Rhythmic accuracy in the new complexity repertoire; its assessment and role in performance practice with specific applications to the guitar

by

Grahame Klippel

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts
Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences

Supervisor: Professor Stephen Goss

Word count 76567

©Grahame Klippel 2014
Abstract

This thesis re-evaluates the arguments about rhythmic accuracy in new complexity. New complexity emerged during the 1980s, prompting composers, performers and analysts to reconsider their own ideas about the ontological status of the score, notational potentials as a compositional tool, compositional intention and the role of the performer as the mediator between the composer, the score and auditor – all under the general notion of the representation of complex phenomena. Richard Toop's paper, *Four Facets of 'The New Complexity'* (1988) was the beginning of a dialectic that has continued to provoke diverse opinions about the status of new complexity as a distinct genre.

The scores by the composers associated with new complexity presented challenges to the performers who had to find new methods of learning the works. I critique these for the benefit of performers new to the area.

One view is that a performance is only valid if it is compliant with every aspect of the score. By means of analysis of recordings of works from different instrumental families, I demonstrate that the interpretation of objective analysis to determine such compliance is problematic.

Roger Marsh's work on the identification of score with performance, *Heroic Motives. Roger Marsh Considers the Relation between Sign and Sound in 'Complex' Music* (1994) has been criticised. I show that, while there are flaws, Marsh's questions are still pertinent. My work builds on Marsh's in an attempt to reconcile the notions of accuracy to the score with fidelity to the composer's intentions.

Part of this project evaluates all these ideas through my own preparation of three pieces for the guitar by composers inextricably linked with new complexity. The result of this is a CD recording of these works. The case studies can be considered to be a resource for performers.
Declaration

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

Signature:

Date: 24th December 2014
I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Stephen Goss for all his help and encouragement over the course of this project. Steve has been unfailing in his enthusiasm for my work, offering numerous suggestions for its improvement.

My wife, Mandy, has been an enormous support, continually offering advice on presentation and technical help with the preparation of this work – she has kept me sane.

Professor James Saunders offered me a great deal of valuable advice in the early stages of this research, prompting me to pursue several lines of research and providing me with useful contacts. James has been a lifelong friend and his continued encouragement has been much appreciated.

Alan Thomas offered me a great deal of help early on. His practical knowledge of the contemporary guitar gave me a head start with my own research.

Nick Budd was of enormous help in producing my recordings and generally teaching me how to use iTunes. His recording skills are exceptional and any faults in the recordings are those of the performer – myself.

Finally, I must thank Judith Pain for proofreading this manuscript, picking up on numerous grammatical errors and generally making it more readable. I was extremely fortunate to have her legal mind and proofreading skills.

It goes without saying that any errors that remain are my own.