

# Temporality and performing style in Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar

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**Abstract:** Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* stands as a major work in the 20th-century guitar repertoire. Although it has been extensively analysed in previous scholarship, its performance practice has not been addressed. In this paper, I set out to fill this gap by analysing fifteen commercial recordings of the work, and furthermore seek to demonstrate how different categories of musical time-experience (after UTZ, 2017) can be used as a frame for discussing performers' interpretative decisions. I propose a formal analysis of the work and provide time-based measurements of the score, which I then compare to the performed sound structures. The results allow me to map the main trends in the performance practice of *Sequenza XI* in commercial recordings produced between 1993 and 2016, as well as to relate these trends to the discourses of the performers involved.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Guitar, Performance Practice, Performance Analysis, Temporality, Luciano Berio.

Since the 1990s, coinciding with the performative turn in the humanities, various music researchers have promoted a reconsideration of the ontology of musical works in the Western tradition, reconceptualising the relationship between performer and composer. These musicological discourses – especially within the fields of Philosophy of Music, Performance Studies and Artistic/Practice-based Research – attempt to overcome the traditional view of the performer's subservience to a composer's intentions, and thus to vindicate performers' creative (or at least co-creative) agency. Whereas traditional ideologies put forward the score as an ideal, fixed and static object, determined by the composer, reproduced by the performer and uncoverable through analysis (LLORENS, 2017, p. 10), more recent thinking proposes that musical meaning and structure are not encoded in notation but rather “constituted in the acts of performance and perception” (COOK, 2013, p. 91-97). Here, the score is regarded as a more dynamic object: one which functions as a script rather than a text (COOK, 2001, paragraph 16), or, better still, as a “means for channelling performers' creative imagination” (PACE, 2017, p. 285). Central to this performance-oriented thinking on musical ontology is a consideration of music's temporal dimension.

Ana Llorens, in recent work focused on identifying a performer-specific notion of musical structure, presents the contrasting notions of the *synchronic* and the *diachronic* (2017, p. 9-11). The former relates to a vertical/paradigmatic view – as when looking for morphological correspondences in musical material – whereas the latter refers to horizontal/syntagmatic aspects such as the temporal succession of sound events. Thus, in modes of discourse such as that of *Formenlehre*,<sup>1</sup> “musical structure has traditionally been represented as a closed, static, architectural, and relational system in whose creation performers have no part, and which can be grasped through synchronic analysis of scores” (LLORENS, 2017, p. 10). However unavoidable the synchronic approach may be in analysis, Llorens argues, it need not exclude diachronic insights: the idea that music is made of time, and that the temporal succession of sounds is central to the creation of structures (ibid, p. 11). Indeed, time is one of the main musical parameters upon which performers are likely to manipulate and exert an impact in performance, through *rubato* and tempo modifications.

Nicholas Cook distinguishes two main performing styles in relation to musical time: the

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<sup>1</sup> Lit. “morphology”. Inherent to this tradition are the discourses on the hierarchy of the senses that were current in the 19th century, whereby “the sense of sight, linked to Kant's ‘pure contemplation’ (*reine Anschauung*), was considered superior to imprecise hearing” (UTZ, 2017, p. 224).

*structuralist* and the *rhetorical* (2013, p. 92-125). The former relates to an architectural/synchronic view of musical form, and is associated in general with literalist/modernist performance and the concept of reproduction. The rhetorical model is, in contrast, pre-modernist and it is characterised by treating musical materials as if they were topics, so that performance becomes a kind of semiotics, practised in real time (*ibid*, p. 125); indeed, this approach results in a more flexible treatment of musical time itself. The structuralist approach regards music as an ideal object, not inherently temporal but which is presented through time in performance – music *in* time. The rhetorical, by contrast, regards music *as* time.

The musicological field of Performance Studies, to which the aforementioned works belong, has to date focused mainly on the common-practice period, giving considerably less attention to the most recent developments in Western Art Music. This could be thought to leave open the question of whether these approaches to musical time are able to account satisfactorily for different interpretative decisions in the performance of contemporary music. An exception is the work of the Austrian composer and theorist Christian Utz, who has produced research outputs concerned with contemporary music, proposing a model that seeks to relate the synchronic and the diachronic which he terms as *morphosyntactic* analysis. According to Utz, this model

aims to capture the multivalence or layeredness of musical sound particularly by cross-relating spatial or morphological aspects of perception (gestalt formation and spatialisation of events in memory) and temporal or syntactic aspects (transformation or change of musical events or processes in time and their syntactic relationships). (UTZ, 2017, p. 217)

Based on the perception of music *as* time, Utz outlines three archetypes of musical temporality (2017, p. 221-225), each entailing certain attributes of performance style:

1. The architectural model (or *spatialised time*) is mainly synchronic, thus sustained by literalist performance traditions. As a performing style, it aims at the individualisation of morphological events: in particular, a fast tempo and strong contrasts between sound events are likely to enhance the perception of time in performance as spatial (*ibid*, p. 222).
2. The transformation model (or *processual time*) can be linked to the tradition of musical energetics, most prominently represented by Ernst Kurth's theory of music as motion. As a performing style it relates to the idea that each sound event is part of a large transformative

chain over the duration of the entire work, pursuing the metaphor of organic growth. Its main performance features are a minimisation of contrasts and a tendency to slow tempos (ibid, p. 223).

3. The presentist mode (or *moment time*) draws upon Stockhausen's idea of "moment form", elaborated as "moment time" in Jonathan Kramer's book *The Time of Music* (1988, p. 50-52). This model has temporal discontinuity at its core, and is informed by contemporary artistic techniques such as montage and fragmentation. As a performing style, the presentist mode seeks a sense of fragmentation by means of a high degree of contrast; contrary to the architectural model, it tends to slow and irregular tempos, contributing to the impression that the individual events are isolated from one another (ibid, p. 224).

Although both the architectural and presentist modes resemble in their aim for contrast, a key difference is the aim for continuity in the former that manifests in the preference for faster tempos, facilitating gestalt formation and recognition of events in memory.

In this paper, I take these theoretical models of musical time perception – and their associated performing features – as a frame for approaching the different interpretative decisions in the commercial recordings of Berio's *Sequenza XI*, questioning their pertinence and applicability. In order to do so, I propose a formal analysis of the score and a temporal quantification of its notated materials, which may then be compared to the performed sound structures in the recordings under examination.

## **1. Berio's *Sequenza XI***

Luciano Berio completed *Sequenza XI* in 1988. Written to a commission from the Philharmonic Society of Rovereto (Italy), it is the result of a long-term collaboration with the American guitarist Eliot Fisk. According to Wuestemann, who interviewed both Berio and Fisk for his DMA thesis (1998), this collaboration started in 1982 and developed through meetings at regular intervals in which, besides working on the new work, Fisk played for Berio many pieces of his repertoire (WUESTEMANN, 1998, p. 12). The composer referred to *Sequenza XI* as the "accursed

one"<sup>2</sup> (BERIO apud WUESTEMANN, p. 18), noting that this, of all his *Sequenzas*, required an unusual amount of work. Berio writes:

In *Sequenza XI* for guitar I was concerned to develop a dialogue between the heavily idiomatic harmony that is bound up with the tuning of the instrument and a "different" harmony, the passport between these two far-flung harmonic territories being the interval of the augmented fourth. In *Sequenza XI*, two instrumental and gestural styles are also present, one having its roots in the flamenco guitar traditions, and the other in that of the classical guitar, the passage between these two "histories" being my more experimental vision of the instrument. The dialogue between the two harmonic dimensions on the one hand, and the two technical and gestural ones on the other, is pursued through a continuous process of exchanges and "transcription" of clearly recognizable figures. (BERIO, 1998, p. 20)

Previous analytical scholarship on *Sequenza XI* concurs in identifying the two main pitch structures – or harmonies – underpinning the music as the open strings of the guitar and a twelve-tone row strongly articulated by the tritone (see Figures 1 & 2).

FIGURE 1 – The open strings of the guitar (sounding pitch)



FIGURE 2 – The twelve-tone row



Moreover, the classical and flamenco guitar traditions as instrumental/gestural styles, as referred to by the composer, are treated as both playing techniques (such as the Romantic tremolo, the flamenco *rasgueado*<sup>3</sup> or the electric guitar tapping technique) and textural construction: the alternation of chords and linear demisemiquavers is inspired, according to the composer, by the

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<sup>2</sup> *Maledetta*, in Italian.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "strumming".

*consonancias* and *redobles* principle from the vihuela music of Luis Milán,<sup>4</sup> as well as by the alternations of *rasgueado* passages, scales and trills typical of flamenco composition/improvisation (BERIO apud WUESTEMANN, 1998, p. 33).

Previous analyses identify gestural patterns based on playing techniques as articulators of musical form. Although these analyses are dissimilar in their formal segmentation, all of them concur in partitioning the music into sections and subsections defined by dominant patterns. At first glance, *Sequenza XI* can indeed be heard as a collection of gestural fragments which blurs formal concatenation: rather than being linear, the organisation of the material is layered – a sort of (veiled) montage. The poet Edoardo Sanguineti, a friend and collaborator of the composer, wrote poems corresponding to the individual *Sequenzas* between 1994-5,<sup>5</sup> and that for the guitar piece may suggest the centrality of temporal fragmentation: “I find you again, my unnatural puerile pseudo-dance / I enclose you within a circle: and I interrupt you, I disrupt you” (SANGUINETI apud BERIO, 1998, p. 20).<sup>6</sup> This suggestion of a sort of circular form that is continuously interrupted can be perceived in the work's sudden transitions between materials, which leave to the listener the task of making sense of how these materials interact. Berio writes:

Almost all the *Sequenzas* have in common the intention of defining and developing through melody an essentially harmonic discourse and [...] of suggesting a polyphonic type of listening, based in part on the rapid transition between different characteristics, and their simultaneous iteration. Here polyphony should be understood in a metaphorical sense, as the exposition and superposition of differing modes of action and instrumental characteristics (BERIO, 1998, p. 8).

Schulmann (2016, p. 255-340) is the most recent of the analytical writings on *Sequenza XI* – a revisionist approach that compares previous scholarship,<sup>7</sup> pointing out that most analysts have identified nine main gestural patterns, or “modes of action”, based on playing techniques. Besides

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<sup>4</sup> Luis Milán's so-called “gallant style, which consists of chords mixed with passage work that is commonly called playing *dedillo*” (GRIFFITHS, 2005, p. 167).

<sup>5</sup> Included in the liner notes of the Deutsche Grammophon CD (1998) devoted to the complete cycle of *Sequenzas*, and included as recorded recitation in the similar publication by Mode Records (2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Ti ritrovo, mia puerile pseudodanza innaturale / Ti chiudo in un cerchio: e ti interrompo, ti rompo* (Italian verses in BERIO, 1998, p. 69).

<sup>7</sup> Except for Rens (2015), which was presumably too recent to be taken into account by Schulmann. Rens's analysis (2015, p. 106-123) resembles the previous analyses, but focuses more on the compositional process – which Rens characterises as a “synergy of freedom and constraint” – as well as on the theatrical/gestural potential of the composition.

receiving wider attention through having been published as both an MA thesis and a chapter in the edited book on the *Sequenza* series (PORCARO, 2007, p. 255-274), Mark Porcaro's analysis is distinguished by being the first to focus on Berio's particular notion of polyphony: "a polyphonic type of listening", a "polyphony of different modes of action". Porcaro identifies in four layers – functioning as paradigmatic columns based on the parameters of pitch and texture – the material for the entire work, and tracks their development according to different levels of tension, which he terms as *focus* and *out-of-focus*<sup>8</sup> (out-of-focus being the maximum level of tension). Porcaro draws on these concepts to discuss the gestural content of each layer and its development in time according to each layer synchronically; that is, he does not approach the horizontal interaction between layers.

Porcaro defines each layer according to pitch and texture, but also implying a series of gestural patterns and playing techniques. Layer 1 (from now on L1) is a six-voice chordal texture, which most typically contains chord sequences played through *flamenco-rasgueado* patterns as well as *tambora* and conventional plucking/strumming. Layer 2 (L2) is a mixture of (four- and five-voiced) chords and linear textures, and alludes to the polyphony of vihuela music. Layer 3 (L3) is based on the twelve-tone row mentioned above (Porcaro defines this layer in terms of two linear hexachords); it is essentially a linear texture, predominantly realised in demisemiquavers or fast grace notes, and contains several playing techniques such as tremolo or tapping as well as a series of gestural types which have been referred to as "arabesques" (McKAY, 2009, p. 131). Finally, Layer 4 (L4) is the work's only passage of two-part counterpoint – located at page 9, systems 5-8; see Figure 3 – although both Porcaro (2004, p. 32) and Rens (2015, p. 114-115) regard it as really a three-part polyphony, whose pitch material has put in previous appearances from page 7 onwards.

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<sup>8</sup> Terms employed by Berio himself (BERIO apud PORCARO, 2004, p. 12).

FIGURE 3 – Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar, page 9, systems 5-8. Porcaro's Layer 4 highlighted in yellow

Source: Luciano Berio (1988, p.9)

FIGURE 4 – Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar, page 1, systems 1-6. Layer 1 is highlighted in red, Layer 2 in blue and Layer 3 in green

The image displays the musical score for Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar, page 1, systems 1-6. The score is divided into six systems, each containing one or two staves of music. The systems are color-coded: System 1 (red), System 2 (blue), System 3 (red), System 4 (green), System 5 (red and green), and System 6 (blue). The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*p*, *pp*, *ff*, *mf*), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (*dolcemente*, *improvvisamente violento*, *vibr.*). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 50, *ma liberamente, come prelu diando*, and later as quarter note = 60. The score also features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs.

Source: Luciano Berio (1988, p.1)

In Figure 4, the first page of *Sequenza XI* is segmented according to Porcaro's suggestions.<sup>9</sup> In this passage can be seen very clearly the distinctiveness of the textures, justifying Porcaro's focus on that parameter in defining his paradigmatic layers. The very first segment based on L1 (highlighted in red in Fig. 4), featuring six-voiced chords played both as *tambora* and normal strumming through different rhythmic figures, is indeed different to its abrupt reappearance in the second system featuring an evident reference to flamenco by means of *rasgueado* patterns. Moreover, L2 (highlighted in blue in Fig. 4), presenting four- and five-voiced chords and some linear material, resembles (especially in system 6) the *consonancias* and *redobles* principle of vihuela music mentioned above. And the L3 fragments (highlighted in green in Fig. 4) – linear gestures based on the twelve-tone row (with its characteristic tritones), grouped in demisemi-quaver and grace-note groups – are inserted in between the L1 and L2 passages. There are elements of similarity between these layers, such as pitch (the two “harmonies”, based on both the guitar tuning and the tritone) and rhythmic patterns: most obviously, the demisemi-quavers grouped in fours, common to L1, L3 and L2 (in system 6), and the groups of grace notes, indicated to be played “as fast as possible” (strummed chords in L1 and linear groups in L3).

Among all the published analyses of *Sequenza XI* – besides the absence of comment/discussion on performance practice<sup>10</sup> – it is surprising to encounter no consideration of the potential aid to analysis that may be found in *Chemins V* (BERIO, 1992a), a work for guitar and orchestra based on the guitar sequenza. Here is Berio on the *Chemins* series in general:

The best way to analyse and comment on a musical work is to write another one using materials from the original work: a creative exploration of a composition is at the same time an analysis, a commentary and an extension of the original. The most profitable commentary on a symphony or an opera has always been another symphony or another opera. This is why my *Chemins*, where I quote, translate, expand and transcribe my *Sequenzas* for solo instruments, are also the *Sequenzas*' best analyses. They are a series of specific commentaries which include, almost intact, the object and subject of the commentary. The *Chemins* are not the displacement of an *objet trouvé* into a different context or the orchestral “dressing up” of a solo piece (the original *Sequenza*), but rather a commentary organically tied to it and generated by it. The instrumental ensemble brings

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<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, my segmentation in Fig. 4 is not identical to that of Porcaro (2004, p. 37), who views L2 in system 1 as beginning with the repeated chord (A2-C3-F#3-G3-D4-E4) played as *tambora*, just before the quaver rest. Similarly, Porcaro (*ibid*) regards L2 in system 6 as starting from the second group of demisemi-quavers, not the first.

<sup>10</sup> Except for Wuestemann (1998, p. 60-66), who offers some technical solutions along the lines of a performing guide – a feature common in dissertations produced under DMA programs in the USA, but not amounting to an in-depth consideration of interpretative decision-making.

to the surface and develops musical processes that are hidden and compressed in the solo part, amplifying every aspect, including the temporal one: at times the roles are inverted so that the solo part appears to be generated by its own commentary (BERIO, 1992b).

*Chemins V* exhibits two features which may provide assistance to an analyst of *Sequenza XI*: a segmentation of the music (by means of orchestral interludes which interrupt the solo part and comment on its gestural content), and valuable metrical insights (since, unlike in the *Sequenza*, many passages are notated with barlines). In this paper, a segmentation of *Sequenza XI* based on the insights afforded by *Chemins V* is proposed, while Porcaro's four "layers" are applied to identify the musical materials.

## 2. Formal analysis of the score

In presenting his analysis of *Sequenza XI*, Porcaro (2004, p. 13) identifies each of his four layers as a section, using the term synchronically – an approach which yields much of interest, although it does not account for process and interaction between layers. John McKay (2007, p. 131) similarly identifies four main sections, but diachronically. In this study, I identify five main sections, distinguished on the basis of their predominant gestural content, and further divide the piece into sub-sections which I call segments.<sup>11</sup> The five sections I propose coincide with those of McKay but split the last section in two: I consider the tempo change to  $\text{♩}=50$  on page 11, system 6 (which remains in force until the end of the work) as the beginning of a new section, given the degree of contrast created by the predominance of different gestural materials. Additionally, following *Chemins V*, I identify 53 segments,<sup>12</sup> and identify each of these as containing gestural material from one or more of Porcaro's four layers. Most of the segments focus on one layer; however in many cases there is material of two or more layers. In cases where there is a clear dominance of one layer over another, the less dominant is indicated in round brackets – for example, L1(L3). If a segment contains layers

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<sup>11</sup> Following the tradition of formal analytical approaches such as Nattiez's paradigmatic analysis (exemplified in his work on Varèse's *Density 21.5*; see NATTIEZ, 1982) – in which the smallest portion is the *unit*, then the *sequence*, then *section* and finally *part* – in this analysis I only consider *sequences* (but calling them *segments*, to avoid a similarity with Berio's term *Sequenza*) and *sections*.

<sup>12</sup> *Chemins V* indicates 50 subsections for rehearsal purposes, with orchestral cues indicated. Almost all of these cues coincide with the 53 segments I have identified – I added a few more in order to account for some tempo changes, given that my analysis is focused on temporality.

with equal preponderance, they are expressed using a slash, for example L1/L3.

Table 1 shows my formal analysis of *Sequenza XI*, in which the metronomic duration of notated sound events has been calculated. Although there are no bars, the notation is clear concerning durations: there are metronomic indications throughout, and even the groups of grace notes (to be played "as fast as possible") display always within measured time spans. There are only two passages that are freer in relation to time: the brief opening passage, from system 1 to 2 of the first page, which is marked to be played "*liberamente, come preluendo*" (although a metronomic indication, of  $\text{♩}=50$ , is also present), and the passage on page 8, systems 2 to 6, where the notated material involves actions for the guitarist to re-tune her/his instrument – these actions may entail a certain degree of temporal freedom. Apart from these two passages, the notation provides clear indications in relation to time, including tempo modifications (starting and ending points are provided for all *rallentandos* and *accelerandos*) and fermatas; these have been included in the calculation. Thus, this process provides a notion of the graphic duration of the score understood as an abstract entity, synchronically. This method has been used previously in musicological work by Ulrich Mosch and Christian Utz focusing on performance of contemporary music (MOSCH 2006 apud UTZ, 2007, p. 226).

Table 1 also indicates each segment's gestural content, labelled according to Porcaro's four layers. As *Sequenza XI* has no bars, events are located by identifying page and system (e.g. 1.3 refers to page 1, system 3). Thus, it can be observed that Section 1 (which has 10 segments from 1.1 to 3.3) is dominated by the opposition of L1 and L2, with a minor presence of L3. Section 2 (10 segments, 3.3-5.5) shows a clear dominance of L3. Section 3 (12 segments, 5.6 to 8.9) portrays L1 and L3, while section 4 (11 segments, 9.1-11.6) features L3 and L4. Finally, section 5 (10 segments, 11.6-12.7) has a clear dominance of L2. This segmentation is employed in my subsequent analysis of the performances.

TABLE 1 – Sectional and segmentational analysis of the score of Berio's *Sequenza XI*

	segment	location (page.system)	crotchets	textural/gestural material	segment's graphic duration (secs)	segment's durational ratio	section's graphic duration (secs)	section's durational ratio
section 1	1	1.1	8 ↓ (j=50)	L1	9,60	1,07%	178,05	19,86%
	2	1.1-1.2	8,5 ↓ (j=50)	L2	10,20	1,14%		
	3	1.2-1.5	33,5 ↓ (j=60)	L1 (L3)	33,50	3,74%		
	4	1.6	11,5 ↓ (j=60)	L2	11,50	1,28%		
	5	2.1-2.3	18,25 ↓ (j=60)	L1	18,25	2,04%		
	6	2.3-2.4	13,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3	13,50	1,51%		
	7	2.4-2.5	23,25 ↓ (j=60)	L2	23,25	2,59%		
	8	2.6-2.7	13,5 ↓ (j=60)	L2	13,50	1,51%		
	9	2.7-2.8	19,5 ↓ (j=60)	L2(L1)	19,50	2,17%		
	10	3.1-3.3	25,25 ↓ (j=60)	L2	25,25	2,82%		
section 2	11	3.3-3.4	11,75 ↓ (j=60)	L3	11,75	1,31%	185,53	20,69%
	12	3.4-3.6	22,25 ↓ (j=60)	L2	22,25	2,48%		
	13	3.6-4.1	26,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3	26,50	2,96%		
	14	4.1-4.2	7 ↓ (j=60)	L3	6,28	0,70%		
	15	4.2-4.5	29,75 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L1)	29,75	3,32%		
	16	4.5-4.9	30 ↓ (j=60)	L3	30,00	3,35%		
	17	4.9-5.1	12 ↓ (j=60)	L3	12,00	1,34%		
	18	5.1-5.3	14,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L1)	14,50	1,62%		
	19	5.3-5.5	23,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3	23,50	2,62%		
	20	5.5-5.6	10,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L1)	9,00	1,00%		
section 3	21	5.6-5.9	26,5 ↓ (j=60)	L1	26,50	2,96%	230,30	25,68%
	22	5.9-6.2	15,5 ↓ (j=60)	L1(L3)	15,50	1,73%		
	23	6.2-6.4	14,25 ↓ (j=60)	L1/L3	14,25	1,59%		
	24	6.4-6.7	24,25 ↓ (j=60)	L3/L1	24,25	2,70%		
	25	7.1-7.4	26,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3	26,50	2,96%		
	26	7.4-7.7	30,75 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L4)	30,75	3,43%		
	27	7.7-7.8	15,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3/L4/L1	15,50	1,73%		
	28	7.8-8.1	7,25 ↓ (j=60)	L1/L4	7,25	0,81%		
	29	8.2-8.6	42,75 ↓ (j=80)	L3/re-tuning	31,80	3,55%		
	30	8.6-8.7	10,5 ↓ (j=60)	L4(L3)	10,50	1,17%		
	31	8.7-8.9	19,5 ↓ (j=60)	L4(L3)	19,50	2,17%		
	32	8.9	8 ↓ (j=60)	L3/L4	8,00	0,89%		
section 4	33	9.1-9.2	9 ↓ (j=60)	L1	9,00	1,00%	174,31	19,44%
	34	9.2-9.3	9 ↓ (j=50 + accel.)	L1	9,14	1,02%		
	35	9.3	6 ↓ (j=60 + accel.)	L1	5,40	0,60%		
	36	9.3-9.5	15 ↓ (j=84 + rall.)	L3	9,90	1,10%		
	37	9.5-9.8	23,25 ↓ (j=60)	L4	23,25	2,59%		
	38	10.1-10.2	15 ↓ (j=60)	L3	15,00	1,67%		
	39	10.2-10.6	32,12 ↓ (j=60)	L3	32,12	3,58%		
	40	10.6-11.1	14 ↓ (j=60)	L3	14,00	1,56%		
	41	11.1	11 ↓ (j=60)	L3	11,00	1,23%		
	42	11.1-11.3	17,5 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L2)	17,50	1,95%		
	43	11.3-11.6	28 ↓ (j=60)	L3(L1/L2)	28,00	3,12%		
section 5	44	11.6-11.8	22,25 ↓ (j=50)	L2	26,70	2,98%	129,05	14,39%
	45	12.1	8 ↓ (j=50 + rall.)	L2	10,35	1,15%		
	46	12.1-12.2	11 ↓ (j=50)	L2	13,20	1,47%		
	47	12.2-12.3	10 ↓ (j=60)	L2	10,00	1,12%		
	48	12.3-12.4	13,5 ↓ (j=60 + accel.)	L2	13,30	1,48%		
	49	12.4-12.5	17,5 ↓ (j=72)	L2	14,50	1,62%		
	50	12.5-12.6	6,5 ↓ (j=72 + accel.)	L1/L3	4,70	0,52%		
	51	12.6	8,5 ↓ (j=60 + rall.)	L1/L3	8,70	0,97%		
	52	12.6-12.7	5,5 ↓ (j=50)	L3	6,60	0,74%		
	53	12.7	14 ↓ (j=40)	L2	21,00	2,34%		

### 3. The commercial recordings: durations and measurements

To a greater extent than other pieces in the contemporary guitar repertoire – such as Elliott Carter's *Changes*, Franco Donatoni's *Algo* or Brian Ferneyhough's *Kurze Schatten II*, to name a few influential composers who wrote major guitar works during the 20th century – *Sequenza XI* has been extensively published in commercial recordings. This paper considers fifteen commercial recordings available at the time of writing, ranging from Eduardo Fernández's premiere recording in 1993 to Andrea Monarda's 2016 version.<sup>13</sup> Table 2 shows the recordings' basic information, including the total duration of the track and a basic indication of the performer's main repertoire – roughly distinguishing *mainstream* and *contemporary* repertoires – according to a cursory survey of each guitarist's main artistic outputs.

In Performance Studies scholarship on early music, such as the work of Dorottya Fabian, a basic distinction is made between a "mainstream" performance style (MSP) and Historically Informed Performance (HIP) (FABIAN, 2015, p.13), the latter implying a significant degree of specialisation in historical repertoire. (The concept of "mainstream" performance is developed in the next section of this paper.) A key question which the present study seeks to address is whether a specialisation in contemporary music performance has implications for performing style. Accordingly, Table 2 shows this basic distinction in repertoires, which will be elaborated through the categorisations of performing styles to be made in section 4 of this paper.

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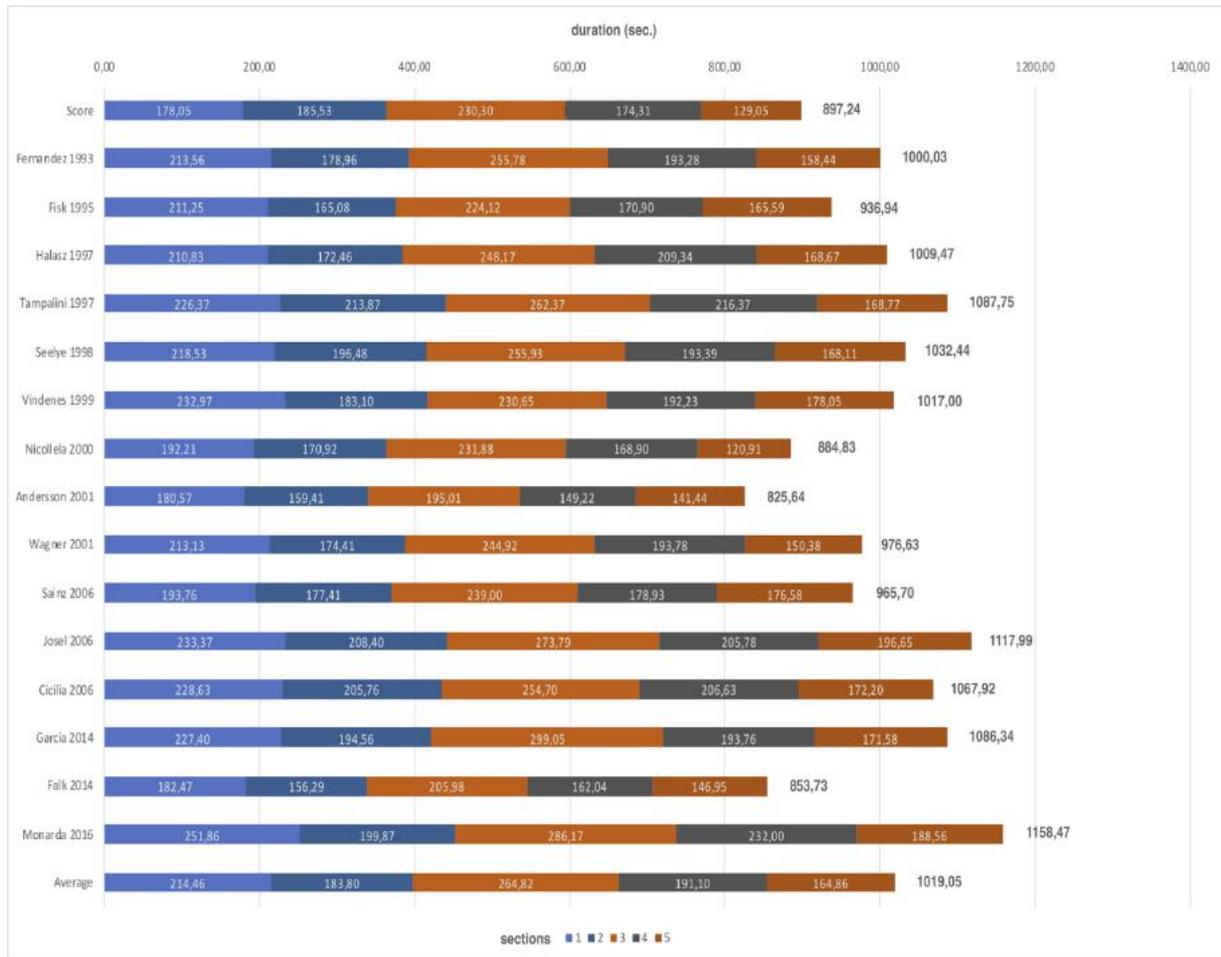
<sup>13</sup> There are a few live performances available on online platforms such as Youtube, but the purpose of this study is not approaching the recorded-live dichotomy but the mediations between notation and performance. I take the view that studio recordings are a product that better reflects the performer's creative intentions in the senses relevant to this study.

TABLE 2 – The commercial recordings of Berio's *Sequenza XI*

Performer	CD name	Label	Year	Duration	Performer's main repertoire: Mainstream (M) or Contemporary (C)
Eduardo Fernández (Uruguay, 1952)	Avant-garde Guitar	Decca	1993	16'40''	M
Eliot Fisk (USA, 1954)	Sequenza!	Musical Heritage	1995	15'36''	M
Franz Halasz (USA-Germany, 1964)	Canzoni	BIS	1997	16'49''	M
Giulio Tampalini (Italy, 1971)	Contemporary Guitar	Antes Edition	1997	18'07''	M
Todd Seelye (USA)	Sheer Pluck	Music and Arts Programs of America	1998	17'12''	M
Njal Vindenes (Norway, 1957)	Sequenza	Euridice	1999	17'03''	M
Michael Nicolella (USA, 1963)	Push	Gale recordings	2000	14'44''	M-C
Magnus Andersson (Sweden, 1956)	Short Sounds	Nosag	2001	13'45''	C
Jens Wagner (Germany, 1958)	Evolución – virtuoso masterworks of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	Acoustic Music Records	2001	16'16''	M
Pablo Sainz (Spain, 1977)	Berio: Sequenzas I - XIV	Naxos	2006	16'05''	M
Seth Josel (USA, 1971)	The Complete Sequenzas and Works for Solo Instruments	Mode Records	2006	18'37''	C
Diangelo Cicilia (Curazao-Netherlands, 1971)	Neue niederländische Gitarrenmusik	Cybele	2006	17'47''	C
Thibaut Garcia (France, 1994)	Demain Dès L'Aube	Contrastes Records	2014	18'06''	M
Marten Falk (Sweden, 1973)	Nocturnal Shadows	dB productions	2014	14'13''	M
Andrea Monarda (Italy, 1985)	Dieci Minuti All'alba, Omaggio A Giorgio Gaslini	Stradivarius	2016	19'18''	M-C

Given the focus on temporality, the durations of the fifteen recordings were measured in terms of duration by sections and segments, and compared with the timings previously calculated from the score. While the score has a total duration of 14'56'', the performances show extremes from Andersson as the shortest version (13'45'') to Monarda as the longest (19'18'') – a noticeable difference of 5'33'' between them.

FIGURE 5 – Durations per section in 15 commercial recordings (1993-2016) of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar

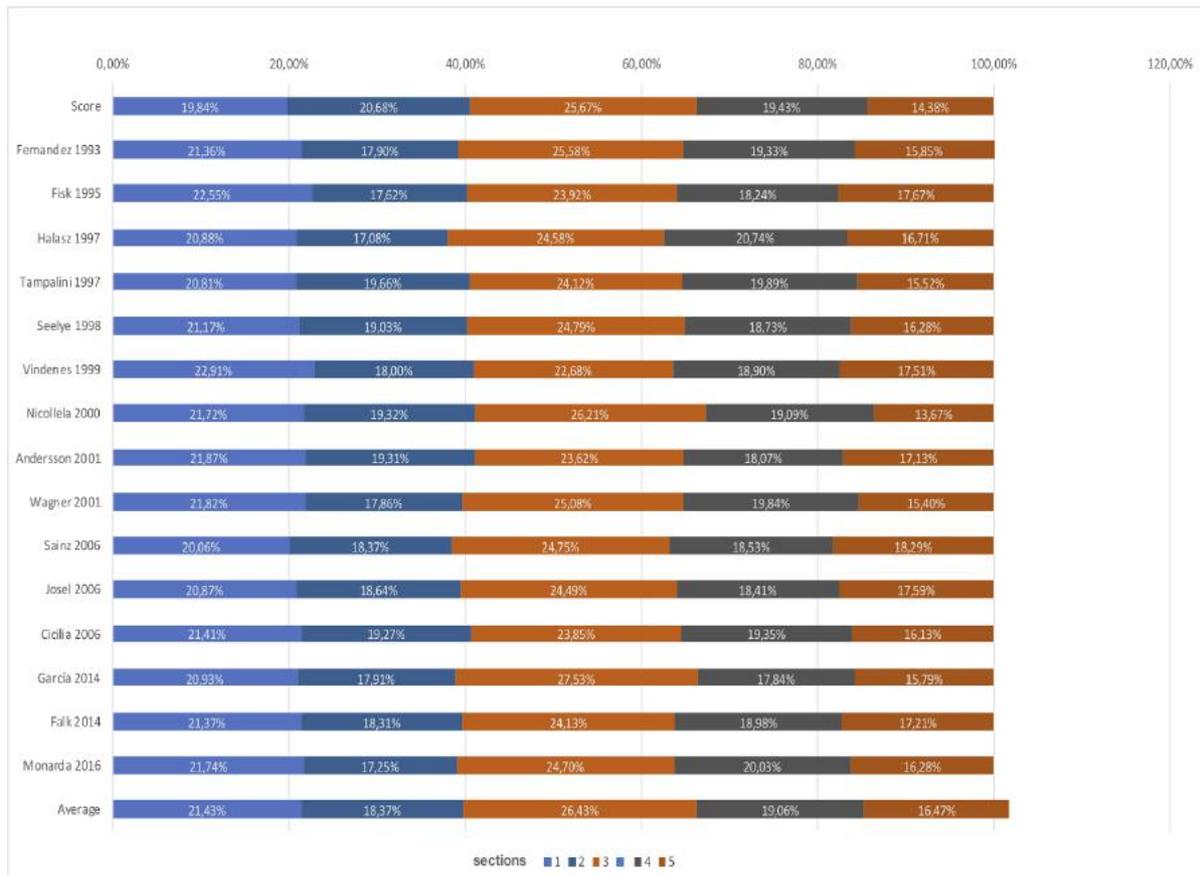


Only the three shortest performances (Andersson, Falk and Nicollella) have a total duration shorter than that of the score; most of the recordings are longer than the score, with Monarda, Josel and Tampalini being the longest. Nicollella and Fisk are the closest to the score's duration (under and over, respectively). Looking at the performances' durations by section, it is noticeable that in both Section 1 and Section 5 all performances are longer than the score, with the sole exception of Nicollella in section 5. Given that the main gestural material of Section 1 is L1/L2 and that of Section 5 is L2, an obvious conclusion is that L2 prompts similar responses in the performers, with longer durations in relation to notation. Let us recall that L2 refers, according to the composer, to vihuela music and Milán's "gallant style".<sup>14</sup> A historical source on vihuela performance practice indicates: "All that is in chords should be played slowly and all that is in running notes fast, and pause on each fermata"

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 5.

(MILÁN apud GRIFFITHS, 2005, p. 167).<sup>15</sup> Given that almost all the performances are marked by longer durations in the L2 sections, the obvious conclusion is that chords were consistently (by all the guitarists) played slower than the notation in these sections – a conclusion resonant with vihuela performance practice.

FIGURE 6 – Sectional ratios in 15 commercial recordings of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XI* for guitar



Moreover, the ratios of the sections – both from score and performances – have been calculated in order to account for the consistency of the performances' vis-a-vis the score's sectional ratios. Thus, again in contrast to the score, Sections 1 and 5 show similar results – that is, performances showed longer ratios than the score. However, Section 2 (based on L3) indicates that all performances show shorter ratios – that is, L3 (itself a vast collection of gestural patterns and playing techniques with a similarity based on linear texture and pitch) prompt for faster responses than notation. In Section 3

<sup>15</sup> “Todo lo que será consonancias tañerlas con el compás a espacio y todo lo que será redobles tañerlos con el compás apriessa, y parar de tañer en cada coronado un poco” (MILÁN apud GRIFFITHS, 2005, p. 167).

(based on L1/L3), the performances' tendency is for shorter ratios too (only Nicollela and García play longer ratios) and Section 4 (based on L3/L4) shows a similar tendency (only Halasz, Tampalini, Wagner and Monarda play longer ratios). Thus, on the large scale, Section 2 represents an energetic contrast in relation to the section preceding it, which is always faster; Sections 3 and 4 show a similar trend; and Section 5 is always slower than the notation.

The diachronic view of the performances – that is, based on sections – shows that deviations of performances in relation to the score (calculated as the difference between ratios in Figure 6) rank Nicollela, Tampalini and Fernández as more consistent with the score's ratios, while Andersson, Vindenes and Fisk deviate the most (see Table 3).

Moreover, a synchronic view of performed form – that is, based on the previously defined Layers – show that Seelye, Fernández and Sainz were more consistent with the notated time proportions, and Monarda, García and Andersson the most deviant from these (see Table 4). Given the recurrence of the same names at the extremes in this comparison of ratios, it could be broadly concluded that Fernández tends the most towards literalist performance while Andersson tends the most towards rhetorical performance (using Cook's distinction mentioned above); the question of such categorisations is more directly addressed in section 4 of this paper.

TABLE 3 – Deviation of the performances, by sections

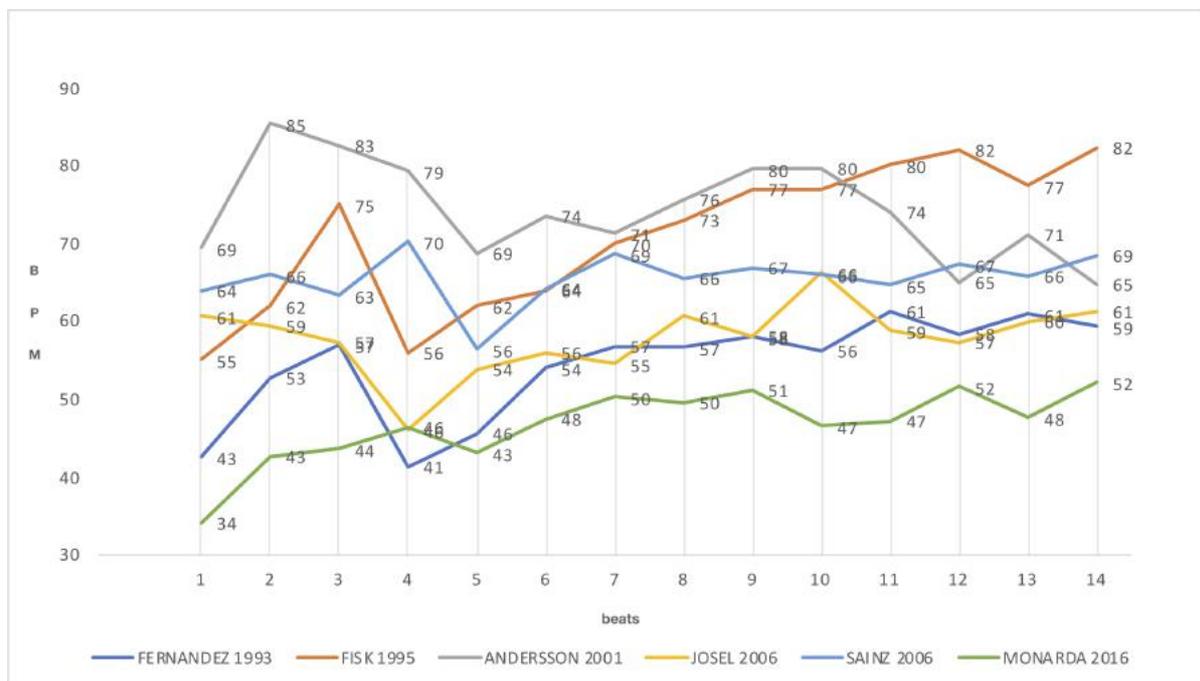
Sections	Fernandez 1993	Fisk 1995	Halasz 1997	Tampalini 1997	Seelye 1998	Vindenes 1999	Nicollella 2000	Andersson 2001	Wagner 2001	Cicilia 2006	Josel 2006	Sainz 2006	Falk 2014	García 2014	Monarda 2016
Section 1	1,51	2,7	1,04	0,97	1,32	3,06	1,88	2,03	1,98	1,56	1,03	0,22	1,53	1,09	1,9
Section 2	2,78	3,06	3,59	1,02	1,65	2,67	1,36	1,37	2,82	1,41	2,04	2,31	2,37	2,77	3,42
Section 3	0,09	1,75	1,08	1,55	0,88	2,99	0,54	2,05	0,59	1,82	1,18	0,92	1,54	1,86	0,97
Section 4	1,1	1,19	1,31	0,46	0,7	0,53	0,34	1,35	0,41	0,08	1,02	0,9	0,45	1,59	0,6
Section 5	1,47	3,29	2,33	1,13	1,9	3,12	0,72	2,75	1,02	1,74	3,21	3,9	2,83	1,41	1,89
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,95</b>	<b>11,99</b>	<b>9,35</b>	<b>5,13</b>	<b>6,45</b>	<b>12,38</b>	<b>4,84</b>	<b>9,55</b>	<b>6,82</b>	<b>6,61</b>	<b>8,47</b>	<b>8,25</b>	<b>8,72</b>	<b>8,72</b>	<b>8,78</b>

TABLE 4 – Deviation of the performances, by layers

Layers	Fernandez 1993	Fisk 1995	Halasz 1997	Tampalini 1997	Seelye 1998	Vindenes 1999	Nicollella 2000	Andersson 2001	Wagner 2001	Cicilia 2006	Josel 2006	Sainz 2006	García 2014	Falk 2014	Monarda 2016
Layer 1	2,88	3,35	3,33	4,44	2,68	3,92	4,89	4,76	5,58	4,73	2,61	3,35	3,92	5,19	3,33
Layer 2	4,87	5,2	4,57	4,6	3,07	6,59	3,55	7,06	4,48	4,66	4,68	4,52	3,82	6,11	5,9
Layer 3	6,45	7,8	8,49	7,09	5,27	7,4	6,94	8,23	7,73	8,26	5,64	5,93	12,47	4,84	10,22
Layer 4	1,21	1,35	1	2,14	1,47	1,97	0,98	2,32	2,03	2,37	1,56	1,83	1,56	0,56	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,41</b>	<b>17,69</b>	<b>17,4</b>	<b>18,26</b>	<b>12,49</b>	<b>19,88</b>	<b>16,36</b>	<b>22,37</b>	<b>19,81</b>	<b>20,01</b>	<b>14,49</b>	<b>15,63</b>	<b>21,77</b>	<b>16,71</b>	<b>21,45</b>

As for time at more local levels, the measurement of tempo fluctuations is likely to shed light on a performance's tendencies to different degrees of pulse stability/flexibility. A comparison of the segment that showcases L4, one of the very few passages where there is a regular succession of 14 crotchet beats,<sup>16</sup> is likely to illustrate different types of pulse in six selected performances.<sup>17</sup>

FIGURE 7 – Tempo fluctuation in six performances of Berio's *Sequenza XI*, page 9, systems 5-8, Layer 4. Vertical axis=beats per minute (BPM), horizontal axis=beats. Metronomic indication in the score is ♩=60



As seen in Fig.7, Sainz shows the most stable pulse followed by Fernández, as demonstrated by the "flatness" of the line. Monarda tends to an *accelerando* towards the end (this passage, whose metronomic indication is ♩=60, leads to a grace-note group – to be played as fast as possible – just after the 14th beat), whereas Fisk shows an evident *accelerando* (from 55 to 82 BPM). Moreover, Josel and especially Andersson show more irregular approaches to tempo. In terms of the three archetypes described above, pulse stability is a feature of an architectural approach (sustained by literalist performance); flexible pulse (in this case an *accelerando*) relates more to processual-time, and irregular pulse relates more to presentist-time.

A comparison of a longer passage, the first page of the score which includes the alternation of

<sup>16</sup> See the corresponding score fragment in Fig. 3, highlighted in yellow.

<sup>17</sup> Three "mainstream" and three "contemporary" performers.

L1, L2 and L3 materials, is likely to illustrate the rather different approaches to time and structure in extremely different versions such as those by Andersson and Monarda. Audio Example 1 presents Andersson's version of the passage – the corresponding score fragment can be seen at Fig. 4 – whose angular approach to tempo and concern with continuity can be clearly seen in Figure 8, a screenshot from the audio analysis program Sonic Visualiser (CANNAM et al, 2010). Monarda's account of the same passage – Audio Example 2, Figure 9 – displays, contrastingly, more spatialisation and isolation/individuation of the sound events. The differences between these two performances are particularly visible in the wave-forms and tempo curves: Andersson's wave-form and tempo curve are more angular, in contrast to the "flatness" of Monarda's tempo curve. Also, Monarda's dynamic curve shows a wider range of contrast, which is manifested in a longer time span: Monarda's rendition of the first page lasts 1'45", while Andersson's is 1'04".

FIGURE 8 – Tempo and dynamic curves in Andersson's (2001) recording of *Sequenza XI*: page 1, systems 1-6. The green line shows tempo fluctuation, the blue line indicates dynamics.  
[Vertical axis=volume in DB; horizontal axis=time]

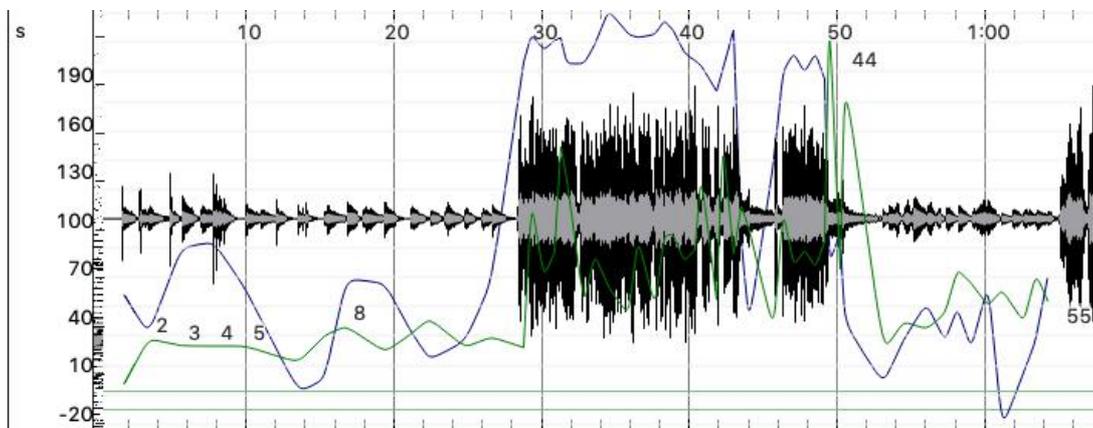
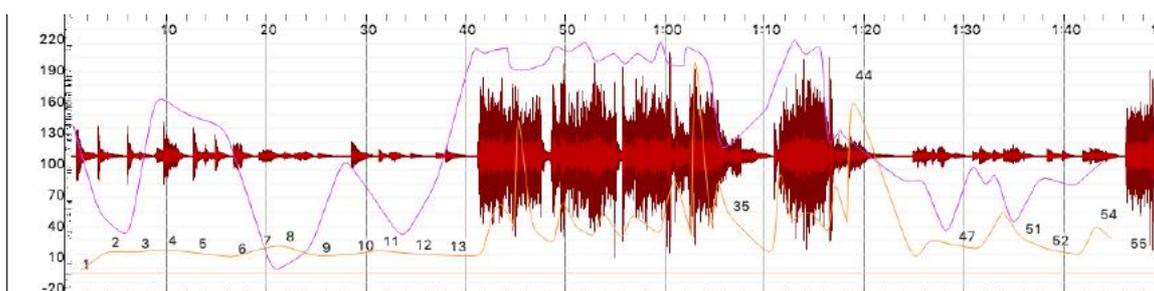


FIGURE 9 – Tempo and dynamic curves in Monarda's (2016) recording of *Sequenza XI*: page 1, systems 1-6. The orange line shows tempo fluctuation, the purple line indicates dynamics.  
[Vertical axis=volume in DB; horizontal axis=time]



#### 4. Categorisations

After several sessions of close listening, I have subjectively evaluated the interpretative decisions manifested in the recordings in order to relate them to the three time-experience archetypes summarised in section 1 of this paper: the architectural (spatialised time), the transformational (processual time) and the presentist (moment time). It could be argued that Utz's theorisation of processual time – the idea that each sound event is part of a large transformative chain over the duration of the entire work – reflects key aspects of so-called "mainstream" performance: specifically, the belief that the task of the performer, beyond exactitude, is "to make the work sound musical" (PACE, 2014, p.8). Dorottya Fabian further distinguishes a sub-type of mainstream performance, the Romantic-modernist approach, characterised by "phrasing that projects long melodic lines, aided by the ebb and flow of dynamics, rhythm that tends to be literal, and ponderous tempos" (2017, paragraph 2.3). In contrast, Utz's architectural model (sustained by literalist performance) is indeed based on exactitude – hence the preference for a regular pulse, marked contrasts, detailed articulation and fast tempos. Moreover, the presentist model is not based on exactitude, but in a different way neither is the transformational model: if the aim of moment time (with its concomitant preference for irregular tempos, short phrasing and marked contrasts) is to isolate the events in order to achieve a fragmentary time-experience, it is my claim that the presentist model, as performing style, is the only one that could be exclusively related to the performance practices of contemporary music.

Nevertheless, as previous work in Performance Studies has recognised, a perfect fit between particular performances and theoretical models is not to be expected. As Fabian, writing on Bach performance practice, comments:

Perhaps not entirely surprisingly, the examination of recordings showed that hardly any of them fits perfectly the theorized categories [...] Instead of representing distinct groups of styles, the performances occupy various overlapping positions in an imaginary space where the different dimensions of the composition are differentiated (FABIAN, 2017, paragraph 5.1).

The present study is no exception, and aims not at an absolute categorisation but to identify the main tendencies of each performance. My subjective evaluation of the available recordings of *Sequenza XI* leads me to the view that most of the performances fit best within the

transformation/processual-time model: meaning that continuity is prioritised over exactitude; dynamic contrasts are minimised; a sense of long phrasing is matched by a flexible pulse; and both rhythmic and fingering-based individuation of gestural material exhibits a primary concern with idiomaticity. Fisk, Halasz, Vindenes, Andersson, Wagner, Tampalini, Seelye, Nicolella and Falk fit within this category, although many of them show strong tendencies towards the architectural – especially Fisk, Tampalini, Seelye and Nicolella, given their concern for big contrasts and tendency to literalism. Andersson, on the other hand, shows tendencies toward presentist-time, given his tendency to irregular pulse and detailed articulation. The architectural model is better represented, I think, by Fernández, Sainz and García, given the concern for exactitude manifested in their tendency towards regular pulse, short phrasing and bigger dynamic contrasts. Moreover, the presentist model is better represented by Josel, Cicilia and Monarda, with their preference for slower tempos, irregular pulse and gestural differentiation tending to isolate the morphological events. Furthermore, it is this time-model that best represents the work of the guitarists whose profile attests to a degree of specialisation in contemporary music.

In general terms, it could be argued that Utz's theoretical models work well in connection with the performance of contemporary music, helping us to identify the main interpretative attitudes toward time by providing more operative models than Cook's distinction between structuralist and rhetorical performance. In particular relation to contemporary music, it is of benefit to distinguish Cook's rhetorical category further into the two subtypes that Utz introduces: the processual and the presentist approaches to time, concerned with continuity and fragmentarity, respectively, as two different kinds of temporal flexibility. However, Utz's assertions that the architectural model relates to fast tempos and that processual-time relates to slower tempos contradict many of the performing practices considered in this study, confirming how difficult it is to make a performance fit a theoretical model.

## **5. Performers' discourses**

Despite the significant number of documented performances of the guitar *Sequenza*, there are not many documented texts/discourses from the performers responsible for these recordings. In CD booklets, performers writing liner notes is more the exception than the rule. One important exception

is Magnus Andersson, who in a note accompanying his recording describes *Sequenza XI* as:

a difficult piece to play, in particular to articulate clearly the various rasgu[e]ado and strumming techniques asked for, which go far beyond what the classical guitarist is normally trained to do. But even more difficult than any mechanical question are the challenging interpretative problems that the *Sequenza XI* poses to the formal control of the musician. One has to balance the static quality of an essentially repetitive form with the innate directional energy of the figurative material which is, as it were, constantly reread as the piece proceeds. This generates a constant flux between the active surface and an undercurrent of melancholy. The mental energy needed to bridge this conflict is to me the true drama of the *Sequenza* (ANDERSSON, 2001, p.7).

These statements confirm Andersson's tendency to a processual-time approach: he is concerned with "directional energy" within a frame of repetitive form. It is interesting to note the way he distinguishes two levels, that interact in constant flux: an "active surface", which he renders with fast tempos and an impressive technical deployment (perhaps referring to L1, L3 and L4), and an undercurrent, which he regards as melancholic (perhaps L2).

Andrea Monarda has also written on *Sequenza XI* – he published a paper in the Italian journal devoted to the guitar, *Il Fronimo*. Here (2014, p. 19-24), Monarda mainly focuses on Berio's concepts of polyphony and gesture, comparing the guitar piece to other pieces of the *Sequenza* series under the perspective of gestural polyphony. Monarda's concerns with gestural clarity and layering are reflected, in my view, in his performance's long duration and in the isolation of morphological events through discontinuity between one event and the next, constituting a tendency towards presentist time.

Another view – one somewhat critical of the piece itself – is that of Seth Josel, who comments in a documented interview:

The piece is organic much in the same way that Beethoven's music is organic. I like to think of it as a spiral-like process. In my opinion, sorry for sounding pompous here, the work's basic material simply does not justify a 15-minute composing-out of that material. That's a highly subjective comment of course, but one that has been supported by some close friends of mine, composers of a high rank. My experience as both an audience member and performer has led me to believe that it's extremely difficult to capture and hold an audience's full attention during an airing of the work. This [is] in stark contrast to the trombone or viola *Sequenzas*. Regardless, it is a milestone indeed: that is, one of the most important composers of the 20th century composed a major work for the guitar. (JOSEL apud AGUZZI, 2016, p. 130)

These remarks on how difficult it is to capture and hold the attention of listeners during a performance of *Sequenza XI* make a central point. It could be presumed that Josel's performance, tending again towards presentist time, is a response to that very issue.<sup>18</sup>

## 6. Final considerations

If the conception of the work of music as an ideal object – and performance as its mere reproduction – is to be overcome, performance practice needs to take its place as part of the analytical discussion of notated works. I believe that existing analyses of *Sequenza XI* can be well complemented by the insights gained in this study, in which performed musical structures have been measured and discussed both synchronically (in terms of layers) and diachronically (through sectionalisation). Porcaro's layers have been evaluated in terms of the different interpretative responses they prompt as notated tasks, with particular attention paid to the temporal implications of the interpretative models identified. My conclusion is that rhetorical performance – considered as “a kind of semiotic practice in real time” (COOK, 2013, p. 125), whose temporal flexibilities can be further distinguished as either processual or presentist approaches to time – has dominated the performance practice of *Sequenza XI*; this seems natural given the particular qualities of the piece, as a sort of circular/montage form intending to make references to various guitar histories and styles. A further, albeit provisional, conclusion of this study is that there is a particular theorised performing style which is distinctive of contemporary music performance: the presentist approach to time. This latter claim would benefit from further exploration in future studies involving more works and instruments.

As for methodological considerations, both the quantification and comparison of notated and performed sound structures in terms of duration seem to illuminate some relations between notation and performance. Although there is some degree of uncertainty in the metronomic measurement of notation, this quantification enacts the notion of the score as an ideal object, which serves as an important reference when discussing performance. These methods, used in tandem with subjective judgement based on close listening, are capable of providing a wide range of insight in the discussion both of specific performances and of theoretical models of performance.

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<sup>18</sup> Also his preference for a long duration, which he shares with Monarda, makes both performances the two longest durations and the most representative cases of presentist time.

Despite the limitations of theoretical categorisations of performance styles – as observed, they rarely fit a given performance perfectly – I hope to have shown the utility of this approach in opening up new interpretative choices and in developing critical perspectives which may inform future performance practice. Despite the fact that *Sequenza XI* has already been extensively (and very well) performed, the most recent trends concerning long durations and presentist-time approaches – as well as approaches that could jump more freely between different styles – offer significant potential for yet further exploration.

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