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Stepan Rak's "Tracy"(1994): A Transcription and Commentary

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Part 1

Introduction

In my opinion the Czech guitarist-composer Stepan Rak is one of the pioneers in the evolution of solo guitar techniques and guitar composition from the late 20th century to the 21st century. This is also the view of many guitarists, writers, and critics of guitar music, some of whom are referenced in this report. Like myself, this view is based on an experience of his recitals and recordings, and personal interviews. It remains to be seen just how significant Rak's contributions are, in the context of new compositions generally. This report will outline the overall significance of Rak as an artist, and will attempt to narrow down the specific techniques that characterise Rak's innovation.

In Part 1 I provide a brief overview of Rak's biography, a discussion of three main thrusts in Rak's oeuvre identified by Bosman (1985), a general description of the composition which have transcribed, *Tracy,* and a commentary on Rak's compositional process. This provides the context for the explanation of techniques used in *Tracy* and the transcription itself, which follows in Part 2.

The impression Rak has made on audiences is reflected in the following sentiments:

> "Through his recitals and recordings he has changed our awareness of the instruments potential" (Wade 1989, CD Sleeve Notes).

> "He is one of the guitars great originals: a total entertainer" (Cooper 1996, 11).

> "Stepan Rak is one of the guitar's most compelling and original performers" (Fowles 1996a, 47).

> "[Stepan Rak]… has widened the horizon's of the guitars possibilities" (Wade 1989, CD Sleeve Notes).

The central component of Part 2, my transcription of Rak's composition *Tracy* (1994), demonstrates how certain guitar techniques are used in a musical and programmatic context. This is the second transcription I have made of Rak's compositions. The first transcription was of *Romance Ontario* (1990), which I performed for Rak during a masterclass he gave in South Africa in 1998. It was after hearing this that Rak approached me to transcribe more of his music, making particular reference to the third movement of *Terra Australis*: *Tracy*. He mentioned that while some of the other movements have been transcribed, no one had attempted to transcribe *Tracy* since it was the most challenging movement of the entire composition, and the largest.

One of the characteristics of Rak's music is that it stretches the sonic capabilities of the guitar. *Tracy* in particular makes more demands on the guitar and guitarist than any previous works by Rak. The work is also unlike other compositions by Rak in that it completely abandons the conventional plucked melodic and harmonic voice of the guitar for an assortment of tremolo techniques. It is however unlike conventional tremolo writing for the guitar, which usually sticks to a continuous p,a,m,i pattern. *Tracy* is, I argue, a culmination of the composer's desire to create sustained, quasi-orchestral textures on the guitar through the use of extended tremolo techniques.

This compositional idea is complimented by the composer's own account of his development of new tremolo techniques. These techniques are to be found in some of Rak's other compositions, such as *Balalaika* (1990), *Remembering Prague* (1988), *First Love* (1988), and *Hiroshima* (1988). In these works Rak uses tremolo only in certain sections to stretch a dynamic climax or create other dramatic effects. In contrast, *Tracy* uses tremolo techniques exclusively, to portray the extreme character of a devastating cyclone. Since the technique stretches the volume and density of the guitar's sound, Rak normally reserves it for tremendous climaxes in the appropriate context. It is used in *First Love*, for example, to intensify the tragic and cathartic subject of this piece, and in a

different context, *Balalaika*, to conjure the sound of a Balalaika orchestra. It is Rak's descriptive, symphonic approach, I believe, that has given rise to works of such magnitude, and inspired the tremolo techniques he has invented. He draws on a variety of styles and musical periods in his compositions, and in this report I will identify some of the main thrusts behind his oeuvre.

My first encounter with Rak's music was compelling. I received a recording from my teacher David Hewitt in response to my request for modern classical guitar music. It was *Mikulka Plays East European Guitar Music by Koshkin and Rak* (Bis CD - 240), on which I heard: 'Farewell Finland' and 'Romance'. I was immediately struck by the expansiveness of Rak's sound canvas, his ability to sustain and develop motives and themes on a large scale without the listener losing interest. The emphasis on melody is further illustrated in 'Romance'. Here Rak shows appreciation for a more traditional homophonic texture on the guitar with its haunting cantabile melody.

Later I was introduced to recordings of Rak playing his own music on the album *Dedications* (Nimbus, 1990, NI 5239 CD), where he pays tribute to people as diverse as Glen Gould and Elvis Presley; and then *The Guitar of Stepan Rak* (Nimbus, 1989, NI 5177 CD), which contained 'The Czech Fairytales' and 'Voces de Profudis'. I had never before heard solo guitar music that was capable of capturing a dramatic narrative on this scale. I was also astonished by the range of unconventional techniques that Rak employed, and their efficacy in conveying the dramatic and emotional narrative. These included extended tremolos, multi-string tremolos, brushing the strings with fingers, and using a teaspoon. I later encountered Rak's larger programmatic works such as 'Hiroshima' in which Rak portrays the historic atomic bomb explosion in 1945, complete with sound effects of the devastation, and 'First Love' in which he conjures the atmosphere of a tragic love affair. Both of these works last over ten minutes, resembling an orchestral tone poem in scope.

As a composer Rak stretches the limits of the guitar's potential without departing from tonality. Instead he incorporates chromaticism emotively and descriptively. Whereas the

evolution of classical composition from the 18th century to the first half of the 20th century was characterised by the loosening of the bounds of tonality, culminating in atonality and Serialism in the 20th century and a variety of post serial aesthetics in the past fifty years, Rak draws on a wide range of tonal and harmonic idioms ranging from the renaissance to impressionism. His music also bears a distinctive Eastern European flavour while maintaining traces of his early experiences playing in rock and jazz bands.

The central purpose of this report is to produce a complete musical transcription[1] of the piece, (*Tracy*), which encapsulates some of Rak's most significant technical innovations. Since the composer or anyone else has not scored the work, the transcription provides the first written musical score of the work. The transcription was made from a mini-disc recording I made, of the original recording of the work. This enabled me to dissect the piece into over 100 segments using the track mark function. I was thus able to loop each segment and listen to a short section or even a single motif repeatedly until I could hear and capture all the correct pitches, rhythms, voicings and techniques.

Since the act of transcription involves representing something in another medium, there are obviously problems with the process. If my task were to provide a mathematically accurate representation of all the pitches located in a time space, the chaos that is part of the nuance and interpretation in a musical performance would render this task extremely complex and indeed almost unnecessary. The method that has developed the process of transcription and notation of this music is one where I recognise the need to approximate certain things, particularly with regards to time and note values.

In the rest of Part 1 I give biographical information, and discuss some of the main thrusts, techniques and aesthetic concerns in Rak's compositions. Part 2 begins with an analysis of the work, and then follows with a list of special notation symbols used in the transcription, and an explanation of the techniques used, with directions on their execution. This is followed by the actual transcription.

[1] *Tracy* is transcribed from a compact disc recording(1994) of the work, which is performed by the composer.

Biography

Stepan Rak has created an air of romanticism around his personal history. Some of the remarkable stories seem to almost give him the same kind of mythical status as Django Reinhardt, the famous 'gypsy' jazz guitarist of the early 20th century. Like Django, Rak also had some connection to gypsy music and culture. As an artistic personality Rak exudes mystery, and it is not unlikely that he plays upon the stories of his birth and upbringing towards his own self-stylisation.

It is not my intention to interrogate this personality, however some of the biographical information I have obtained from magazine articles and personal communication has been confirmed by Jan Matej Rak (Stepan Rak's son)[2]. Despite the indeterminate nature of some of the stories surrounding Rak's birth and upbringing, I propose that it is relevant to look at how this biography informs to some extent his compositional approach and his technique on the guitar. Rak's personality is far too layered and complex for this report. Instead, I wish to give some sense of Rak, the artist. 'Romanticism', is a convenient word to describe how Stepan Rak brings together in all its richness, his own history, personal associations, as well as the cultural history of his country, the Czech Republic, and particularly his home city, Prague. Rak has woven this together into an artistic identity that imbues each note that he plays and every composition that he writes.

His precise date of birth is not known and is frequently disputed. Summerfield (1991), Bosman (1985, 13), and Duarte (1988, CD Sleeve Notes) and on occasion, Rak himself, provide the 8th of August 1945 as the official birth date. While he accepts this as his official date of birth, Rak believes that he was born two days earlier, on the 6th of August 1945 – the day that the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The significance of this symbolic birth, at the same historical moment as the devastation of the atom bomb, was

[2] Other biographical information contained in this chapter was obtained from the Unofficial Web Page of Stepan Rak at http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/music/main.htm, created and maintained by Rashad Bagus.

clearly the inspiration for a major composition, *Hiroshima*. Rak describes this piece as a thanksgiving for his "ascent into life at the same time as many thousands died in a different place on earth" (quoted in Bosman 1985, 14).

Stepan Rak was born in a small village in the Ukraine and was according to one source found in a bomb-wrecked house by Soviet soldiers in the village of Chust (Cooper 1996, 11). There is some dispute about the early years of Rak's life. Ophee (1988, 14), Summerfield (1991), and Cooper (1996, 11), for example, believe that the orphaned newborn baby was transported in a tank to Prague where he was cared for first by a Russian doctor, then an old gypsy woman, and was eventually adopted by the Rak family. Duarte (1990, CD Sleeve Notes) however, suggests that the infant was discovered by gypsies who then took him to Prague where they registered his birth officially.

There is a similar mystery around Rak's early years. According to Ophee (1988, 14), Rak spent a large part of his childhood with gypsies on the banks of the Berounka River where he gained a knowledge of their language, culture and music. However Rak's son, Jan-Matej Rak, disputes this, contending that his father did not spend his early life with gypsies, but instead became acquainted with gypsy music quite late in his life (Pers. Com.). What is clear is that Stepan Rak did adopt something of the gypsy accent in his music and artistic personality.

According to Wade (1989, CD Sleeve Notes), Rak aspired to become a painter and studied graphic art and painting for four years at the Fine Arts School in Prague. This exposure to graphic art and painting left a deep impression on him, which was later to influence his music making. Rak only started playing the guitar at the age of 18, having already played the double bass and tuba (Train 1993, 6). At the age of 21 he developed an interest in classical guitar and in 1965 he entered the Prague Conservatory (Wade 1989, CD Sleeve Notes); (Summerfield 1991) where, for the next five years he studied the classical guitar and composition for the guitar, with teacher/composer Stepan Urban.

According to Rak, Urban instilled two enduring values in him:

> "The guitar is an instrument like all other instruments and should be just a means of your expression. You should develop this expression through that particular instrument, but as it were, forget that it is a guitar" and,
>
> "Whenever you touch your guitar, not only with your hands but in your imagination, try to believe you are seated in a great theatre of the world, and what happens there concerns you and all of us" (quoted in Wade 1992, 5).

In 1975 Rak enrolled at the Prague Music Academy to continue his studies in composition (Summerfield 1991). He studied general composition with Jiri Dvoracek, modern composition with Vaclav Kucera, and musical analysis with Karel Janacek (Duarte 1988; Wade 1989, CD Sleeve Notes). After the completion of his diploma, Rak was invited to take up a teaching post in the Finnish town of Jyvaskyla where he remained until 1980 (Wade 1989, CD Sleeve Notes), (Summerfield 1991). He then returned to Prague where according to Duarte (1988), his numerous activities included, performing with the Prague Marimba Trio and playing with the Chamber Ensemble of Czech Television. Rak also became a member of the Union of Czechoslovakian Composers and Concert Artists and of the Czechoslovakian Jury for International Guitar Competitions (Train 1993, 6; Jan-Matej Rak 1998, Pers. Com.).

Besides these activities, Rak established guitar studies (previously only taught at the Prague Conservatory) at the Academy of Fine Arts, where he has been teaching ever since. In the discussion that follows, I will focus more specifically on Stepan Rak as a composer.

Compositions: Characteristics and Approach

Rak is a prolific composer. Although there is no definitive catalogue of his compositions there are approximately 82 compositions listed on The Unofficial Stepan Rak Web page. Some of these are multi-movement works like *Terra Australis.* In order to understand *Tracy*, the third movement of this work, it is useful to understand the directions in Stepan Rak's compositions that led to this work.

Bosman (1985, 11-12) identifies three main thrusts in Rak's music. "One reveals his fondness for early music, hence the *Renaissance Temptation*" (Bosman 1985,11). According to Duarte (1990, CD Sleeve Notes), the Six Early Dances, which comprise this work, represents Rak's personal view of renaissance music with his own Slavic accent. The second thrust in Rak's music are pieces that take the shape of impressionistic sketches and the third consists of Rak's personal dramatic laments and essays (Bosman 1985, 12). *Tracy* shows the latter two thrusts, along with Rak's most descriptive compositions. For example, *The Sun* is described by Bosman as a work that traces the rise, zenith and descent of the sun: "its movements and corona are portrayed first by a slow angular melody which gradually expands into a sustained hue of arpeggiated chords and rasgueado" (Bosman 1985, 12). Similarly in *Balalaika*, Rak conveys the sound of a whole balalaika[3] orchestra gradually getting louder and louder. He uses rasgueado[4] and cross-string or campanela[5] tremolos, combined with a typically Russian melody that is accentuated above the implied balalaika orchestra. As in Ravel's *Bolero,* which is based on a single theme that is orchestrated differently each time it is restated, Rak uses texture to give breadth and altered perspectives to a single theme. Even without tremolo textures

[3] The Balalaika is a Russian plucked string instrument resembling a Mandolin. Balalaika players use the tremolo technique predominantly.
[4] A rapid strumming across the strings, with one or more fingers of the right hand.
[5] Campanela refers to the technique of alternating between or playing across successive strings thereby imitating a keyboard or harp legato.

Rak still maintains an economy of material, as in *Farewell Finland*. Using the form of theme and variations, Rak says that the main theme is based on a Finnish folk song, stated almost throughout, in the bass or treble. "Around this is an atmosphere that changes gradually and constantly" (Rak quoted in Train 1993, 7). *First Love* is one of Rak's larger works that would fall under Bosman's category of personal dramatic essays. Approximately 10 minutes in length, the form resembles that of a symphonic tone poem.

The three descriptive/programmatic works described above exemplify a mutually dependent relationship between sustained chord textures and large-scale thematicism. This relationship is a central feature of many of Rak's larger[6] works including *Tracy*. The sustained chord textures make it possible to augment the note values within a theme to a greater extent than when plucking.

Tracy

Tracy is the 3rd movement of *Terra-Australis,* which is a multi-movement work of approximately 100 minutes in length. There are 10 movements in total (all recorded). According to (Cooper 1996, 12) Rak sometimes performs the movements separately. This is not surprising considering the length of the whole work. Even the individual movements are long: *Australia* 13'29", *Uluru* 10'30", and *Tracy* at 17'42", is the longest movement. The large scale of the whole composition seems to have developed out of Rak's affinity for symphonic form, visual metaphor and dramatic programmes, as well as his idiomatic approach to developing a wider soundscape for the guitar; a soundscape that incorporates the composer's own derivations of the tremolo technique. Rak composed *Terra-Australis* after visiting and travelling in Australia, and each movement was inspired by a place, situation, or object of interest or event. *Tracy* was inspired by the cyclone of the that name: "Cyclone Tracy caused catastrophic damage to the northern town of Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974, stimulating international fund-raising to enable

[6]Rak prefers the word "large" as opposed to "long". Even though the length of some of Rak's compositions is remarkable (for solo guitar music), the emphasis is more on the scale or scope of the work, which is determined by musical or aesthetic concerns.

it to be rebuilt. This movement is a tribute to its victims" (Duarte 1994, CD Sleeve Notes).

The Guitar as a Miniature Orchestra and the Influence of the Graphic Arts

According to Cooper (1996,11) and Duarte (1988, CD Sleeve Notes), Rak's concern with symphonic form, texture and colour has provided the stimulus for many of his technical innovations. His development of tremolo techniques is intended to sustain sound and create dynamic gradations that imitate an orchestra. Combining the tremolo and rasgueado techniques, Rak dramatically increases and sustains the sonority and volume of the guitar beyond its usual capability, creating the illusion of orchestral texture.

The idea of the guitar imitating different instruments of the orchestra is not new: it was already expounded in the 19th century by guitarist-composer Fernando Sor in his *Method for the Spanish Guitar*. According to Train (1993, 1), Sor gives detailed directions on how to execute the imitation of different instruments of the orchestra on the guitar. This approach however only went as far as exploring the variety of tonal effects that are possible within the traditional plucking method: a natural conclusion, given the guitar's inherent variety of timbres. By including some of the more abrasive sounds on the guitar and developing the tremolo, Rak's technique is in fact quite close to that of a flamenco player.

Bosman (1985, 12) maintains that Rak's technical innovations are also closely connected to his years of studying painting, graphic art, and photography. In this article, Rak is quoted as saying that in harmony and chords he visualizes different colours, and that melodies are like the lines of a painting. According to Wade (1989, CD Sleeve Notes), Rak often takes as his starting point an image or vivid impression around which the composition is then created. In Rak's own words: "everything I do in music is affected by my years of painting studies, before I took up the guitar" (quoted in Bosman 1985, 12). Rak continues to explain that just as in Surrealist painting where the ordinary is

juxtaposed with the seemingly unrelated or disruptive, so too does he create juxtapositions in his compositions. He cites *First Love,* which quotes Villa Lobos's first Prelude, but instead of continuing in the flowing style of the prelude, Rak creates points of rupture "to create a sharp change of feeling" (Bosman 1985:12). According to Bosman, the same applies to *La Guitarra* (No Date) and *The Cry of The Guitar* (1988). "These pieces are dislocated in structure, the result of mixing diverse characteristics and impressions that both blend and conflict" (Bosman 1985, 12). Bosman continues to explain that Rak's references to Tarrega and Villa Lobos are incongruently juxtaposed with his personal melodic and harmonic content, and that familiarity is disrupted by the inner-contradiction of the compositional materials. This is similar to the way the compositions of Francis Poulenc, express their sense of irony and incongruity. "In many of his larger compositions there is the same disconcerting juxtaposition of banal objects that one finds in much Surrealist painting, and the same academic skill which brings quite unrelated things into a coherent whole" (Griffiths 1978, 76).

Part 2

Analysis

I view the transcription of *Tracy* as having 7 sections, comprising an Introduction, sections A, B, C, D, E and a Coda (indicated in the score using boxed text). Here is a summary of the bars that constitute each section:

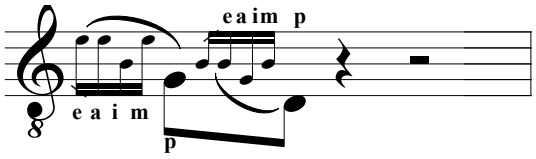
	Intro	A	B	C	D	E	Coda
Bars:	1-32	33-156	157-188	189-223	224-306	307-355	356-421

I have determined these sections according to the coherence of a particular musical idea, whether thematic or textural. In the following analysis I will look at the formal aspects of the piece as well the use of motives, dynamics and guitar techniques, in each section. I will also explore some of the suggested visual and programmatic elements, which I regard as quite clearly narrative in structure – showing the development of the cyclone disaster in a progressive linear way.

Introduction

The Introduction uses harmonics with the tremolo pattern e,a,m,i,p. The dynamics alternate between ***p*** (soft) and ***sfz*** (forced) making the character pensive, suggesting the first signs of a storm and the flashes of lightning in the distance. Rak's choice of harmonics as well as the changing time signature creates a sense of unpredictability. The Introduction also contains a melodic motive (Fig1a.) that is subsequently used throughout the A section.

Fig1a.



Rak uses a muting technique created by stopping the string directly on the fret (bar15-). Unlike conventional muting on the guitar, which usually serves to give a contrasting colour or imitate a double bass pizzicato, Rak's use of muting is thematic and descriptive. The mute is combined with a thumb tremolo that resembles more closely a muted cello section of an orchestra. With this technique, the basic thematic character of the piece is revealed (bars 14 – 31).

The thematic material has a basic intervallic contour. The length of phrase, size of interval and melodic treatment varies throughout the piece. The intervallic motive consists of a descending minor second followed by an intervallic leap mostly upward but also occurs in the same direction. In bars 16 to 19 this occurs as: G F# Bb A C# C G#. This is followed by a similar phrase from bar 20 – 22. As shown, Rak strings together a sequence of such motives to construct the thematic material. Let us refer to this generic motive as Motive 1. The effect in this section seems to conjure the sound of a rousing wind. Sparing no descriptive detail, this is interspersed with a muted chord passage sounding hauntingly close to a door being blown by the wind. Fig1a[7] returns suddenly ***f*** at the end of a long note played with a thumb tremolo (bars 25-28). The motive is not continuous and serves more to introduce the following section A.

Section A

Section A uses Fig1a almost exclusively. The right hand figure is combined with secundal[8] chords in the left hand creating a spiralling effect, again imitating the wind.

[7] The technical figures are provided in the explanation of techniques in this report.
[8] This refers to chords built out of second intervals. Persichetti.

The chords gradually ascend and crescendo from bar 33 to 64. In bar 51 Rak again uses Motive 1 with its characteristic descending minor seconds and melodic leap between. This time it occurs in the bass with the first two notes repeated: F E F E C B. The same motive is repeated in bar 53, 56 and 58. Rak appears to be alluding to the section following from bar 65, which contains the same pattern in a higher register: C A C A F. From this point (bar 65), the motivic idea is continuously repeated in different forms with its basic two-note secundal structure.

From bar 90 – 94 Rak introduces the voice for the first time to sing in unison a bass melody constructed out of the descending secundal two note figures: Ab-G, D-Db. The general character of section A continues and builds up steadily till bar 142 where the tremolo is replaced by ***ff*** rasgueado with sharply dissonant chords and continues to crescendo to what would be the normal limit to the guitars sound.

Section B

Section B uses the rasgueado tremolo. This technique stretches the volume and dynamics of the guitar further. It creates a sustained chordal texture that imitates the orchestra. In bars 162 – 169 we find motive 1 in an augmented form: A# A D# C# F# E B A#. Rak maintains the general intervallic character but stretches out the phrases. This augmentation is made possible by the sustained texture of the section. From bar 170 the texture becomes more contrapuntal between the top and inner voices while maintaining the second intervals interspersed with arpeggios and leaps. The section continues to climax to the extreme limit of the guitars sound, with the last chord stretched out across the full pitch range of the instrument. Despite the belief that the crescendo cannot ensue Rak maintains the descriptive climax into Section C, by breaking into dissonant muted chords (bar 189) constructed with tri-tones.

Section C

The abrasive and percussive sound generated by the rasgueado and muted tri-tone chords perpetuates the descriptive effect of a cyclone reaching a cataclysmic force. Section C continues to become more and more violent using continuous glissandi up and down the fretboard. With the pitches unstable and becoming more abstract Rak still brings back a theme in bar 200 Motive 1: Eb Db F and again in 203: Eb D F# E Eb A Ab. The chords continue to rise in pitch also reaching the highest register while keeping the lowest bass notes. It climaxes in bar 212 with such a chord and using demisemiquaver strumming.

At this point the listener would believe that the crescendo couldn't still go further. Rak ingeniously perpetuates a descriptive crescendo with another change in texture, after bar 212 the sound seems to break apart altogether. After a percussive strum across completely dampened strings Rak breaks violently into full rasgueado tremolo with the left hand 1st and 2nd fingers playing beyond the highest frets, fingering with the nails of the left hand and executing a circular glissando at the same time, producing a percussive high pitch wailing sound. At the same time the left hand thumb comes onto the fretboard from the same direction as the other fingers to play a thematic variation of Motive 1 on the third string:(1st phrase bars 215-220) A G# B A# C# G# B A B G. It is only after this phrase for the first time in the piece that we have a diminuendo and a feeling that the storm has finally ended. Rak continues the circular glissando with the muted voices but slowly descends in pitch and tempo and volume, creating a very convincing effect of the storm wind subsiding.

Section D

Sections D, E and Coda take the form of a lament that seems to look back at the devastation. In the liner notes of the CD recording of this work (Duarte 1994), writes that this movement (*Tracy*) is a tribute to the victims of the cyclone. These sections are

particularly reflective in this regard. Section D begins with a drum roll effect, evoking the sense of calamity and death. Over the drum roll Rak returns to the initial tremolo (Fig1a.). With this he states a more extended tonal theme based on Motive 1. It is also the first time that the piece is in a clearly definable key, the key of E minor. From bar 230–250 the theme is: B A C, B A E, G F# A, G F# E. As you can see all of phrases except for the last one has the same basic motivic structure of a descending second followed by a melodic leap in either direction i.e. Motive 1. From bars 251-268 Rak whistles the same theme with slight variation in note lengths. With the final note of the theme Rak changes the whistle sound to the sound of wind bringing back a strong reminder of the storm (bars 268-285).

What follows in bar 286 to the beginning of Section E in bar 307 is an interlude that is convincingly similar to an orchestral interlude between the movements of a ballet suite or symphony. For the first time Rak brings back a reminder of some of the textures of the introduction with the thumb tremolo and muted tremolo (bar 289-300). The thumb tremolo meanders downward in pitch and volume and settles at the guitars low D maintaining the tremolo at ***pp***. Below this D, Rak scratches with the left hand, the notes: Bb, A, C, B.

In the German musical alphabet B = Bb and H = B, hence Rak is stating the name of Bach: B, A, C, H. Composers have frequently used the letters of Bach's name and there are a few metaphorical possibilities for this; In some instances simply to pay tribute to the composer, in other cases alluding to the final unfinished fugue of Bach's *Art of Fugue* based on the theme of his own name. In Rak's case it is likely that he discovered that Bach's name also carries the same intervallic structure as the motive that shapes *Tracy*. The use of the name also carries the weight of impending doom since Bach died whilst writing this last fugue.

Section E

In Section E, *Tracy* builds up the most dramatic climax yet. It begins with a tremolo drone on D in the low register of the guitar. Whilst playing this tremolo on the 5th string he introduces a rhythmic motive in unison on the 4th string from bar 310-321. From bar 315, Rak introduces the voice singing another D unison in a dramatic tenor voice. This is a technique used in orchestral music in which a crescendo is achieved by the addition of instruments rather than the instruments themselves getting louder. He continues layering the texture by adding a 4th voice a minor second up on Eb creating sharp tension. From bar 322 the chord voices start to expand from their close position and building up into the rasgueado tremolo in bar 331 which immediately crescendos into full six string chord texture. From bar 331-355 the piece reaches its final climax. The voice sings in unison with the 4th string on the guitar creating the most dramatic crescendo in the piece. The voice steadily climbs with the chords in the characteristic intervallic pattern of Motive 1, moving down a minor second and then a leap up of a major 2nd in this instance: Bb A B Bb C B C# C D. Rak uses a sequence of ascending major triads with the above melodic pattern forming bass notes that move a from minor second above to a minor second bellow the root of the chord. This entire structure occurs over the drone of the two lowest open strings of the guitar, E and A. While this is happening he strums accents in the same three note rhythmic motive mentioned in bars 310-321. I have used the middle stave to indicate this. These dense chords resolve into the D major chord in bar 355, which initiates the coda.

Coda

The Coda reverts to the simpler tremolo texture of Section B. The D major tonality represents hope and renewal, but is juxtaposed with borrowed chords such as the Bb major #11 in bar 361 in its first inversion taken from the key of D minor. This change is a

haunting reminder of the devastation. This kind of modal interchange continues from the key of D major to borrowed chords of D minor such as the D minor 7^{th} in bar 367 and the C minor in 369. Later Rak borrows from G minor in bar 373. This alternation ensues until he combines both the F# of D Major with the F of D minor in bar 385 after which the piece ends in an unaltered D major tonality.

Notation Symbols

 - Harmonic

 or  - Muted notes. Played by fretting on the frets with the left hand and slightly released pressure

 - Drum Roll Effect. Created by crossing the 5th string over the 6th string with the left hand at the indicated fret

 - Scratch. Scratch string with left hand nail at the written pitch.

Explanation of techniques

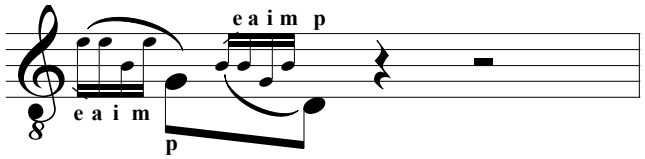
According to Rak, 'traditional' guitar pedagogy tends to concentrate exclusively on the development of the thumb, index, middle and annular (p,i,m,a) fingers of the right hand while ignoring the development of the little finger (e) of this hand (pers.comm.). Rak has developed tremolo and rasgueado techniques that incorporate the use of the little finger.

Tremolo [9]

The basic tremolo technique used in *Tracy* is **e,a,i,m,p.** Played:

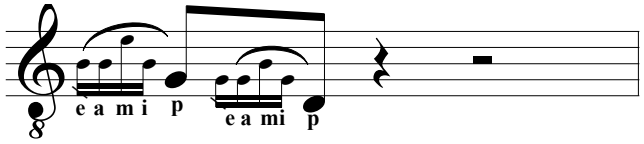
[9] All figures and examples for the right hand will be on open strings.

Fig 1a.



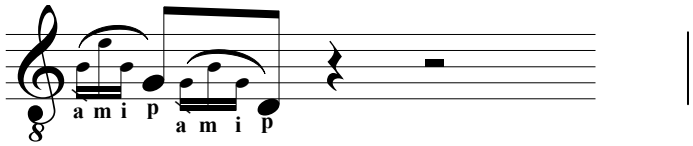
The Intro section uses the variation **e,a,m,i,p**:

Fig 1b.



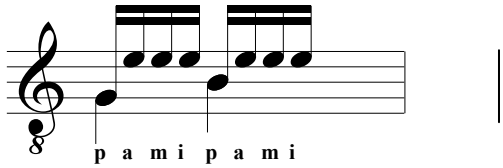
A simpler variation excluding the little finger is **a,m,i,p**:

Fig 1c.



As can be seen in Fig 1a, b and c, it is indicated as a grace note figure and is played this way, unlike conventional guitar tremolo, which is regular or even spaced:

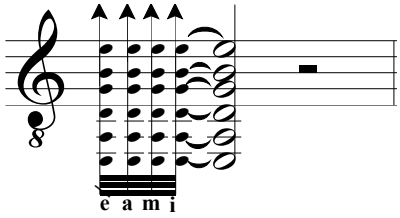
E.g. 1.



Rasgueado and Strumming

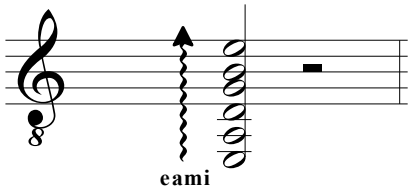
The standard classical guitar rasgueado is usually a single motion strum with all the right hand fore fingers:

Fig 2a.



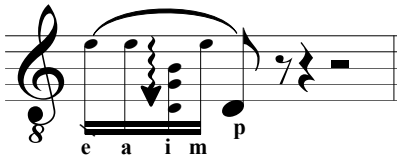
The degree of separation between fingers can vary depending on the style. In this case there should be little separation in this figure. It will be indicated more simply by the conventional wavy arrow line (pointing up):

Fig 2b.



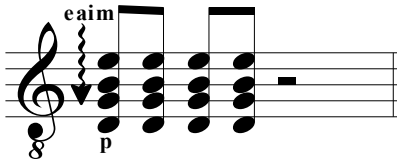
The work also contains a variation of Fig 1, in which the index finger strums across two or more strings. Here the Tremolo Fig1 is combined with a rasgueado:

Fig 2c.



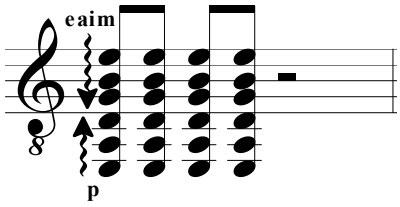
As this is a rasgueado technique, it will be indicated by a wavy arrow line (pointing down):

Fig 2d.



The above two Figures are identical. It is represented in the score as Fig 2d, but is played as Fig 2c. Unless otherwise indicated the thumb should play a single note. Notice that fingers e, a and m play on the same string while the index finger strums in between these and the thumb. Where the thumb is required to strum as well, another wavy arrow line is included in the opposite direction of the forefingers:

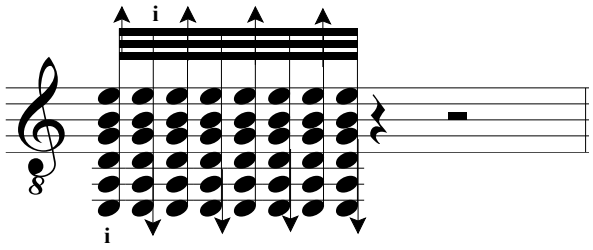
Fig 2e.



In both Fig 2d and Fig 2e, The wavy arrow lines are indicated once. The technique is to be repeated in the subsequent chords until the texture changes.

The climactic passage in bar 211 requires one to strum in both directions alternately as one would do with a plectrum. This is done with the index finger and indicated as:

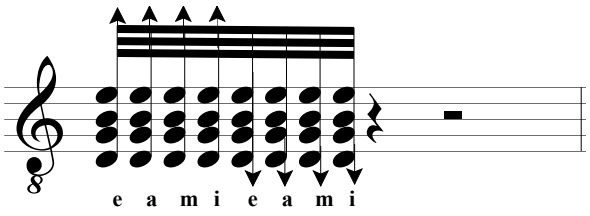
Fig 2f.



Rasgueado Tremolo

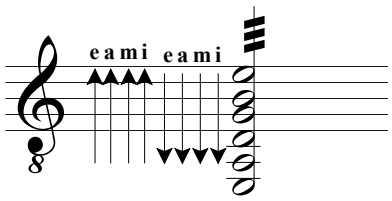
This technique is responsible for the masses of sound and quadruple fortes that can be heard in works like *Hiroshima, First Love* and *Tracy*. Where one would expect the guitars volume to have reached its limit, Rak is able to build the intensity of crescendos further to the extreme limit of the guitars volume and density. The technique creates a sustained wall of sound that has an almost orchestral quality. The technique occurs for the first time in section **B** of *Tracy* (bar157). When executed rapidly the sound of the individual fingers become less distinct and the desired continuity is achieved. It is played as:

Fig 3a.



and notated as:

Fig 3b.

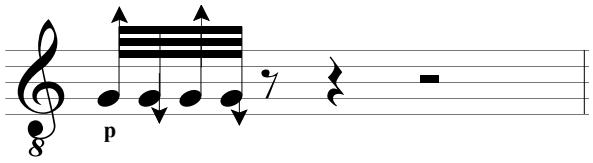


The arrows indicate the strumming direction of each finger. It forms a continuous tremolo, as opposed to a normal rasgueado (Fig 2a/b). Though these passages are dense chord textures they are thematic. The sustained quasi-orchestral themes should be clear when played. Sometimes this occurs with an entire chord shifting as in bars 161-168, or with a held chord and a moving top voice as in bars169-187.

Thumb Tremolo

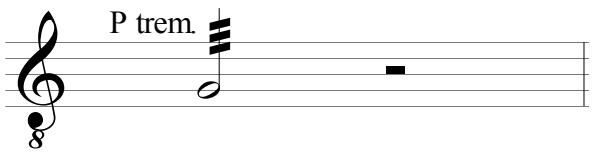
This technique occurs early in the piece (bar14). It is executed by using the right hand thumb as a plectrum and playing alternating up and down strokes across a string.

Fig 4a.



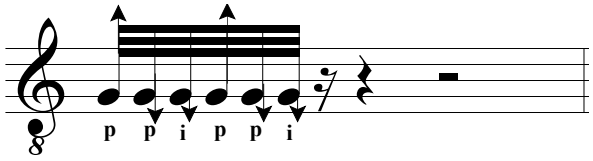
It is notated as a conventional tremolo with the indication: P trem (Shown in Fig 4b.).

Fig 4b.



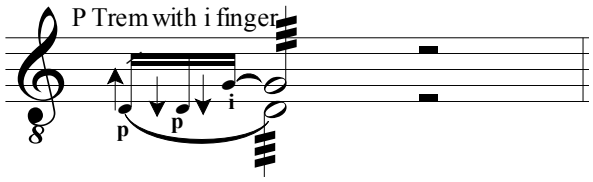
There is also a variation of the thumb tremolo including the index finger in bar 11-12. This is more complex as it requires the index finger to fit in between the thumb tremolo:

Fig 4c.



It is notated in the score as:

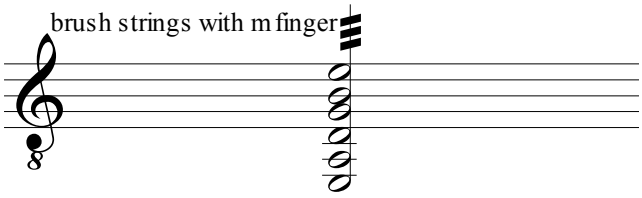
Fig 4d.



Brushing Tremolo

This effect sounds like a soft or muted string tremolo in an orchestra and is produced by brushing rapidly up and down across the strings, with the flesh of the right hand middle finger. It occurs at the end of the composition. It uses conventional tremolo notation with the direction:

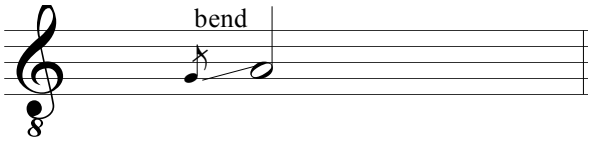
Fig 5.



Bends

This is a technique more commonly used on electric or steel string acoustic guitars. The string is bent with the left hand finger from one note to the next:

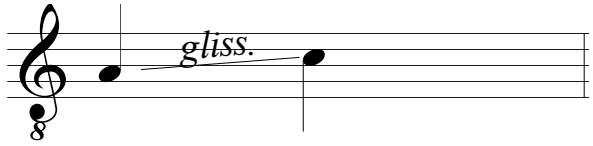
Fig 6.



Glissandi

A conventional guitar glissando entails sliding the left hand finger from one note to the next on the same string.

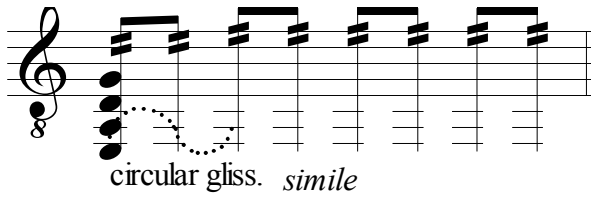
Fig 7a.



This occurs from bar 14 onwards, and is combined with the thumb tremolo and left hand mute.

It appears again in a circular form in bar 192 called Circular gliss. This technique involves sliding the entire chord up and down the neck in a continuous motion

Fig 7b.

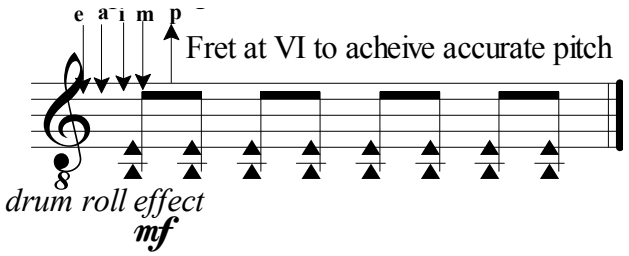


Later it is combined with other techniques. With the rasgueado tremolo in the right hand, the left hand uses the thumb (on top of the fret board) to play a melody while the other fingers of the left hand play a muted circular glissando. This occurs at bar 213–223.

Another variation is the gliss vibrato. This is similar to the circular gliss except that it occurs over a smaller pitch range. It would not really exceed a semi-tone. It occurs in bar 290 and 292 with the thumb tremolo and left hand mute.

Drum Roll Effect

This technique occurs in section D from bar 224. As indicated in the explanation of notation symbols, the 5th string is crossed over the 6th with the left hand 2nd finger, at the fret appropriate to the indicated pitch. The result imitates the sound of the snare drum. Combined with rasgueado in the right hand, it sounds like a snare drum roll.



Use of the left hand thumb

The left hand thumb is used unconventionally in *Tracy*. It is frequently used by guitarists of other styles such as Jazz or Rock to add a bass note to a chord or provide an extra finger for chord voicings. In this case Rak uses the thumb to play an entire melodic voice on the 3rd string. This is achieved by bringing the thumb over the fret board from the same direction as the other fingers unlike the standard use playing from the bass end of the guitar.

Use of the Voice

The use of the voice is also quite a novelty in this composition. Besides not being common to the classical guitar repertoire, it is also unlike other vocal and guitar combinations. In this instance Rak uses the voice to double a melodic part on the guitar, rather than sing in the traditional sense a melody with guitar accompaniment. Rak's deep tenor voice is almost Wagnerian, giving an otherworldly character to the piece. In Section E, the combination of the rasgueado tremolo playing across all six strings as well as the voice creates a sustained 'wall' of sound, which in the cathedral in which it was recorded sounds very close to a massive orchestral climax.

I have provided a complete list of techniques used in the composition Tracy. While these techniques can be found in other works by Rak, they appear in a condensed form in *Tracy*. In providing an explanation of these techniques I wish to bring the reader closer to understanding the transcription as well as Rak's oeuvre more generally.