

Jazz Mind and Classical Hands -

Roland Dyens and his Style of Arranging and Performing

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ABSTRACT

This research project focuses on four of Roland Dyens' 26 Chansons Francaises: "Ne Me Quitte Pas", "Revoir Paris", "Avec le Temps" and "Plaisir d'Amour". It contains biographical detail, relevant recordings, existing literature on Dyens, and personal correspondence with Dyens and others. Analysis of these four song adaptations for classical guitar is undertaken in order to better understand Dyens' style of arranging and performing.

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INTRODUCTION

The works of the French composer and guitarist Roland Dyens, (1955-), form an important body of work for the 20th century classical guitar and reveal a composer with humour and sensitivity, who maintains a strong affinity to his musical community and heritage. Although sometimes very technically challenging, they are distinguished by an involvement with the heart of a musician. Dyens' exceptional performance style combined with his distinctive style of arranging for the guitar offers the opportunity to gain both a superior concept of performance, together with insight into the arranging and performing style of a musician not previously studied in depth.

This research project focuses on four songs chosen from the *26 Chansons Francaises* (1995), a collection of Dyens' solo guitar adaptations of well-known French songs. These four songs are *Ne Me Quitte Pas*, *Avec le Temps*, *Plaisir d'Amour*, and *Revoir Paris*. The reason why these four adaptations were chosen is that within the limits of this collection of Dyens' song adaptations for the classical guitar, they illustrate a good cross-section of styles and moods. These four adaptations will be analysed and presented as a microcosm of Dyens' style of arranging, which forms a substantial portion of his output.

To do this, Dyens' written scores and recordings of the four adaptations will be analysed and considered against the original arrangements that Dyens worked from, literature written about Dyens, other recordings of his playing, and related topics.

Additionally the researcher has corresponded briefly with Dyens, and his publicity agent Farinaz Agharabi. New York guitarist, composer, and Associate Professor for Guitar at Yale University, Ben Verdery, who knows Dyens personally, has been interviewed.

ROLAND DYENS - BIOGRAPHY

Roland Dyens was born in Tunisia in 1955. He began his study of the guitar at the age of nine with a guitar teacher named Robert Maison, and subsequently at the age of 13 went to study at the music school *l'Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris*. At this school he studied guitar with the Spanish-born French guitarist Alberto Ponce (1935-) and composition with French composer and conductor Désiré Dondeyne (1921-). He graduated from there in 1976 at the age of 21 with the *Licence de Concert de l'Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris* (by unanimous vote), and First Prize in Harmony, Counterpoint and Analysis.

Dyens' passion for South American music led in the early part of his career to his winning two awards which were offered in honour of the Brazilian composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959). These were the *Villa-Lobos Special Prize* at the *International Competition Citta di Alessandria in Italy* (date unknown), and the *Grand Prix du Disque de l'Académie Charles-Cros* (awarded during the celebration of the centenary of Villa-Lobos in 1987). Dyens won the latter for his CD *Heitor Villa-Lobos/Concerto Pour Guitare et Petit Orchestre* on which Dyens' original composition *Homage to Villa-Lobos* (1987) appears. At the age of 25 Dyens became a laureate of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, and at the age of 33 he was recognized as one of the "100 Best Living Guitarists" in all styles by the French magazine *Guitarist* (1988).

In 1997, at a Parisian jazz and rock school simply called *l'Ecole*, Dyens created a course in classical interpretation, arranging, harmony and improvisation. He stopped teaching there in 2000 when he was made Professor of Guitar at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris*, a position he still holds. Further to his responsibilities at the *Conservatoire*, Dyens is extremely active as an international guitarist. He has developed a significant reputation around the world as an exceptionally able and expressive musician. In addition to being a seasoned performer within his own country, Dyens regularly tours internationally. He has completed successful tours to many countries including the United States, the Middle-East, Indonesia, Scandinavia, Poland, and Brazil. Dyens is a regular, popular guest at many international festivals where he performs and holds master-classes. He has sat on numerous academic and guitar competition juries, makes regular radio and television appearances, and has featured in a

video called *Incontro con Roland Dyens (Encounter with Roland Dyens)*. He has featured on the covers of several major guitar magazines including *Les Cahiers de la Guitare* (France), *Gitarre & Laute* (Germany), *Guit'art* (Italy) and *Gitary Swiat* (Poland). Further to this, Dyens continues to compose, having released over 35 works for solo and ensemble guitar, guitar with string quartet, and guitar/s with orchestra. He has released 12 solo CDs, covering an eclectic mix ranging from self-styled jazz adaptations of songs such as *Over the Rainbow* and *I Love Paris*, through adaptations of more classical pieces such as Villa-Lobos' *Aria from Bachianas brasileiras no 5*, and Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante defunte*, to song adaptations such as the *26 Chansons Francaises*, and five George Brassens songs. Many of Dyens' original compositions feature alongside other composer's works - Villa Lobos, Eric Satie, Leo Brouwer, Francisco Torroba, Fernando Sor, Sylvius Leopold Weiss, and others. Dyens also appears on a number of composite CD's with various artists.

Dyens has defined several of his musical influences, one being Heitor Villa-Lobos, arguably Brazil's most important composer to date. Dyens considers him the incarnation of Brazilian music and culture, quoting Villa-Lobos as saying "The Map of Brazil is the Harmony Treaty from which I took my musical knowledge". (personal correspondence, 9 September 2005). Dyens also says that the Villa-Lobos' *Twelve Studies*, "represent for me the birth of modern guitar." (Dyens, 2000). Claude Debussy (1862-1918) is another major influence, for his "refinement, delicateness, modernism" and for being "so French". Dyens mourns that Debussy didn't write a single note for the guitar (personal correspondence, 9 September, 2005). A third influence is the Spanish guitarist and composer Fernando Sor (1778-1839), whom Dyens claims as his "ancestor". Dyens says that he feels so close to Sor's "so modern" approach to the guitar in his time, as exemplified in Sor's *Methodo Pour La Guitare* (1832) that "not a word written by him I could deny even today" (personal correspondence, 9 September, 2005). In fact Dyens says he includes a composition of Sor's in every concert he does - "for superstition perhaps." (Dyens, 2000).

Regarding Dyens' empathy for the music of the multi-faceted, multi-instrumentalist Brazilian musician and composer Egberto Gismonti, who shares Villa-Lobos' deep involvement with Brazilian music and culture, Dyens describes Gismonti's "flexibility, crossover (not 'collage' that I hate), perfect synthesis between ... Musica Popular Brasileira, Jazz and Contemporary music." Gismonti's rather unconventional,

ambidextrous approach to guitar-playing techniques arising from an early and self-taught involvement with the piano, helped to spark Dyens' own adventurousness regarding the wider tonal and technical possibilities of the guitar. This includes the use of scordatura. In fact Dyens was very emphatic about this similarity, saying "MY APPROACH OF GUITAR PLAYING IS THAT OF PIANO PLAYING" [sic] (personal correspondence, 9 September, 2005). Both musicians share the same ability to move easily between different musical styles. Of Gismonti, Dyens (1987, p. 26) says that he finds in him, "as in Michel Portal, Gerry Mulligan, Keith Jarrett and myself - a care for nuance coming from classical studies. I like this transposition of education, from classical culture to other forms of music."

On the subject of Dyens' more general influences, Verdery (personal communication, 17 September, 2005) believes that Dyens seems to yearn a little toward the freedoms of America and its jazz culture. The diverseness and freedom of Brazilian culture - the "flexibility" compared to the conventions of European culture - act as a draw card in the same way. Dyens (1987, p. 26) says:

My basic ideas on music have been corroborated by the way Brazilian musicians organise their concert life; there is no musical frontier, they all participate in all kinds of classical or popular music. ... I try to present my concerts in the same spirit, mixing music that I like with only one guideline: quality, not history.

From his Tunisian heritage, Dyens claims that he has inherited a strong ability to remember rhythms, but nothing about the "Arabic scales or whatever" (personal correspondence, 9 September, 2005).

THE FOUR ADAPTATIONS

The four adaptations to be studied are:

- *Plaisir d'Amour* ("Pleasure of Love")
- Music by Jean-Paul Martini 1706-1784),
- Words by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1755-1794)
- Adapted for solo guitar by Roland Dyens (*Chansons Francaises, Volume 2, 1995*), from French soprano Mado Robin's version (Orchestre de l'Association des Concerts Colonne/Jesus Etcheverry). The date of recording is unknown, but the CD itself, *Plaisir d'amour*, was digitally remastered and compiled in 1992.

- *Revoir Paris* ("To see Paris again")
- Words and music by Charles Trenet (1913-2001)
- Adapted for solo guitar by Roland Dyens (1995), from Trenet's version. The arrangement used for reference for the purposes of this research was one where Trenet sings with orchestra. However, because the introduction was a little different from Dyens' adaptation, this may have been a different arrangement from the one Dyens used. This is unconfirmed, Dyens not specifying which one he used.

- *Ne Me Quitte Pas* ("Don't Leave Me")
- Words and music by Jacques Brel (1929-1978)
- Adapted for solo guitar by Roland Dyens (1995) from Brel's version arranged for orchestra by Brel's favourite arranger François Rauber. Included in the orchestra are Ondes Martenot, piano, accordion, bass, and percussion. Brel sang this version at his farewell concert at the Paris *Olympia* in 1966.

- *Avec le Temps* ("With Time")
- Words by Leo Ferré, music by Leo Ferré and J. M. Defaye
- Adapted for solo guitar by Roland Dyens (1995), from Ferré's version. The arrangement that was used for reference for the purposes of this research was one where Ferré sings with piano and orchestra. It is similar, but of different length from Dyens' adaptation, suggesting he may have used a different arrangement. This is unconfirmed, Dyens not specifying which one he used.

Dyens' reveals the intentions behind his adaptations as follows (personal correspondence, 9 September, 2005):

My aim was to listen to the original versions of each of the songs (so not from any score- only by hearing) and to try to reconstitute [reproduce] the whole "esprit" and soul of their interpreters. Since it's impossible to gather all instrumental and musical elements and transfer them on a simple guitar, I obviously had to make a selection of all these elements when arranging them. Here the orchestral introduction, there the oboe solo etc ... I had to do sacrifices somehow. Sometimes, I was so keen [to be] faithful to the spirit of these songs that I even transcribed the singer's breathings ...

In adapting the songs, Dyens has, in spite of the inevitable pruning necessary in reducing the singer's and orchestra's lines on to a single guitar, sufficient competence with the whole workings of his art - harmony, rhythm, the treatment of melody, and the possibilities of the guitar - that he is able to create arrangements which manage to retain and even enhance the expressive power of the original. Dyens' adaptations show a composer with an exceptional understanding and sensitivity for both the source and his own instrument.

The Importance of Understanding the Source

The importance of understanding the background of a piece of music when embarking on the study of it is fundamental. When music is in a different idiom from what we are utterly familiar with, the process of understanding is more complex. Carlos Bonell, a well known English classical guitarist of Spanish descent, discusses this point. He comments that because of his Spanish background he has become particularly sensitive to the risks of playing music not of his own culture, and that it takes a great deal of work to achieve an understanding of its true character. For example when he hears someone play Spanish music, he maintains he can hear whether the performer understands the nuances of the music fully or not. (Bonell, 2005, p. 12):

The undercurrents are informed by assumptions about knowledge of folk music and rhythms and those very subtle things that happen in all folk music which feed through into so-called 'art music'. So if we approach this without that feeling, or without an awareness of that, we actually may play the notes correctly, and we might get somewhere close to the spirit of the interpretation, but it's only as close as being close enough to touch it but yet still 100 miles away.

A novice approaching the *Chanson Francaises*, especially if not French, will find that the idiom is complex and seductive. On the surface, the songs are appealing, both because of their catchy tunes and the sense of a life lived to its fullest, but also because of their quintessential French charm. At a deeper level, (in listening to the songs), a growing awareness of the portrayal of life as it truly is will embed an emotional hook in the innermost heart of most listeners. This awareness of the essence of the music takes it far beyond the charming tunes that the novice might at first take Dyens arrangements to be. Certainly the melodies are far more than the "innocuous little tunes" that are "buried under a weighty blanket of accompaniment ... almost succeed(ing) in obliterating them altogether." (Burley, 1996, p. 41).

The Importance of Good Translation

The words of a song are fundamental to its meaning, and this is where the importance of good translation comes in. A prime example of the pitfalls of bad translations is Ron McKuen's English translation (1969) of Brel's *Ne Me Quitte Pas*. McKuen's translation of the title alone serves to illustrate the liberties he took in his version. Literally translated, the title of *Ne Me Quitte Pas* is "Don't Leave Me". Ron McKuen changed it to *If You Go Away*. Brel's title is an imperative: desperate, pathetic, abject, raw; McKuen's is speculative, romantic, softened, almost heartwarming. Brel's song leaves the listener in no doubt that the lover is leaving; McKuen's version gives an impression that there is still hope. Rupert Smith, from *The Guardian Unlimited* (4 November, 2002), writes that:

.. some of those older artists [French Chanson singers] are known in the UK, if only in strange translations. The ... Brel translation, *If You Go Away*, watered down the desperate grovelling of his most famous song, *Ne Me Quitte Pas*, turning it into an MOR [middle of the road] standard that served all comers from Dusty Springfield to Frank Sinatra.

McKuen's version might be said to bear as little similarity to the original as the archetypal blockbuster movie of a good book. And yet, if the melody is played to a person whose main or only language is English, that person will most likely sing McKuen's version, with every confidence that the words have the intended meaning.

The consequence of performing a song arrangement without the words might, on a superficial level, be argued to be negligible. However, if the true abjectness of *Ne Me Quitte Pas*, for example, is not understood, then how can the true meaning be communicated through the performance of Dyens' adaptation? Similarly, if a performer ignores the words of the song *Revoir Paris*, that performer might easily think that "To-see Paris again" might mean to think nostalgically about it. In fact the song represents a person just happy to be there, strolling happily along in the sun on a lovely day in Paris, glad to be home in a beloved city. *Plaisir d'Amour* is also a song vulnerable to bad translations. Roy Jeffrie's translation might be a completely different song from Carl Deis' far more accurate one (see appendix). Regarding *Avec le Temps*, without the words, what might "With Time" mean? Should *Avec le Temps* be played with the regularity of a clock?

The words reveal a deeper meaning that is vital to an effective interpretation of the song. Due to cultural and language differences it is impossible for a translation to exactly mirror the meaning of its source, but the effort should be made to achieve something as close as possible to the original.

Finally, a clarification regarding terminology should be made here. The French word "*adaptation*" appears to be susceptible to misunderstanding. As might be noted in the quotations within this text, most English speaking people refer to Dyens' adaptations as "arrangements". A common English-speaker's understanding of the word "arrangement" is that a pre-existing melody is set to music, and that the role of the arranger is extremely free - having little of the original composition to constrain him (or her) other than the melody itself. This ambiguity can easily lead to exactly the same premise that the researcher initially approached the adaptations from: that the complex rhythms, the lovely harmonies, and the charming introductions, were solely Dyens' own. If the exact English equivalent is used, it is much easier to understand that Dyens has taken the original arrangement and *adapted* it, in all its intricate beauty, for the guitar.

DYEN'S COMPOSITIONAL AND PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

Colour

When asked what he thought the most important aspect of guitar technique was, Dyens (2000) replied:

As the son of a painter I would say the colour. The guitar is a very special instrument, it is not just six vibrating [strings], but also the way we make them vibrate. We have many possibilities: with the fingertip, with the finger, with both sides and so on and then the point where we touch the [string] and with which [angle]. They all are possible colours. We have millions of combinations for us to determine a colour which we need. It seems that not using this possibility of colours, not considering the importance, is like getting close to the guitar without really meeting the instrument.

Dyens' passion for tonal colour and expressiveness is displayed in the type and detail of performance indications he writes on his scores, and in the special effects he employs in performance. Mark Greenberg (2004, page unknown), writes in his review of Dyens' playing for the New York Classical Guitar Society Newsletter:

As far as tone-color, Dyens uses far more flesh than the average classical guitarist. ... he often plays even inner strings, even the 2nd string, with his thumb. ... He can also provide a wide spectrum of special effects. I guess we've all fooled around with the tight stretch of strings above the nut. The difference is that for Dyens, they are a regular stop. Presumably he can tell you their pitch.

The really distinctive aspect of Dyens' performance style, and similarly his performance indications in his scores, is the range and subtlety of his musical expression. In this, the influence of Debussy can be seen. Dyens uses sound colours like an Impressionist painter.

His use of tonal colour and expressiveness - his “alchemic tonal palette” (Panting, 2001, p. 36), is fundamental to his compositional and performance style. The huge emphasis Dyens places on musical expressiveness is reflected in his constant determination to capture the emotional power of the original song he sets.

As a result of this determination, Dyens' published scores are crammed with very detailed performance indications. His recordings are very faithful to the performance indications on these scores. These performance indications cover areas such as tempo and dynamic markings, articulation, melody notes, harmonics, and special effects/techniques which include written-out rubato in the melody line, portamento tremolo to imitate the electronic *Ondes Martenot*, flesh tones, glissandi, cross-string tremolos, and arpeggiated two-note chords around the melody line.

Illustration 1 highlights a small sample of the proliferation of Dyens' performance indications. The green defines tempo and dynamic markings, as well as articulation. The yellow designates melody notes, the blue, harmonics, and the purple identifies special effects or techniques.

The illustration shows a musical score for guitar with three systems of music. The first system is in 3/4 time and features a melody line with various articulations and dynamics. The second system is in 4/4 time and includes a section marked 'Doloroso' and 'rall poco a poco, poi molto'. The third system is in 3/4 time and ends with a 'FINE' marking. The score is annotated with various performance instructions and techniques, including 'A tpo', 'meno f', 'rit. pochiss.', 'Allarg. poco a poco', 'Doloroso', 'rall poco a poco, poi molto', 'Rall. molto', 'FINE', 'p. pulpe', and '(en se rapprochant progressivement de la touche)'. The annotations are color-coded: green for tempo and dynamic markings, yellow for melody notes, blue for harmonics, and purple for special effects or techniques.

Illustration 1: Avec le Temps (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 6), Colour.

Special Techniques

In the pursuit of creating the musical effects he seeks, Dyens has explored unconventional techniques. The challenge of trying to reproduce the original flavour of the French songs has necessitated a more lateral approach to technique than what he might have had otherwise. In his performance notes to “Ne Me Quitte Pas” prefacing the *Chansons Francaises* (Vol. 2, 1995) he explains:

Strangely or paradoxically, it is more through working on the 26 French songs than through my own compositions that I have made the ‘discovery’ of certain small technical figures, particularly in the right hand. The idea invokes the necessity, and this necessity, implying realisation on the instrument, sees this slight ‘deviation’ of technique (which is unimaginable for me in the strict sense) assimilated [and] then integrated into the repository of traditional techniques.

Dyens' motivation is not to show off or to display as many different techniques on his instrument as he can squeeze into a piece, but to use the full possibilities of the guitar to express the meaning of the original version he has used. In a similar way, his technical brilliance as a performer is never allowed to get in the way of his relationship with the audience and with the soul of the music itself. In this, perhaps he could truly be described as Sor's descendant; as Sor writes in the Preface to his *Method* of 1832: “Music, reasoning, and the preference which I give in general to results before a display of difficulty, constitute my whole secret.” (Sor, 1832, p. 5).

In his adaptation of “Ne Me Quitte Pas”, Dyens approximates the distinctive sound of the Ondes Martenot, by employing a portamento tremolo. This occurs at the start and finish of the adaptation. As may also be noted, Dyens uses scordatura in this piece. Scordatura is sometimes used by Dyens to increase the range of the guitar, to increase its sonority, and to allow Dyens to keep the adaptation in the original key as the original.

uses the right hand thumb on a higher string than the ring, middle and index¹ fingers of the right hand, which are alternating quickly to create the tremolo on the second string. He uses this awkward positioning because the thumb's² sound has more body and volume than the fingers can produce. This thumb sound brings out the melody well above the accompanying tremolo. Dyens uses this technique to bring out these high melody notes in the same way as the piano does in the original, with the *Ondes Martenot*, drifting untouched, beneath.

Illustration 5 shows the beginning of the trill section near the end of *Ne Me Quitte Pas*. This is tricky to play, and is further complicated by the necessity of playing the melody smoothly and more prominently than the trill. There are also some awkward stretches in the section which add to its difficulty. In the original, this trill is played by the piano and the *Ondes Martenot*, high above the rest of the orchestra. Dyens has retained this sense of 'suspension', which helps to express the lack of resolution, and the sure knowledge that there will be no 'happy ending', to this song. In the Preface to the *Chansons Francaises*, Dyens justifies his reason for the undeniable difficulty of this adaptation in particular:

I hope to have faithfully followed, in spirit and to the letter, the sumptuous arrangement of Francois Rauber, Brel's preferred arranger, [for *Ne Me Quitte Pas*] wherever the guitar has permitted me to so. This adaptation, it is true, makes these pages the most difficult technically in the collection, with certain formidable left hand extensions and continuous trills on two strings at the last reprise of the theme. Equally, effort is required to overcome the small and precise difficulty of the 'dissident' tremolo [see Illustration 4] which encompasses the last two bars of the introduction; here you must play the melody with the thumb on the first string and 'tremolo' simultaneously on the 2nd string.

1(hereafter referred to as "a", "m" and "i")

2(hereafter referred to as "p")

lunga *poco vib.* ③

X

pp *poco* *p* *mp* *poco*

④

pp *p* *mp* *poco*

mesures à $\frac{X}{4}$ = jouer les premiers groupes de trilles sur 2 cordes le plus vite possible et sans sentiment de pulsation ni précision numérique ;
 les 2^e et 3^e groupes de ces mesures seront eux joués de façon rigoureuse ainsi que les mesures à $\frac{3}{4}$.

Illustration 5: Ne Me Quitte Pas (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 24), Special Techniques

Dyens characteristically uses the flesh of the thumb on the right hand, “not always but often, just enough to make a real opposition with nail sound” (personal correspondence, 17 September, 2005). This is a technique where a player will pluck the string with the flesh of the thumb rather than the nail. This produces a distinctively mellow, melancholy tone, which causes the note to stand out. In Illustration 6, (h) indicates the use of thumb flesh. This example is preceded by a portamento, or glissando (slide), from the F to the G. Portamento is used by Dyens both in the way a singer might (as here), or as an instrumentalist’s stylish flourish (Illustration 13). Letter (i) shows where Dyens asks for notes to be left ringing, and where they should be stopped.

The image displays two staves of musical notation for the piece 'Avec le Temps' by Roland Dyens. The top staff begins with the instruction '(A tpo)' and contains several measures of music with annotations: '(p)', 'rit. pochiss.', 'A tpo XII', and 'Allarg. poco a poco'. Specific notes are circled in purple and labeled with 'pouce pulpe' and '(norm.)'. A circled note is labeled 'h'. The bottom staff starts with 'A tpo Doloroso' and includes annotations like 'mf (dolciss.)', 'pouce pulpe', 'mp', '(norm.)', and 'largamente'. A circled note is labeled 'i'. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Illustration 6: Avec le Temps (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 6), Special Techniques

Performance Indications

Dyens is very specific about how his adaptations should be played. For example, in Illustration 7, Dyens indicates not only detailed tempo and dynamic changes, articulation, and right and left-hand fingering, but also specifies where bass notes should be stopped with a left hand finger (a) “by touching string number 4 with the third finger [on the left hand]” to retain the clarity of the melodic line. This degree of detail is unusual in a classical guitar score.

The musical score for Illustration 7 is in 4/4 time. It features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The score includes various performance markings: dynamics such as *mf*, *p*, *m*, *i*, *m*, *mp*, and *poco*; tempo markings like *poco* and *allarg. poco*; and detailed fingering instructions including *a*, *m*, *i*, *m*, and *3*. A specific instruction '(en effleurant avec 3)' is circled and labeled with a box 'a' pointing to the left hand.

Illustration 7: Plaisir d'Amour (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 39), Performance Indications

Similarly, in Illustration 8, Dyens directs the performer to use the “i” finger repeatedly on the open third string (b). This creates a lightness and uniformity of tone which allows the melody to be heard more clearly than if the naturally heavier thumb was used in a more conventional fingering. In (c), the thumb's heaviness as well as its natural tonal difference becomes an advantage - hence Dyens' indication to use “p” brings out the important notes (circled) more clearly than the notes in the accompaniment.

The musical score for Illustration 8 is in 3/4 time. It features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The score includes various performance markings: dynamics such as *mf*, *(mf)*, *p*, and *mp*; tempo markings like *rit. poco*; and detailed fingering instructions including *i*, *a*, *m*, *i*, *m*, and *3*. A box labeled 'b' points to the 'i' finger instruction, and a box labeled 'c' points to the 'p' instruction.

Illustration 8: Plaisir d'Amour (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 39), Performance Indications

Illustration 9 highlights frequent and specific directions to arpeggiate chords. A bracket adjoining an arpeggiando marking indicates a chord is strummed with the thumb over adjoining strings, whereas an arpeggiando marking without brackets indicates chords which must be played by plucking with thumb and fingers because of un-played strings lying between plucked strings. In the original, this section opens out as the strings join in, and their sound, enhanced by vibrato and combined with the piano, creates a wavering effect which is effectively evoked by these arpeggiated chords.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Ne Me Quitte Pas" from "Chansons Francaises Volume 2" by Roland Dyens. The score is written in treble clef and includes various performance markings and fingerings. The music is divided into four systems, each containing several measures. The first system includes measures XXIV, XXV, and XXVI, with markings for *pp (eco)*, *mezza voce*, and *poco esitando*. The second system includes measures XII, XIX, and XII, with markings for *poco*, *mf*, and *dolciss.*. The third system includes measures III, XIX, and VII, with markings for *mp*, *sempre m.d.*, and *poco rit.*. The fourth system includes measures XII, XIX, and VII, with markings for *poco sfz (XII)*, *poco rit.*, *mp*, *poco sfz*, and *mf*. The score also includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, *mp*, *poco sfz*, and *dolciss.*, and performance directions like *mezza voce*, *poco esitando*, *poco rit.*, and *poco stringendo*. The score is numbered 26 329 H. L. at the bottom.

Illustration 9: Ne Me Quitte Pas (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 23), Performance Indications

In Illustration 10, (d) highlights a chord in which the lower two notes are played with the flesh of the thumb, together with the “a” finger on the right hand. The effect of this is to put a particular colour emphasis on the E, which is the melody note. This idea is used again in (e), this time with the normal thumb nail sound. In (f), Dyens directs the player to slide a left-hand finger up the sixth string prior to playing the open fifth string, to lead the ear to the A. Letter (g) is one of several places in which Dyens directs the player to stop a bass note so that it doesn't interfere with the next bass note.

à Paul MINDY

AVEC LE TEMPS

Paroles de Léo FERRÉ
Musique de Léo FERRÉ
et J. M. DEFAYE
Adaptation pour guitare
Roland DYENS

Molto lento e mesto (♩ = 105/110)

a m i (sempre)

mp (pouce pulvé)

p (norm.)

mp (chant toujours en dehors mais sans force)

pp rit. pochiss. (i)

poco

(A tpo)

a m i a m i

mp *mf* largamente

p (poco)

p (i)

p

Illustration 10: Avec le Temps (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 6), Performance Indications

Harmonics

Dyens uses harmonics frequently and for several reasons. Illustration 11 shows where he has used them to mimic the way the piano in the original song plays the bridge passage an octave higher than the rest of the accompaniment. The harmonics add poignancy and grace to a musical idea which would, if fretted normally, have less effect. The second example displays the use of individual harmonics to add lightness, colour and sustain to an accompanying arpeggio. These notes would be impossible to sustain if the notes had to be held with the left hand, so the idea works doubly well - both in adding colour and style, as well as adding facility to the arrangement.

breve (A tpo) rit. poco a poco POCO PIÙ MOSSO
 rit. poco a poco
 (pp) (mp) p
 rit. poco a poco
 XXIV XXV XXVI
 XIV (4) pp (eco) lunga
 poco esitando A tpo (come prima) Φ V
 mezza voce p poco
 XII (3) poco mf
 Φ III XIX a m i XII poco stringendo
 mp dolce
 A tpo Calmato (sempre m.d.) poco rit. A tpo
 poco sfz (XII) poco rit. mp poco sfz mf

26 329 H. L.

Illustration 11: Ne Me Quitte Pas (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 23), Harmonics

Illustration 12 shows two individual harmonics dropped into the accompaniment. Because of their positioning in relation to the other notes being played they are able to sound clearly without any other notes stopping them. This extra facility is of particular benefit while trying to make six strings take on the double role of voice and accompaniment. The harmonics also add tonal colour.

Illustration 12: Avec le Temps (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 6), Harmonics

Illustration 13 features harmonics placed simply for colour. In the original, these notes were played by flutes, and Dyens' use of harmonics mimics the colour change. The glissando chords before and after the harmonics give a suave and lighthearted effect in keeping with the style of the song.

Illustration 13: Revoir Paris (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 8), Harmonics

The harmonics in Illustration 14 are a different way of playing the melody.

Poco più mosso e mezza voce
 (Trio) Φ V (harmoniques très claires)
 XX
 XIX
 rit. pochiss. A tpo Φ V
 poco
 allarg. poco A tpo Animando
 Φ I
 mp mf

Illustration 14: Plaisir d'Amour (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 39), Harmonics

Melody

Dyens is never afraid to vary the placement of the melody within the accompaniment, but does not move it around without good reason. In his treatment of melody, Dyens endeavours as much as possible to transcribe the singer's vocal expression, both by using portamento, as well as by manipulating the rhythm as the singer did in the original interpretation. This enhances the emotional power of the adaptation in the same way as it enhanced the earlier song. The melody line is also moved around in relation to the accompaniment - above, below, and within - to add interest, define different sections, and in some cases to evoke the nuances of the singer's original interpretation. Combined with the use of harmonics in both the melody and as individual notes within the accompaniment, this increases the music's intricacy and subtlety. It also helps to reduce the impact of the guitar's comparatively narrow range.

When the particular placement of the melody is characteristic of the arrangement, Dyens takes care to keep it in the same place. For example, this illustration shows the beginning of the tremolo section near the end of *Ne Me Quitte Pas*, which aims to reproduce Rauber's arrangement for Brel's song with its piano trill. The melody, as in Rauber's arrangement, sits under the trill.

The illustration shows a musical score for the song "Ne Me Quitte Pas". It consists of two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the guitar accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a long note marked "lunga" and "poco vib." (poco vibrato). This is followed by a series of notes, some marked with a circled 3, and then a trill. The lyrics "mia mia mia mia mia" are written above the notes, and "mia mi" is written above the trill. The guitar accompaniment features a complex tremolo pattern, with various dynamics such as *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, and articulations like "poco". The score includes fingerings, breath marks, and other musical notations.

Illustration 15: *Ne Me Quitte Pas* (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 24), Melody

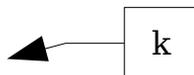
and resignation. The melody for *Avec le Temps* reflects this with its narrow range and falling shape, and Dyens has been careful to keep it simple so as not to diffuse its unpretentious power.

Illustration 17 shows the melody for *Ne Me Quitte Pas* moving from the top of the accompaniment into the middle. This is an example of Dyens using the position of the melody within the accompaniment to define different verses or sections within the song (see arrow). The *poco vib[rato]* markings indicate notes which Dyens wishes the performer to sustain to increase the emotional intensity of the song.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the guitar, labeled C III, C II, and C V. Each system shows a melody line and an accompaniment line. The first system (C III) has a melody on a high register with markings like 'dolciss.', 'poco vib.', and 'poco affretando'. The second system (C II) shows the melody moving to a middle register with 'poco vib.' and '(poco) rit pochiss. (A tpo)'. The third system (C V) shows the melody on a lower register with 'port. molto espress.', 'rall. poco a poco', and 'largamente'. An arrow points from the first system to the second, indicating the transition of the melody's position.

Illustration 17: *Ne Me Quitte Pas* (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 22), Melody

Illustration 18, (k) marks the beginning of a tremolo treatment of the melody. Apart from the textural variation and sectional definition that this provides, Dyens has used this effect to evoke the shimmer of French singer Mado Robin's exceptionally high voice. Letter (l) marks the beginning of where the melody drops into the bass for the next section, - with thumb flesh for extra colour at (m) for good measure.



38

(Couplet)

molto lirico

port. (trem.)

p - (*)

p *dolce* *mf* *molto*

rit. pochiss. A tpo

mp *p sub.* *mp*

mezza voce

mp *molto* *mp dolce* *p*

rit. pochiss.

poco *poco* *dolce*

(m. g. seule)

A tpo

allarg. poco a poco *Largamente* *Calmato*

p *dolcissimo*

allarg. poco *A tpo* *rit. pochiss.*

pulpe *dolcissimo*

26 329 H.L.

l

m

Illustration 18: Plaisir d'Amour (Chansons Francaises Volume 2 by Roland Dyens, p. 38), Melody

Rhythm

When I compose, I am no longer a guitar player, and thanks to my musical

studies I can write with a pencil, and eraser, and paper. That's exalting! The instrument alone does not offer you such an opportunity; ... This may be the reason why my music is so difficult to play; I do not write things which I could have thought of if I had a guitar in my arms while composing. I arrange my music, I adapt it; but I let it be the number one, before the instrument.” (Dyens, 1987, p. 26).

Dyens' unflagging determination to remain faithful to the original composition means that, despite the acknowledged technical challenges caused by this practice, the separate parts of voice and accompaniment are still individually recognisable within the solo guitar adaptation. Paul Fowles (1999, p. 40) says wryly that “as anyone who has ever attempted a Dyens arrangement will know, he [Dyens] is an outstanding guitarist who makes full use of his considerable skills.” Dyens' harmonically and rhythmically astute fusion of the vocal and accompanying lines into a single instrumental part creates rhythmic intricacies which in turn add to the polyphonic nature of his adaptations. The complexity of these song adaptations creates a sense of more than one guitar playing at once.

Dyens' careful treatment of rhythm, as highlighted in Illustration 19, is also displayed here in Illustration 20. The buoyant, carefree mood of *Revoir Paris* is ably communicated with this appropriately jaunty rhythmic accompaniment. Glissandos, accents and subtle dynamics add to its lighthearted character.

The musical score for 'Revoir Paris' is presented in two systems. The first system features a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a melodic line marked 'm' and 'i' with a glissando, followed by a bass line with a 'molto' marking. Dynamics include 'ff' and 'mf'. The second system continues the bass line with a 'C II (poco)' marking and includes asterisks (*) under some notes. The tempo is marked 'Più animato'.

Illustration 20: *Revoir Paris* (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 9), Rhythm

Illustration 21 shows the consequence of combining a song in duple time against an accompaniment in triple time, with its resultant rhythmically intriguing complexity.

The musical score for 'Avec le Temps' is presented in three systems. The first system is in 3/8 time, marked 'Molto lento e mesto' with a tempo of 105/110. It features a melodic line with 'a m i' lyrics and a bass line with 'mp' dynamics and 'pouce pulpé' instruction. The second system continues the melodic line with 'pp' dynamics and 'rit. pochiss.' marking. The third system shows a change to 9/8 time, marked '(A tpo)' and 'largamente', with 'mp' and 'mf' dynamics. The score includes various guitar techniques like arpeggios and fingerings, and is titled 'AVEC LE TEMPS' by Paul MINDY, with lyrics by Léo FERRÉ and music by Léo FERRÉ and J. M. DEFAYE.

Illustration 21: *Avec le Temps* (*Chansons Francaises Volume 2* by Roland Dyens, p. 9), Rhythm

FINDINGS

The characteristic compositional aspects of the 26 *Chansons Francaises* which form the core of this study, unsurprisingly, are not unique within Dyens' musical output. The same thoughtful, aesthetic approach which is displayed in Dyens' careful attention to the original French song arrangements, as well as his use of the full range of the guitar's most colourful and sonorous possibilities, is characteristic of his typical style of arranging and performing. Dyens is a musician primarily motivated by emotional expression and sentimentality, not by technical prowess. His formidable technique is the vehicle with which he expresses the music, not an end in itself.

Dyens as a Performer

Dyens' performances are an entity in themselves: he creates them for the moment. His comment about the concert being like flying an aeroplane - "I am the pilot and I must direct the flight to the end" - (Dyens, 2000), describes his creative, directive approach to performing. This, combined with his ability to relate emotionally to the audience, as well as his exceptional technique, makes him a formidable performer. Greenberg (2004, page unknown) writes "Though subtle and refined, Dyens is a showy and exciting performer, who can (and does) get his audience to its feet."

Dyens' informal programming style, which includes beginning his concerts with an improvisation, only deciding shortly before a concert what he will play, and not providing a set written programme, provides a personal touch which touches the hearts of his audiences. Dyens is characteristically definite in expressing his opinion of the current fashion of not improvising in classical concerts, which he "deplores". (Dyens, 1987, p. 24). He explains the reason for his habit of improvising, saying "I have to go to the deepest part of myself immediately, and this calms me. In this way, I take up with ancient musicians again, I 'prelude'; this is a tradition"¹ (1987, p. 24). Dyens' practice of starting concerts - and in fact warming up backstage with an improvisation - also keeps his playing fresh and receptive to creative thinking. These "back-stage warm-ups" have been known to evolve into published compositions, such as his piece *Valse des Loges* (date unknown). He describes its evolution as follows (video interview transcription,

¹Referring to the old lutenist's practice of improvising, especially the Prelude before the Suite

2000, p. 5) :

Valse des Loges ... is born from my habit of arriving so early before the beginning of the concert, at least three hours. Just as an animal, a cat ... I need to feel the things ... It happened also that in the dressing rooms I have ideas of new pieces, sometimes I write the first bars; so one day has come out the beginning of this waltz in a dressing room, then another concert, another dressing room, another piece of the waltz. Then I impose myself of continuing the composition of this waltz only in the dressing rooms and one day I finish it two hours before going on stage and in that concert I played for the first time this piece, the Waltz of the dressing rooms.

Dyens (1987, p. 24) expresses some of his profound empathy with jazz when describing his approach to improvising:

Improvising at the guitar is not easy; it's even a challenge, because knowledge of the instrument must go beyond classical interpretation. For instance, you have to think of harmony, as in jazz, but without forgetting to keep classical writing density, whereas in jazz music, musicians play linear because they are sustained.

If there is one limitation that Dyens appears, consciously or unconsciously, to be subject to, it is the use of the opportunities on the guitar beyond what he can do with the six strings in their natural state. He uses percussion on the body of the guitar very rarely, and then quite subtly. His adaptation of Dizzy Gillespie's *A Night in Tunisia* (date unknown) is one of the few examples of Dyens striking the body of the guitar. Rasqueado is another technique he uses sparingly. There is no evidence of pre-preparing the guitar, for example, with credit cards, 'blu-tack', or any other alien devices. Possibly this is a further expression of Dyens' strong sense of aesthetics - not to meddle with something already so beautiful. He is a sensitive player, who seems more interested in exploring the sonorous and expressive possibilities of the guitar than in experimenting with how he can change it. Greenberg (2004, page unknown) describes Dyens' playing as follows:

... compared to other guitarists, he [Dyens] has a far greater range of dynamics and tone-color. Dyens never gets very loud--I imagine harsh

sounds make him wince--but when he plays softly, he gets to the threshold of audibility, and then some. There are times when he may or may not be producing sound. Only he knows, and it is very much part of his sense of humor not to let you in on the secret.

There might be said to be a contradiction between the flexibility of Dyens' performances, and the almost possessive detail he puts into the performance directions of his scores. Both of these things, however, point to a musician with exceptionally high standards and a profound sense of creativity, and therefore offer no conflict. If an analogy is used, a man might take care to have the best quality clothes in his wardrobe, but won't decide what to wear until a very short time before he goes out. Dyens puts his whole heart into the expression of the "esprit" of his adaptations, and expects others to do the same. He also is determined to retain the creative impetus in concert. To continue the analogy, whatever 'suit' Dyens chooses as he prepares for his performance will still be one of the highest quality, with the greatest attention to detail.

Dyens as an Arranger

Dyens' thoughtful approach is reflected in his comments about the process of composing. Dyens says that he originally thought that those who attended counterpoint, harmony and fugue courses would, because of their knowledge, automatically become composers. Later he realised that this was not the case, saying that he believes a composer also needs, apart from the "creative impetus", the "culture, [of other musicians] without which one may find himself in a deadlock, without any spiritual independence, stuck by the limits of his instrument or his fingers". (Dyens, 1987, p. 26).

Dyens has a strong sense of musical context. His strength within the guitar community is enhanced because he creates music that can be sung to, and that people can relate to emotionally. In the case of the *26 Chansons Francaises*, the songs are well-known and loved - at least in France. This adds significantly to their appeal, and to the willingness of guitarists to persevere with technical challenges in order to reproduce something they know to be emotionally powerful.

Dyens is described as a man with a definite sense of what is aesthetically pleasing. Greenberg (2004, page unknown) quotes an example of this:

On this subject of pitch, Dyens is (I hope he will forgive me for saying so) a bit of a crank. If your concentration is not good, you do not want to play for him in a master class. He will re tune your guitar, even if you are in the middle of the Bach Chaconne. Even if you are in the middle of the runs in the Bach Chaconne, he will re tune your guitar. Not that he is a mean person; he is extremely warm and kind. I simply think he cannot bear to hear an out-of-tune guitar, and his ear demands that he administer an instant remedy.

Dyens is described as looking back in time as well as looking forward. (Verdery, interview, 17 September, 2005). This is a frequently expressed opinion regarding Dyens, and is an aspect of him which helps to explain his exceptional care in the re-creation of the soul of an original composition when adapting it for guitar. Verdery says Dyens is quite sentimental, seeming to be more drawn to the sensitivity of melody and harmony of the earlier part of the 20th century than more edgy music or even Rock and Roll. "It [Dyens' music] always has a more poetic edge to it" (Verdery, interview, 17 September, 2005). Greenberg (2004, page unknown) said that Dyens had once told him that he doesn't like photography because he "likes to live in the present" and elaborates, saying "the logical extension of Dyens' thinking is that to live in the present, one must live in the past and future. Of this, he is in fact a master."

Summary

Dyens is a composer of sensitivity and feeling who has developed his own distinctive style of performing and arranging. He uses tonal colour to a greater than usual degree, and is very specific and detailed in his music scores regarding the music's expressive elements. A strong affinity with jazz includes his profound involvement with improvisation, which has an impact both on his performances and his compositions. Dyens' leaning towards idiomatic music of the first half of the 20th century sits cohesively with his style, which might be described more as rich, resonant, sonorous, warm, and romantic than edgy or clever - although his technical brilliance is acknowledged. Dyens' passion for music from last century does not wholly define him however. Although his arrangements focus on music from the past, his original works sit easily within the steadily increasing accumulation of compositions contributed by the contemporary classical guitarist/composer.

Cooper (1998, page unknown), in his ineffable style, sums Dyens up:

My ears which have lived for 60 years among the glories of Mozart, Haydn, Bach and Schubert, confess themselves seduced by the Gallic charm. I hesitate to call it magic: mesmerism, maybe. My judgment is therefore unreliable, and I beg readers to take notice of the fact. It is a personal response to a very personal style, and I must admit it even if I do not feel like apologising for it. Dyens is a one-off, an original in the great mold, an improviser who shows one way forward while he reminds you of the way back, a charmer, a creator of unusual timbres, a spellbinder.

The final word, however, comes from Dyens (1998) himself:

The challenge of the arrangement for the guitar is the restitution of the work's original essence across the space, forcibly restrained, of the six strings of the instrument. It is also a perpetual confrontation with the technical limits of the guitar. That requires on the part of the artisan a fine geographical acquaintance with his instrument, a solid harmonic knowledge and, above all, the concern for being in permanent contact with the spirit of the work.

The arranger metamorphoses the limits and weaknesses encountered into so many new qualities, he transforms, he enriches the work in a new light, sometimes unexpected. It is in this step that the *art of the arrangement* reveals itself.

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(1995, page not stated)

Trans. Julie Coulson

***Ne me quitte pas* (A minor)**

It would have been unpardonable in two collections to overlook what is possibly the greatest of French songs. A masterpiece and unqualified success, words fail to convey the emotion that this song evokes in me. The different versions that have been made (Nina Simone, etc) would, in my opinion, have been better inspired to remain work in progress despite their objective quality. What concerns me, not being recognized for my singing ability - at least officially - is that I don't have the feeling of having been given here a game of counter offer, a battle lost however from the start. What I have done with this song is simply the creative work of a musician looking at the song musically and instrumentally, nothing more. I hope to have faithfully followed, in spirit and to the letter, the sumptuous arrangement of Francois Rauber, Brel's preferred arranger, wherever the guitar has permitted me to so. This adaptation, it is true, makes these pages the most difficult technically in the collection, with certain formidable left hand extensions and continuous trills on two strings at the last reprise of the theme. Equally, effort is required to overcome the small and precise difficulty of the 'dissident' tremolo which encompasses the last two bars of the introduction; here you must play the melody with the thumb on the first string and 'tremolo' simultaneously on the 2nd string. Strangely or paradoxically, it is more through working on the 26 French songs than through my own compositions that I have made the 'discovery' of certain small technical figures, particularly in the right hand. The idea invokes the necessity and the necessity, implying realisation on the instrument, sees this slight 'deviation' of technique (which is unimaginable for me in the strict sense) assimilated then integrated into the repository of traditional techniques. This will be the same for you, naturally, once you have attained mastery of the tremolo. This chapter on 'technico-guitaristic Darwinism' being closed, all that remains is for me to wish you 'bon appetit' in the study of this difficult but gratifying adaptation.

***Avec le temps*: (A minor; original key: B flat minor)**

The difficulty in performing this great song arises from the complexity of the arrangement, which seeks to merge the constant arpeggio movement of the piano part

with the free, ballad-like voice of Leo Ferré. The result is a delicate alchemy, sometimes introducing rhythms of four against three, whose lines are not always clearly evident in the guitar realization. From the beginning to the end, the tempo should never leave the lowest numbers on the metronome, as if it were ensnared by the quasi-excessive slowness of passing time. The gamble in this uncompromising version of *Avec le temps* is found in the overarching idea of tranquility, of a song played very legato and in filigree over a quiet harmony. Your task is to convey the illusion of ease in the face of technical 'adversity'.

Revoir Paris (A major; original key: B flat frankly low)

In the preceding edition, I admitted to having a weakness for *Un jour tu verras*. In this edition, *Revoir Paris* is my favourite. Without sacrificing anything, it is also one of the most accessible songs technically - none of its difficulties is insurmountable. Ensure at the very least that the harmony, particularly up to the couplet [refrain], is played with delicate colours and that they never encroach on the longer notes of the melody.