

Guitar Semiotics

for Guitar

David Pocknee

Guitar Semiotics

Duration: approx. 6 ½ minutes

Information

This piece is inspired by the way in which an audience perceives sound during a performance of music. It is also inspired by the rumour that the guitarist John Williams has all extraneous string noise digitally removed on his later records.

When a classical guitar is played there are four strata of activity happening (for a right handed guitarist):

1. The vibration of the strings: this produces pitch.
2. The sound of the nails of the right hand attacking the strings.
3. The sound of the left hand sliding over the metal strings when moving between frets.
4. The sound of left hand coming into contact with the fingerboard when stopping the strings.

There is a tendency in audiences to mentally filter all sounds bar the sounds of the strings vibrating, as all others are perceived as extraneous 'noise'. The purpose of this piece is to draw the audiences' attention to this (often unconscious) mental filtering, as well as adjust their perception of the sounds they are receiving.

The piece consists of a 'theme' (bars 1-10) which is then deconstructed so that each of the strata of activity is independently developed and given equal prominence in the piece. Upon the return of the theme at the end of the piece, the extended development of these strata will hopefully allow the audience to realise the way that they had initially been filtering the sound of the guitar by imposing socio-culturally-defined value judgements upon it in a way that they may not have been conscious of before. The separation and development of the strata will hopefully also allow them to recognise the way in which all four are embedded into the main theme the second time they hear it.

Explanatory Notes

Dynamics apply to the force used to produce sound NOT to the sounding result.

Where two staves are used in the piece they are for Right Hand (RH) and Left Hand (LH).

Where possible, notes with conventional noteheads should be played with the flesh of the finger rather than the nails (apart from bars 1-19 and 174-end, where nails should be used).

Notes which are conventionally produced (conventional noteheads) are only notated in the Left Hand stave, even though both will be used in their production. This is for ease of reading.

Fret and string positions must be stuck to EXACTLY due to the sounds obtained at these specific places on the guitar..

If the performance venue means that amplification is necessary, the guitar should be close-miked over both soundhole and fretboard.

Symbols

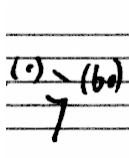
ST = sul tasto

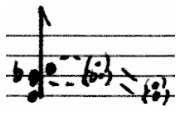
norm. = normale

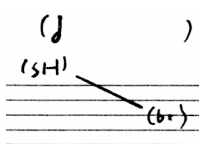
SP = sul ponticello

XSP = as close to the bridge as possible

MC = a muted barre chord


 = an audible slide along a string as if changing between frets. Should create a hissing sound. In the first 19 bars and bars 174 onwards, many of these slides often occur naturally from moving between the frets when playing the main melody, but the player should still ensure that they sound clearly.

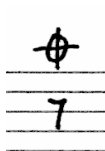
 = a dotted tie indicates that the subsequent slide starts from the same fret and string as the note that precedes this symbol.

 = notes in brackets over a slide indicate the duration of the slide where this may not be obvious.

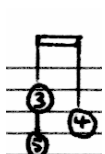
(S+H) = at the soundhole

(B) = at the bridge

 = a crossed notehead means a percussive hammer-on (striking the string against the fretboard using the flesh of the finger).

 = this symbol near a staff means that the hand which reads from that staff should mute all strings (unless specific strings are indicated e.g. bar 65). It normally occurs above a rest but occasionally appears above the stem of an event occurring on the same beat (this is done to create clearer notation. In the right hand muting should be done near the bridge. In the left hand muting should be done at the nearest, convenient place on the strings, though away from any harmonic nodes which might sound unintentionally.

Occasionally the right forearm should be used to mute the strings by laying the elbow by the bridge and resting the rest of the forearm up the strings towards the neck.

 = a string plucked with nail (the number indicates the string). Often this coincides with muting in the left hand to produce an unpitched percussive sound. The position of this symbol on the staff is purely for ease of reading and does not indicate pitch.

Guitar Semiotics (2008)

David Pocknee

$\text{♩} = 100$ Fast, Energetic

1 **X**

3 **XII** **XI** played $\times 2$

6 **XI** **XI** **XI** As before

9 **XI**

12 **XI** **X**

15 **X**

17 **VIII**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

20 **XI**

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Mechanically with four part counterpoint texture

23

RH

LH

f 5 # f

26

RH

LH

XI

28

RH

LH

XI

30

RH

LH

VII IX

32

RH

LH

IX

34

RH

LH

VIII VI

36

RH

LH

VII

3

38

RH

LH

gestural

VI

IV

III

41

RH

LH

lightly

f

viciously

I

III

45

RH

LH

f

49

RH

LH

w/arm

52

RH

LH

MXXI

56

RH

LH

MXXI

60

RH

LH

62

RH

LH

VI

mp

fff

64

RH

LH

ppp

f

PP

r♯ w/ forearm

67 *w/ forearm*

70 *pipim*

73 *w/ forearm*

76 *w/ forearm*

80 *w/ forearm*

96

RH

LH

w/nail (SH)

III 3 5

7 7

98

RH

LH

w/nail (SH)

5

5

P

ff

101

RH

LH

rall

P

ff

pp

ff

C II

104

RH

LH

Mute w/ forearm

III 5

P

ff

VIII

107

RH

LH

VIII

III

6 6 6

6 6 6

6 6 6

6 6 6

6 6 6

110

RH

LH

pp

114

RH

LH

118

RH

LH

P

122

RH

LH

mf

ST → XSP

* Slowly mute strings with left hand and move to XSP with right hand to create a gradual transition from pitched to unpitched strings.

125

RH

LH

Plucking w/nail → XSP

stroking strings horizontally → [XSP → SH] (SH)

* Gradually change from plucking with nails to stroking with fingers by lengthening plucking stroke horizontally along the strings, moving from nails to fingertips, and decreasing attack

* Gradually shorten slides along strings and add finger attacks to the bottom of slides to create a gradual transition from string slides to finger attacks.

127 w/ forearm

RH: XVIII XII XI IX * VIII
 LH: 6 6 6

132 w/ forearm

RH: 7 7 7 7
 LH: 6 6 6 6 6 6

135

RH: (SH)
 LH: 3 3 3

* Gradually shorten slides along string and rotate horizontal stroking action to vertical plucking to create a gradual transition from stroking strings to muted, plucked strings.

138

RH: 1 2 3 4 5
 LH: 3 3 3 3 3 3

* Repeat the finger pattern in bar 140 whilst shifting it up the fretboard to the places indicated, lessening the attack of fingers 4 and 2, and keeping the barre of finger 1 held down so that hammer-ons fade into string sliding.

143

146

153

158

Gradual transition from unpitched to pitched
XSP → norm → ff

Mechanically with four part counterpoint texture

161

163

RH

LH

Handwritten musical notation for measures 163-164. The right hand (RH) is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. The left hand (LH) is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The piece is in G major. The RH part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The LH part includes a complex bass line with a 6th fret barre, various chords, and a 7th fret barre. Fingering numbers (1-5) and fret numbers (6, 7) are indicated. A large bracket on the right side of the system spans both staves.

165

RH

LH

Handwritten musical notation for measures 165-167. The RH part continues the melodic line with slurs and accents. The LH part features a 6th fret barre, a 3rd fret barre, and a 7th fret barre. A 3rd fret barre is also indicated in the RH part. A large bracket on the right side of the system spans both staves.

168

RH

LH

Handwritten musical notation for measures 168-170. The RH part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The LH part includes a 5th fret barre, a 6th fret barre, and a 7th fret barre. A large bracket on the right side of the system spans both staves.

171

RH

LH

Handwritten musical notation for measures 171-172. The RH part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The LH part includes a 5th fret barre and a 7th fret barre. A large bracket on the right side of the system spans both staves.

174 X As beginning

Musical notation for measure 174, marked 'X As beginning'. The staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with dynamic markings: ff , mf , ff , and f . There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. Fingering numbers 3 and 5 are indicated above the notes. The measure concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

178 X

Musical notation for measure 178, marked 'X'. The staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with dynamic markings: ff , mf , ff , and f . There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. Fingering numbers 3 and 5 are indicated above the notes. The measure concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

182

Musical notation for measure 182. The staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with a dynamic marking of mf . A fingering number 3 is indicated above the notes. The measure concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

184

Musical notation for measure 184. The staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with dynamic markings: ff , mf , and f . There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. Fingering numbers 3 and 5 are indicated above the notes. The measure concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

188

Suddenly & viciously

Musical notation for measure 188, marked 'Suddenly & viciously'. The staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with dynamic markings: ff and f . There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. Fingering numbers 6 and III are indicated above the notes. The measure concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.