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Thinking through the guitar : the sound-cell-texture chain

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Chapter 17 Etudes: Outline and Notes

In this chapter, an account is provided of the etudes that were written with the use of the findings of the research trajectory. The outline of the etudes is discussed, followed by a commentary on each of the etudes.

17.1 Outline

The outline of the Etudes is described here in terms of its relation to the findings of the dissertation, my goals in composing the etude and an account of inspiration from other sources used in the creative process.

17.1.1 Relation to findings

The findings section of the dissertation consists of an account of twelve sound-cell-texture chains. For the composition process, each of the etudes was based on one of the sound-cell-texture chains. This means that each etude has one sound as its focus. For instance, the etude based on inverted stopping sounds contains a large number of inverted stopping sounds, but also regular plucked sounds and harmonics. The findings of the sound-cell-texture chain in question are used in the compositional process in two ways: as structured, written reminders of the potential of the sound category in question, and as normative instructions on the limitations of the sound in question. Most of the etudes have a duration of approximately one minute, although some of the etudes are longer. The title “Etude” is reflective of the fact that these pieces are my studies into the possibilities of the selected sound-cell-texture chain.

17.1.2 Goal

My goal in composing the set of etudes is to provide a kaleidoscopic view of the classical guitar potential that is expressive of the wide palette of sonorities that can be scored on the guitar, while drawing on an extended guitar scoring knowledge with the help of the sound-cell-texture chains.

17.1.3 Inspiration

The etudes were inspired by chapters, events and characters from the first and second books of Haruki Murakami’s novel 1Q84 (Murakami, 2010). Etudes were named after the chapter, character or event that served as their inspiration.

17.2 Notes on etudes

In this section, notes on each of the twelve etudes are provided. Two aspects are considered: the chain the etude is based on, and the scoring aspects that are explored in the etude.

17.2.1 Etude I: Die Puppe aus Luft

Etude I is based on the plucked sound-cell-texture chain. The etude explores the use of vertical cells that contain harmonics and regular plucked notes, single line textures, arpeggio textures, chordal textures, multiple part writing and harmonic flexibility.

17.2.2 Etude II: Die alte Dame

Etude II is based on the harmonic sound-cell-texture chain. Various aspects pertaining to the use of harmonics are explored in this etude: the use of pitch bends and glissando attached to harmonics, the range of velocities at which harmonics and regular plucked notes may be alternated, the resonance of harmonics during the performance of regular plucked sounds and the simultaneous use of harmonics and crossed-string sounds.

17.2.3 Etude III: Tengo

Etude III is based on the rasgueado sound-cell-texture chain. The etude juxtaposes dynamically powerful rasgueado sounds with soft-spoken plucked sounds, which alternate in their timbre between *tasto*, *ordinario* and *ponticello*.

17.2.4 Etude IV: Eriko

Etude IV is based on the strumming sound-cell-texture chain. The etude explores the combination of strumming sounds, plucked sounds, glissando articulation in arpeggiated strums, and strumming with the flesh. A *scordatura* is used, lowering the sixth string to d.

17.2.5 Etude V: Die Vorreiter

Etude V is based on the percussion sound-cell-texture chain. In this etude, the possibilities of creating two simultaneous musical lines is explored, one consisting of percussion sounds, the other consisting of *tambora* sounds, hammered sounds, plucked sounds and harmonics. A *scordatura* is used on two strings; the fifth string is tuned down to g, while the sixth string is tuned to d.

17.2.6 Etude VI: Der Leader

Etude VI is based on the *tambora* sound-cell-texture chain. It explores possibilities to combine *tambora* sounds, regular plucked sounds, percussion sounds, single harmonics and vertical cells of harmonics.

17.2.7 Etude VII: Zählen

Etude VII is based on the hammered sound-cell-texture chain. This etude uses a paper clip woven through the strings, turning the guitar into a prepared guitar. In this etude, the altered sound that the guitar preparation causes is explored. The piece also includes the simultaneous use of hammering with the left and right hand, and hammering with the left hand simultaneously combined with the production of percussion sounds with the right hand in rhythmical patterns.

17.2.8 Etude VIII: Und jetzt beginnt die Geisterstunde

Etude VIII is based on the Bartok pizzicato sound-cell-texture chain. This etude uses a paper clip woven through the strings and a scordatura that detunes the sixth, third and first string. In this etude, the altered sound the guitar preparation causes is explored, its effect on the Bartok pizzicato sound, and the use of natural harmonics in the Bartok pizzicato sound range (for this last possibility, see section 12.1.1).

17.2.9 Etude IX: Mäuse herausholen

Etude IX is based on the buzzing string sound-cell-texture chain. It explores the possibility to use two-part writing in which the bottom voice consists of a buzzing string sound, while the top voice consists of harmonics, tambora sounds, regular plucked sounds and inverted stopping sounds.

17.2.10 Etude X: Wenn die Daughter erwacht

Etude X is based on the scratching string sound-cell-texture chain. It explores the extremes between noise and pitched sounds that can be created by scratching the strings, the rhythmic evenness with which the scratching can be scored, and contrasts it with similar rhythmic evenness of strummed sounds.

17.2.11 Etude XI: Solange es zwei Monde gibt

Etude XI is based on the inverted stopping sound-cell-texture chain. It explores the combination of inverted stopping sounds, regular sounds and harmonics, and the detuned character of the inverted stopping sound pitches.

17.2.12 Etude XII: Der Ritt auf dem Tiger/Solange es die Wärme noch gibt

Etude XII is based on the bottleneck sound-cell-texture chain. It explores the combination of bottleneck sounds and regular plucked sounds, glissando articulation for bottleneck sounds, tambora sounds executed with the bottleneck, and the simultaneous use of bottleneck tambora, pitch manipulation with the bottleneck and plucking.