

Guitar Improvisations with Hexaphonic Multi-Effects dataset and practice analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a novel guitar dataset made out of rightly annotated guitarists improvisations. The annotations gather notes, playing techniques, instrument tuning, audio effects configurations as well as transcription of post improvisations interviews. The dataset gathers ten hours of improvisations and around five hours of interviews. Those accompanying data make this dataset suitable for a variety of different research domains : from MIR to improvisation analysis and musicology. The recordings yielded to this dataset were done in the context of an hexaphonic multi-effect practice study. Such a multi-effects is meant to work with an hexaphonic guitar (one pickup per string guitar) and grant the player with independent strings audio effects configurations. This paper presents the dataset and the experiments it has been gathered from. It also details, based on the interviews transcriptions, a first analysis of the hexaphonic setup specificities regarding to the guitarists own practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

An hexaphonic guitar is an electric (or acoustic) guitar equipped with an hexaphonic pickup. This device gathers six individual pickups, one per string. As a result, six audio signals are available for further processing¹. With such system, different audio effects or analysis tools can be applied to each string independently. This type of pickups appeared in the late 1970s with guitar synthesizer which as its name implies corresponds to a guitar that can control a synthesizer. On this type of instrument, hexaphonic pickups are of great help in converting notes to control signals, because they narrow down the complexity of pitch detection from polyphonic to six monophonic algorithms running in parallel. Apart from that main commercially-developped use case, hexaphonic pickups can be use for independent-string audio processing. The first physical units integrating individual string processing appeared at the end of the 1970s but, despite the large amount of creative potential

¹ As a comparison, on regular electric guitars, monophonic pickups mix the sound of all resonating strings down to one audio signal.

it seems to have, hexaphonic audio processing has never reach a larger audience and remained a niche. Interests in such approach seem to have grown, though, in recent years with companies like Cycfi² and Synquanon³.

This series of experiments and the resulting dataset⁴ presented here were made to try to understand how individual string processing affects the guitarists' practices. Five guitarists used the hexaphonic multi-effects for three days to record improvisations based on pre-defined scenarios. The resulting dataset is made out of objective data (notes, playing techniques, effects configuration, etc.) which were collected automatically, semi-automatically or by hand, and subjective data (guitarists' interviews transcriptions). These different types of data make the dataset suitable for different research fields ranging from Music Information Retrieval (MIR) to Musicology as well as Music Improvisation Analysis. Around ten hours of musical improvisations are being annotated and around four and a half hour of interviews have been transcribed. As the amount of objective data is quite important (despite the limited number of guitarists), the first analysis presented here is based on the guitarists' interviews. This analysis helps to highlight terms and notions describing different points of interest for the musicians of such a setup.

While section 2 will cover works related to our topic, sections 3, 4 and 5 will develop different points of the experiment. Section 6 will describe further the built dataset and section 7 will sum up interviews' analysis. Finally, section ?? will highlight future work before conclusion (section 9).

2. RELATED WORKS

Music datasets are mostly built and used in MIR-related contexts. Some contains multiple types of musical instruments [1], and some are oriented towards specific instrument such as the piano [2, 3] or the guitar [4, 5]. Most of these datasets are built for pitch and onset detection but some of them are made for tasks such as guitar playing techniques [6], chords [7], effects [8] and playing modes detection [9].

Apart from these datasets which were built to improve existing results on the MIR-related tasks, some are built to study musical and instrumental practices such as the Weimar Jazz Database [10] from the Jazzomat project [11] which uses different MIR techniques to extract relevant in-

² <https://www.cycfi.com/>

³ <https://www.synquanon.com/>

⁴ Which can be found online at : ANONYMIZED

formation to describe and classify jazz improvisations. As mentioned above, the dataset presented in this paper goes a bit further by proposing recordings of guitarists' improvisations made using an hexaphonic multi-effects and different types of annotations.

First hexaphonic effects appear in the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. The ARP Avatar⁵ guitar synthesizer and the Roland GR-100 [12] both includes an hexaphonic distortion effects while the GR-300 [13] integrates an hexaphonic harmonizer. Apart from this already established companies, engineer Keith McMillen developed the PolyFuzz [14] guitar pedal (used by guitarist John Abercrombie) which integrates distortion, fuzz and suboctave effects. Swiss Luthier Matthias Grob developed around the same period its PolyDistorsion [15] followed by a multi-effects. He then went on developing the Polysubass⁶ (which octave down each string) and the Mathons VST plugins serie⁷. More recently, several scientific works tackle the development of hexaphonic audio processing tools [16, 17] and their use in performance context [18–20]⁸.

3. EXPERIMENT STRUCTURE

The experiment presented here was built up to investigate specific uses of hexaphonic pickup and multi-effects, namely the distribution of audio effects on specific groups of strings and the control of individual bypasses of the audio effects. For this experiment, five guitarists have been recorded playing the hexaphonic multi-effects on specific pre-defined scenarios. Four of them are professional guitarists and/or composers and/or improvisers and the last one is an amateur guitarist/composer⁹. The four professional guitarists are part of a collective of musicians¹⁰ whose musical projects range from jazz and improvisation, to contemporary and prepared instruments while the amateur guitarist mostly evolves in rock style related music. In the rest of the paper we'll be referring to the guitarists using number from 1 to 5, 5 being the amateur guitarist.

3.1 Pre-defined scenarios

The whole process of this experiment go through the 3 following scenarios:

- The first scenario is a “discovery scenario” where the guitarist, with the aid of the researcher, tests each hexaphonic effects, builds presets and create a “main sound” (i.e. chain of chosen effects and presets) to start working on the next scenario. No improvisation was recorded during this scenario.
- The second scenario investigates the distribution of effects on specific guitar strings by applying the chosen “main sound” to different groups of strings while

the remaining strings are left dry (i.e. without any effects).

- The third scenario studies how this setup can be controlled in a performance context. A generic MIDI foot controller (Behringer FCB1010¹¹) was used to control different granularities of individual audio effects bypass controls (e.g. global effect bypass versus string-independent bypass).

As a matter of clarity, the “discovery scenario” was named scenario 0 and the two remaining, respectively, scenario 1 and scenario 2.

3.2 Scenarios 1 and 2 protocol

Scenarios 1 and 2 follow the same protocol:

- They are made out of five sub-scenarios;
- Each sub-scenario are made of three steps:
 - Test : the guitarist plays with the proposed sub-scenario's configuration and tries to develop musical ideas that can be used during the improvisation;
 - Record : once the guitarist is satisfied with its findings, he records an improvisation of 3 to 4 minutes minimum (the longest being 18 minutes);
 - Interview : the guitarist and the researcher talk about specific elements of the improvisation that was just recorded.
- The two last steps can be repeated any amount of times the guitarist feels like, leading to try out different presets (i.e. changing the “main sound” to fit one specific sub-scenario) and/or different modes of playing;
- While the four first sub-scenarios are pre-defined, the fifth one is built by the guitarist. In scenario 1, the guitarist can choose the group of strings on which the “main sound” can be applied. In scenario 2, the guitarist can decide which bypass control configuration he wants and create presets.

Table 1 and 2 summarize the different configurations of the sub-scenarios contained in each scenario. While sub-scenarios 1_1 and 1_2 uses separation between “low” and “high” strings which is already used by guitarists in different playing styles¹², scenarios 1_3 and 1_4 are relatively unnatural for guitarists effects are being applied on non adjacent strings. It has also to be noted that sub-scenarios

⁵ <http://www.vintagesynth.com/arp/avatar.php>

⁶ <http://www.polybass.com>

⁷ <https://www.mathons.com/>

⁸ Sound recordings of hexaphonic effects can be found online, <https://soundcloud.com/medicationtime/sets/hexaphonic-effects>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLHyrUsYR-gE5r-4Vs45xkQ>

¹⁰ <https://muzzix.info/>

¹¹ This controller provides ten buttons (configured with on/off behaviours) which can be linked to different mapping configurations (also called pages or banks in this type of devices). The browsing (going up or down) of this list of configurations can be done by two other buttons. Two continuous foot controller are also present on the device but were not used in the context of these experiments.

¹² We can think e.g. of acoustic blues style where guitarists often plays the accompagnement part on the low strings (often with alternating bass technique) and the melody on the high strings.

Name	Strings with effects	Strings with no effect
1.1	E-A-D	G-B-e
1.2	G-B-e	E-A-D
1.3	E-D-B	A-G-e
1.4	A-G-e	E-D-B
1.5	Distribution (2.3 or 2.4) chosen by the guitarist and definition of recallable presets	

Table 1. Scenario 1 sub-scenarios.

Name	Bypass controls mappings
2.1	1 button controls the bypass of 1 hexaphonic effect on all strings
2.2	1 button controls the bypass of the effects applied on 1 string
2.3	1 bank per effect and 1 button per string
2.4	1 bank per string and 1 button per effect
2.5	Distribution chosen by the guitarist

Table 2. Scenario 2 sub-scenarios.

2.3 and 2.4 come out of the foot controller structure. Indeed, as only ten buttons¹³ are available at once on the controller, mapping strategies needed to be defined in order to access the 36 individual bypasses of the multi-effects (6 effects available on 6 strings). Another setup, e.g with 2 Voes MX-18 controllers¹⁴ (which we didn't know of at the time of the experiment), may have only need one sub-scenario to access the 36 individual bypasses controls.

4. HEXAPHONIC MULTI-EFFECTS

The hexaphonic multi-effects used in these experiments is depicted in figure 1. It has been developed using Cycling'74 Max software. This patch is an adapted version of the one presented in [18]. The multi-effects gathers four main elements : six hexaphonic audio effects, a bypass matrix grouping individual effects bypasses, a routing system to define effects order, an output mixer to adjust strings output levels individually. In order to help the guitarist focusing, as much as possible, on the hexaphony practice, the six audio effects (overdrive, delay, ring modulation, flanger, tremolo, reverb) were chosen, arguably, among the most common for electric guitarists. Each of the effects integrates six instances (depicted by graphical colorful sliders) of each of its parameters, a preset system (with an interpolation option not used in those experiments) and individual bypasses. Those individual bypasses are gathered and developed graphically (bottom right part of the patch), forming a 6x6 graphical matrix that more easily gives visual feedback to the guitarist when using the foot controller in scenario 2. The default order of the effects routing system follows the graphical display of the patch (same as listed above). Only one of the guitarist changed this default setting by moving the delay just before the reverb effect. Lastly, an output mixer is used to balance the sound

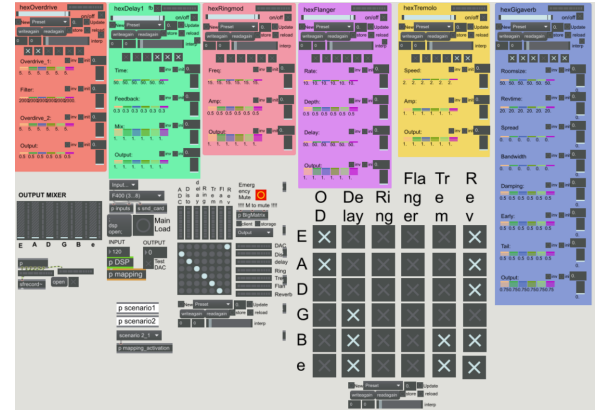


Figure 1. Hexaphonic Multi-Effects used for the experiments.

of each string. This mixer is particularly useful in the first scenario, where the difference in sound amplitude between the strings with effects and the string without effects can be pretty significant.

5. AUDIO SETUP AND RECORDING PROCESS

The audio processing setup is made out of several components :

- Two Godin guitars equipped with RMC hexaphonic piezo-electric pickups were at the disposal of the guitarists. The first one, a Godin Mutliac, is a nylon-string guitar whereas the second one, a Godin LGXT, is a steel-string guitar. Only one of the guitarist tried the first one, but eventually felt more at ease with the second one.
- A homemade breakout box is used to power pickup electronics and to convert the standard 13-pin din connector used for those pickups to six standard mono-phononic 6.35mm female jack cable.
- The breakout box is connected to an RME Fireface UCX soundcard through six mono Jack cables. Sampling rate was set to 44100 Hz and 16 bits of precision were used.
- The computer used is running Max software and the hexaphonic multi-effects patch described in section 4;
- Hexaphonic outputs are then connected to a mixing desk and to a quadriphonic Genelec speaker system (completed by a subwoofer). This diffusion system was the one present in the recording room and couldn't be moved. No specific spatialisation was used as it was not the subject of this experiment. The six strings' resulting sounds were all equally broadcast on each speaker.

Multiple audio and video files were recorded during the experiment. On the audio side, the hexaphonic audio signals were recorded before and after the chosen audio effects. As the result, the clean hexaphonic signals (before)

¹³ See footnote 11

¹⁴ <https://www.voes.be/mx18.html>

enable to easily use any type of algorithm detection to ease the annotation part and the “wet”¹⁵ (after) hexaphonic signals give a detailed look at the produced sound. A monophonic reduction of the hexaphonic wet signals was also recorded in order to have an low quality format easier to work with (only the two first channels of hexaphonic audio files can be heard when listen to through audio player software). Moreover, the guitarist was asked to launch (when ready) a mono mix recording of its improvisation. On the video side, a Nikon 5D mark IV camera was used to capture the guitarists’ tests, improvisations and talks through all the scenarios. Video files were recorded with a resolution of 1920x1080 at 25 fps. The screen of the computer, on which the audio program ran, was also recorded in order to keep track of the user changes to the program GUI. The video conference software Zoom was used for that purpose so that recordings could be launched remotely without having the guitarist to do it.

All recorded signals were synced by sound. The guitarist was asked to pluck the lowest string with a palm-muting technique in order to record on each media a sharp event that can easily be detected and referred to.

6. DATASET

Once all those raw signals are recorded, several steps are necessary in order to obtain a useable dataset.

The first step was to extract from recorded audio and video files, the media corresponding to each specific sub-scenario recordings. Syncing points (made by plucking the palm-muted lowest string), as well as timings of sub-scenarios parts (test, recordings or talks) were annotated by hand in order to automatically trim and export files corresponding to each sub-scenario. The trim and export steps were done using `ffmpeg`¹⁶ and `sox`¹⁷ softwares, respectively for dealing with video and audio files. Each part of each sub-scenario is then made out of 5 files :

- 2 video files: one from the camera, one from the computer screen;
- 3 audio files: clean and wet hexaphonic signals as well as monophonic mix down of wet hexaphonic signals.

The second step was to annotate each sub-scenario. Different types of annotations were used for different types of collected data:

- Global information, such as scenario and sub-scenario number, instrument tuning (and its evolution if necessary), duration of the specific part, used audio effects and presets, were collected;
- Played notes have been retrieved by using a semi-automatic method similar to the one used in [5]. Six automatic pitch extractions were performed in parallel, on the hexaphonic clean signals. As tuning

¹⁵ The “wet” term is often present in effects like reverb for example where levels of modified signals and non modified signals can be modified. In this context, this term refers to the level of the modified signal.

¹⁶ <https://www.ffmpeg.org/>

¹⁷ <http://sox.sourceforge.net/>



Figure 2. Bypasses matrix being overlayed on top of guitarist’s performance.

(i.e. pitches of the strings when no notes are fretted) of the guitar was known, fret number was inferred from pitch extraction result and string number. Aubio library’s¹⁸ implementation of `vin-fft` algorithm [21] has been used to perform this task¹⁹. The data generated by the algorithm have then been manually verified in order to consolidate notes and frets information;

- The activation periods of each individual effects from scenario 2 have been automatically extracted from computer screen videos. A computer vision algorithm has been built to track the changes in the individual effects’ bypasses of the graphical user interface (thoses changes have then been computed as time segments). Moreover, in order to be able to easily visualize those changes with the improvisation, the global bypass matrix from the computer screen videos has been cropped and overlayed on top of the camera video (see Figure 2);
- Common guitar playing techniques, such as bend, harmonics, hammer-on, pull-off, etc. (see, e.g [6], for details on such techniques), have been manually annotated. Extended playing techniques like use of a bow, objects or preparations as well as more advanced techniques like *scordatura*²⁰ are also including in the annotations. Definitions and explanations of those kind of extended or advanced techniques can be found in [22], [23] and [24] or [25]. To the best of our knowledge, these kind of techniques are most often not present in literature’s datasets.

All the data detailed above are stored in various file formats (`json`, `txt` or `csv`) in order to be compatible with different visualisation software like Sonic Visualizer²¹ or Advène²². An exemple of the collected data integrated in Advène software can be seen on Figure 3.

¹⁸ <https://aubio.org/>

¹⁹ It has to be noticed that different pitch detection algorithms were tested inside of Sonic Visualizer software and that the `vin-fft` algorithm appeared to give the best results.

²⁰ The *scordatura* is the action of strongly detuning the strings in order to be able to play with the timbres generated in part by the softness of the relaxed strings.

²¹ <https://www.sonicvisualiser.org/>

²² <https://www.advene.org/>

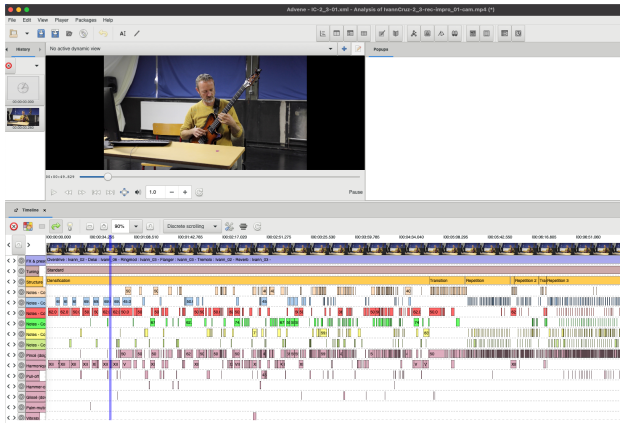


Figure 3. GIHME annotations integration example in Advenne software.

To complete the objective collected data, interviews made after each improvisations have been transcribed. The method used for the transcription is the one of the verbatim, i.e. hesitations, repetitions are integrated in the resulting text. Only some common french oral language words or expressions has been rewritten with more readable terms. The use of the verbatim here is made so that researchers from other fields willing to analyze those texts can access the less modified data as possible. The analysis that we are making in next section is specifically based on those transcriptions.

7. INTERVIEWS ANALYSIS

This analysis of the words the guitarists is a first step towards understanding and characterizing how guitarists' practice is being altered by the use of the hexaphonic multi-effects. The different points presented below give good hints about the impact of hexaphonic multi-effects on guitarists' practices, but, for now, it cannot be easily generalizable as the number of guitarists who participate in that experiment is pretty small.

7.1 Constraints and limitations

Before talking about the impact of the hexaphonic multi-effects itself, one common element to all guitarists that appeared in the interviews is that, at some point, they felt constrained. The limitations they endured were most of the time either due to scenarios' configuration or to the technical elements used for the experiment.

It has to be noticed that the scenarios and sub-scenarios configurations do act as constraints already, as they put all the guitarists in unusual situations, but most of the time the guitarists have managed to work with them and felt stimulated by them. The constraints listed below are the ones where guitarists had a hard-time integrating those configuration in their improvisations.

Regarding to the hexaphonic multi-effects several constraints were mentioned : the balance between the volume of dry strings and strings on which effects were applied in scenario.1 was, for example, mentioned by guitarists 1 and 3 as being problematic (the issue was resolved by adding

the output mixer mentioned in Section 4). Some effects configurations were felt uneasy : guitarist 1 had trouble playing with different delay times when those were not rhythmically related and guitarist 5 felt that applying distortion only on specific strings was not a natural fit for him.

On the scenario level, all the manipulations needed to access the different individual bypasses in scenarios 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 (due to the use a foot controller FCB1010 as mentioned above) was mentioned by guitarists 1, 4 and 5 as being not intuitive and adding a strong inertia to the whole process. Guitarist 2 felt a strong constraint with effects distribution in scenario1_3 and 1_4 :

I was a bit helpless in fact with a setup like this one. [...] I have my guitarist's reflexes that try to find something but which is not there anymore. So, yeah it tries [...], but it doesn't work. (Guitarist 2, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario1_3-02, pers. comm.).

One last type of constraint is due to acoustic and electric behavior of the hexaphonic. Indeed cross-talk²³ and transfer of a played string's vibrations to other pickups through the bridge create resonances on non-played strings. These two phenomena are particularly significant in scenario 1, where notes played on strings without effects would trigger low volume modified sounds on strings with effects. This is especially true when the distortion is used on the string with effects as it increases the volume of the strings. However, these constraints were used by guitarist 2, 3 and 4 as a mode of playing in itself.

7.2 Appropriation of the system

In spite of the constraints brought by the scenarios and by the technical system, the guitarists have, for the great majority, succeeded in appropriating and integrating the complexity of the system. They have, for the most part, put in place various strategies to reduce this complexity.

Guitarist 3, for example, played several improvisations using only a limited amount of prepared strings²⁴ (scenario 1.2) or a limited way to attack the strings (scenarios 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). In scenario 1.2, guitarist 4 used preparations (a small bar of metal inserted in between the strings close to the bridge)²⁵ on the three dry strings in order to bring their timbre closer to the ones of the strings with effects. The same guitarist used *scordatura* right from the beginning (scenario 1.1) to limit the harmonic possibilities²⁶ :

It appeared to me as a way, in this chaos of the low strings [strings with effects, editor's note], to try to find an organization clearer for me. (Guitarist 4, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario1_1, pers. comm.).

²³ A small amount of the sound of a vibrating string is picked up by adjacent pickups.

²⁴ Instrument's preparations is the process by which object are added or fixed on the strings in order to modify its original timbre.

²⁵ See video recording at <https://vimeo.com/639069813>.

²⁶ See video recordings at <https://vimeo.com/639069333>.

In this improvisation, the standard tuning of the guitar, E-A-D-G-B-e, evolved to E-A-D-A-A-e (the D string was left unused during all the improvisation).

During scenario's test step, guitarist 5 played pieces of his repertoire while applying effects in a random manner. Both of these actions (know pieces playing and randomness) helped him to dig directly into hexaphonic effects timbre without overthinking too much. From there he narrowed down to specific choice of effects and presets as well as specific directions for his improvisations (most of the time inspired by the pieces he just played).

7.3 Guitarist practice

The playing of an electric guitar is necessarily modified by the addition of an hexaphonic microphone and of an string-individualized sound processing system. The gestures made by the guitarists no longer have the same scope, the same impact, which leads him to reexamine his relationship with his instrument and therefore his practice. However hexaphonic multi-effect practice was not considered by the guitarists as something radically new. As guitarist 2 stated "it's another instrument, but at the same time, it's a familiar one" (Guitarist 2, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario 2_5, pers.comm).

Guitarist 4 notes the sensitivity of the hexaphonic pickup "regarding the reactivity [...], it's very sensitive [he plucks the strings very slightly with his nails, editor's note]" (Guitarist 4, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario 1_5, pers.comm). The hexaphonic pickup on this guitar are piezoelectric ones. Those type of pickups sense a broader frequency spectrum [26] than most of the regular electromagnetic pickups found on electric guitars. But what this very technical remark highlights is that this kind of pickup is very good at sensing all subtleties of guitarist's playing. This element is very important in terms of respect of guitarist's practice and of guitarists' acceptance of hexaphony.

Guitarist 1 develops the same idea :

[...] because there's also the habit of linking instrumental gesture with foot gestures on the pedals. So there you have it, it seems to me to fit more into the same logic, but at a higher level we'll say. (Additional interview, Guitarist 1, pers.comm).

With this quote, guitarist 1 emphasizes that working with the foot controller in scenario 2 is pretty close to its practice of monophonic guitar effect pedals but it adds more relief or details to it. This idea of being part of a known and familiar practice which goes further and needs to adapt is developed by guitarist 2 :

It doesn't question the practice. The practice, it stays, it exists. However, it reconsiders it, in the sense where, as new things happen, you have to adapt.[...] It's a system who forces you to look deeply at the instrument for ways to adapt, even if it is a material that I know. I mean, all this effects, I've already used them in my life. They are part of the guitarist's

landscape. And despite all that, the fact to use them in hexaphony, you rethink the effects differently too. You rethink, you adapt your playing, an interaction takes place. (Guitarist 2, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario2_5, pers. comm.).

The same guitarist sums up this idea in a pretty concise and concrete way when he mentions "with this system, you have to redraw the geographical relationship with your instrument" (Additional interview, Guitarist 1, pers. comm.). This "geographical relationship" is close to the notion of "mapping" often used in NIME (New Interface for Musical Expression) context. Using an hexaphonic multi-effect pushes the guitarist to modify the relationship (one could say the "inner mapping") he/she has built between his/her gesture and the produced sound.

From these few excerpts, it appears that this hexaphonic setup can easily integrates into guitarists' practices as it uses the same elements as their regular practices, but they also need to adapt this practice in terms of relationship between the gesture and the produced sound.

7.4 Hexaphonic specificities

Regarding the produced sounds, several comments develop the idea of this setup having a rich palette of sounds. Guitarists 1 and 4 both make the parallel with the organ. This metaphor derive directly from second scenario's use of foot controller but also from the vast amount of sounds accessible through this controller and through the playing. Let's remember that scenario 2_5 gives access to individual bypass control of individual effects as well as to presets of the whole bypass matrix. These options gives the musicians the ability to change completely switch configurations or just to make a tiny adjustment, these abilities being modulated by guitarist's playing which itself acts as a "selection gesture" [?] inside of the defined timbre palette. Guitarist 2 develops this idea by comparing the sound possibilities to the ones given by digital audio workstation (DAW) :

Precisely, it helps going into fields that could be covered by the digital world and all that. I find that we come close to things like that, while respecting the instrumental practice. [...] I'm not saying that it's like MIDI [...], it's a kind of in-between. (Guitarist 2, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario2_5, pers. comm.)

"Respect of instrumental practice" referred by guitarist 2 echoes remarks from the previous part, but also comes in opposition to MIDI control of instruments. With the hexaphonic system, the guitarist uses the professional practice he spent years to develop to access all these sound possibilities.

The specificities of the practices used during this experiments are also the center of the last hexaphonic specificity developed here. Indeed, it appears that practices that already made use of techniques to develop polyphonic or multitimbral approaches of the guitar were enhanced by

this system. Guitarist 3 who extensively used preparations during its improvisation points out at several moments the gain of clarity due to the hexaphony :

[...] one can add a tremolo or a delay on just one string, it's really nice. Or a reverb on one string, it brings a bit of depth and it won't impact everything. On a classic analog effect, it necessarily take huge proportion. Here, one can add a huge reverb, but just on one string, it's very convenient yeah. (Guitarist 4, extract of post improvisation interview, scenario2_4-01, pers. comm.).

Despite being obvious, this remark brings to the fore the idea that monophonic effect pedals are not that well-suited for prepared guitar practice. Indeed, added preparations can be string specific (as well as applied to multiple strings) whereas monophonic effects do apply to all the strings at the same time. In such a context, string specific effect system (aka hexaphonic multi-effects) brings a natural continuity to preparations. Guitarist 4 whose practice falls into classical, contemporary and flamenca practices tends to formulate the same kind of idea :

With a classical guitar, we work with the aim of being able to have an action as independent as possible from each finger and therefore potentially also differentiated regarding the strings. (Guitarist 4, complementary interview, pers. comm.).

This quote comes as a justification of the idea brings by guitarist 4 that the hexaphonic multi-effects setup could be of interest of classical guitarists who would want to move on electric guitar. As he mentions, the independence of the finger from each other seems to be able to find a continuity in a string specific audio effects system. This point (that wasn't expected in the first place) and the example of the prepared guitar practice seems to highlight that this kind of system is a good fit for practices that seeks for independence in terms of gestures, of played strings or on added preparations.

8. FUTURE WORK

While bringing some important notions, this first analysis and this dataset could be improved. Recordings coming from more guitarists with more different styles of music would help broaden the results. The different style seems pretty important as other music styles come with specific modes of playing, which were not represented in this dataset. We showed a data visualization test in Advane software, but this software, while being able to show all the data (except audio signals) at once, is not optimum to run a study with such a number of different types of data. Being able to switch between audio signals (clean or wet hexaphonic, monophonic or sound from video) while looking at the same video or data summary for specific parts of an improvisation are some of the features that don't appear that much in the state of the art of such software, but which would be really useful for this kind of study.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper presents a novel dataset including improvisations of 5 different guitarists using hexaphonic guitar and multi-effects. Such a system enables them to apply string-independent effects. This dataset gathers 10 hours of improvisations and transcription of 4,5 hours of interviews. Each sub-scenario's improvisation is annotated with pitch, string/fret, playing techniques (including extended techniques), effects configuration and activation timings. As these annotations represent a large amount of data, the first analysis given in this paper is based on the different interviews. According to the guitarists, this system, while new, appears to be familiar: effects are a well-known paradigm for electric guitarists and there's no need to learn new gestures, the guitarists' practices can be used as is. What need a new approach from the guitarists, though, is the impact the instrumental gestures have on the generated sound, what one could call "inner mapping". Indeed by being string-specific, hexaphonic effects add another level to the impact the gestures can have. As a wrap-up guitarists make several remarks that tends to emphasize that this system is particularly relevant with practices that already use extensively fingers' or strings' independence from each other.

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10. REFERENCES

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