

PREFACE

Dangerous to the hand and pleasing to behold, the thorns arise in whorls. Pockmarked, but sometimes smooth, the sites of the thorns' emergence constitute a ledger of recurrent violation. Read in the blood of pinpricks the thorns transfigure our fairytales; reread in metal, the thorns multiply according to a regime of walls and barbed wire. The American West, children read at their desks, developed in a proliferation of these fences across which cattle can not pass, inscribing in the movements of animals the decisions of an economics that would come to totalize both them and us alike. If only these ribbons — and with them their thorns — had expired in the sun of our rangeland. If only the bodies confined at these folds were of another place, another type. If only the thorns weren't now.

Interpretation. The music is structured according to an interpolation of voices. The interpretation of this type of intercalative polyphony should prioritize the connectedness of each voice: one voice interrupting another should convey a type of curtailment; each voice's reappearance should effect the sudden return of a music hidden from view. **Color.** Some indications of articulation are provided in the first half of the score. But the choice of both instrumental color and dynamics prior to measure 182 is left very largely to the interpreter. Select combinations of playing technique and dynamic to convey the polyphony of the first half of the piece as fantastically as possible. Note, however, that explicit indications of color and dynamic appear starting at measure 182; these should be followed exactly until the end of the score. **Tamburo trills.** Beginning at measure 78 the score calls for tamburo trills. Play these by tapping the pads of the index and middle fingers in rapid alternation. From measure 182 the score varies the number of fingers used to execute these trills; add the ring finger for 3-finger trills and add the little finger for 4-finger trills. Play all tamburo trills with the fleshy pads of the fingers and never with the fingernails or with the knuckles; all such trills are relatively quiet. **Rasgueado.** Beginning at measure 214 the score introduces two types of rasgueado: “knuckle rasgueado” and “nail rasgueado.” The second of these — nail rasgueado — is the familiar four-finger strumming technique originating in flamenco. Knuckle rasgueado is a modification of this technique played with the knuckles instead of fingernails. Knuckle rasgueado functions as a type of muted or veiled version of the usual nail rasgueado. Note that the score requests gradual transitions of color between these two types of rasgueado and the tamburo trills described above. **Scordatura.** At the start of the piece the guitar is tuned as usual. Raise string ② a quartertone at measure 124 and leave the scordatura in place for the remainder of the piece; this means that 12-ET pitches played on string ② after measure 124 will sound a quartertone higher than written, with the selection of pitches to be played on string ② left to the performer. **Amplification.** The piece may be amplified according to the judgement of the performer.

Spiel der Dornen was written between November 2015 and July 2016 for Nico Couck who gave the world premiere on the 9th of August 2016 at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse in Darmstadt, Germany.