one of actively engaging with the case studies, pieces from which the practice springs naturally. We have seen how the work with the studies seems to further distort the idea of a unified practice, and thus the term must encapsulate a non-specificity, or a decentered focus. Or a heterogeneity of practices, conditioned by openness to change and dialog with the self. The validity of the term will have to be determined elsewhere.

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