

# An analysis of Roland Dyens's *Niterói*: Unified sonority and pedagogical approach for two guitars

## *Roland Dyens'in Niterói adlı eserinin analizi: İki gitar için bütünleşik tını ve pedagojik yaklaşım*

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents a detailed analysis of *Niterói*, a piece composed for two guitars by Roland Dyens, one of the prominent composers in the modern classical guitar repertoire. While Dyens's overall compositional career was prolific and diverse, his works for guitar duo are relatively few and concentrated in two distinct periods: the early 1990s and after 2010, the years leading up to his death. In his early duo works, such as *ConcertOmaggio* (Dyens, 1999) which is a concerto, and *Côte Nord* (Dyens, 1994), Dyens began exploring the possibilities of intertwining two guitars to function as one cohesive instrument. In his later years, he returned to this exploration, culminating in *Comme des Grands* (2010) and *Niterói* (Dyens, 2012), which represents a mature synthesis of his compositional ideas for guitar duo. This study delves into the form, rhythmic and melodic structures, and techniques employed within *Niterói*, placing particular emphasis on the concept of merging two guitars to create a unified timbre. By expanding his musical language, originally conceived for solo guitar, into a duo context, Dyens explores the interplay and fluidity between the instruments. It is concluded that the work represents an advanced pedagogical approach intended for professional guitarists, requiring an ideal performance where both guitarists achieve perfect synchronization and a unified musical understanding. *Niterói* can be seen as a significant contribution to the guitar duo repertoire, and this analysis aims to highlight its importance in the context of guitar pedagogy and performance practice.

**Keywords:** Roland Dyens, *Niterói*, guitar duo, musical analysis, Hocket technique, pedagogical works

### ÖZ

Bu makale, modern klasik gitar repertuarının önde gelen bestecilerinden Roland Dyens'in iki gitar için bestelediği *Niterói* adlı eserinin ayrıntılı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Dyens'in iki gitar için yazdığı eserler incelendiğinde, bestecinin yaratıcılığının iki önemli dönemde yoğunlaştığı görülmektedir: 1990'ların başlarında ve 2010 sonrası, hayatının son yıllarında. Bahsedilen ilk dönemde biri konçerto olmak üzere, *ConcertOmaggio* (Dyens, 1999) ve *Côte Nord* (Dyens, 1994) gibi eserlerle iki gitar için yazdığı müzikal dilini şekillendiren Dyens, ikinci dönemde bu dilini olgunlaştırarak *Comme des Grands* (2010) ve *Niterói* (Dyens, 2012) gibi eserlerle iki gitarın tek bir enstrüman gibi iç içe geçtiği yapılar oluşturmuştur. Çalışmada, *Niterói* eserinin formu, ritmik ve melodik yapısı ile kullanılan teknikler ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmiş; özellikle iki gitarın birleşerek tek bir tını yaratma fikri üzerinde durulmuştur. Dyens'in solo gitar için geliştirdiği müzikal dilini iki gitar konseptine genişleterek enstrümanlar arası etkileşim ve geçişkenliği nasıl kurguladığı ele alınmıştır. Eserin, profesyonel düzeyde gitaristler için ileri seviyede bir pedagojik yaklaşımı temsil ettiği ve ideal bir icra için iki gitaristin tam bir uyum ve senkronizasyon içinde olmalarının zorunlu olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. *Niterói*, bu bağlamda, Dyens'in iki gitar için geliştirdiği bestecilik anlayışının olgun bir sentezi olarak değerlendirilebilir ve gitar literatürüne önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu analiz, eserin gitar pedagojisi ve performans pratiği açısından önemini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Roland Dyens, *Niterói*, gitar ikilisi, müzikal analiz, Hocket tekniği, pedagojik eserler

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The classical guitar duo has emerged as a significant ensemble setting in the 20th century, expanding the sonic possibilities of the guitar and enriching the chamber music repertoire. Initially overshadowed by solo guitar works, the guitar duo gained prominence as composers and performers explored the intricate interplay and textural diversity achievable with two guitars. This evolution reflects a broader trend in classical music, where collaborations between instrumentalists fostered new artistic expressions and technical innovations.

The early 20th century saw pioneering efforts by composers like Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Joaquín Rodrigo, and guitarist Ida Presti, who recognized the potential of the guitar duo. Presti, in partnership with Alexandre Lagoya, formed one of the most celebrated guitar duos, inspiring numerous compositions and arrangements tailored for two guitars. Their collaborations demonstrated the duo's capacity for dynamic range, harmonic richness, and contrapuntal complexity, setting a high standard for ensemble performance.

As the century progressed, the guitar duo became a canvas for experimentation and fusion of musical styles. Composers incorporated elements from jazz, folk, and non-Western musical traditions, reflecting the globalization of art music. The repertoire expanded with works that challenged conventional techniques and encouraged performers to develop new skills in synchronization, balance, and interpretative unity.

In this context, the late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed significant contributions from composers who pushed the boundaries of guitar duo literature. Among these, Roland Dyens (1955–2016) stands out for his innovative approach and unique blending of genres. Dyens's works for two guitars exemplify the maturation of the guitar duo, combining technical demands with expressive depth. As a pivotal figure, Dyens' work bridges classical traditions with contemporary influences such as jazz, Brazilian music, and improvisation. His impact on the modern guitar world extends beyond his virtuosic performances; he is equally celebrated for his contributions as a composer and arranger.

"He views himself in the tradition of guitarist-composers such as Fernando Sor and Mauro Giuliani. Dyens excels among guitarist-composers living at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century... Dyens is outstanding in his ability to maintain a high level of quality and a prolific output in composition, arrangement, and performance. His style is flexible and eclectic. His most important influences include European art music, French popular songs, American jazz, South American jazz and popular styles. Dyens' forms are often drawn from popular music, and his harmonies from jazz" (Beavers, 2006).

His stylistic versatility and ability to merge technical brilliance with emotional depth resonate deeply with audiences and performers by enriching the repertoire.

While objective analysis of musical style and technique is essential, the subjective experience of music also holds significant value. Roland Dyens's ability to forge deep personal connections with listeners is a crucial aspect of his artistic impact. As noted in Michelle Birch's article, Colin Cooper's reflections on Dyens's playing, though subjective, offer a compelling insight:

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 apologizing 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, and a spellbinder (Birch, 2005).

Dyens's contributions are notable not only for their stylistic diversity but also for their exploration of the guitar's potential in ensemble settings. While he is widely recognized for his solo works, his compositions for guitar duo, though relatively few, hold a special place due to their intricate interplay and sophisticated use of two instruments to create a unified musical expression. *"Niterói"*, composed in 2010, exemplifies this approach, showcasing Dyens's mature style and his ability to weave complex textures that require seamless collaboration between two guitarists.

His duo compositions demonstrate remarkable interplay and sophisticated textural development, achieving a unified musical expression. This collaborative spirit also informs his approach to solo guitar arrangements, where he reimagines existing works with fresh perspectives. His belief in the boundless possibilities of the

guitar duo is reflected in a 2009 interview with Tolgahan Çoğulu for *Andante* magazine. "...everything is possible with two guitars, even *New World Symphony* by Anton Dvořák!" (Çoğulu, 2009) This statement underscores Dyens's profound confidence in the guitar's capabilities and his relentless pursuit of musical innovation.

This study, along with the authors' previous research on *Comme des Grands*, represents one of two in-depth scholarly works dedicated to Roland Dyens's chamber music as of February 2025. Together, these publications provide the first comprehensive academic analysis of his compositions for guitar duo, offering valuable insights into Dyens's approach to ensemble writing and the pedagogical significance of his duo works.

### 1.1. Purpose of the Study

Building upon the rich tradition of guitar duo repertoire established in the 20th century, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Roland Dyens's "*Niterói*", a significant work composed in 2010. The piece represents a culmination of the developments in guitar duo writing, integrating complex rhythms, harmonies, and interactive techniques that reflect both historical influences and contemporary innovations.

The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. Analyze the form, rhythmic, and melodic elements of the piece, highlighting how Dyens employs techniques such as hocket to achieve a unified sound between the two guitars.
2. Explore the pedagogical implications of the work, considering its role in advancing technical proficiency and ensemble cohesion among professional guitarists.
3. Provide insights into performance practice, offering guidance on interpreting the intricate interplay required by the composition.

Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of "*Niterói*" and its place within the evolution of guitar duo literature, bridging historical perspectives with contemporary practice.

### 1.2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is multifaceted, addressing gaps in academic scholarship and offering practical benefits for performers:

1. Technical and Musical Insights: The detailed analysis provides valuable insights into Dyens's compositional techniques, particularly his use of rhythmic interplay and melodic interweaving. These analyses enrich the appreciation of the work's originality and its contribution to the repertoire. Understanding these elements enhances performers' ability to interpret the piece authentically and effectively.
2. Pedagogical Relevance: Recognizing "*Niterói*" as an advanced pedagogical tool underscores its importance in professional training. The work challenges guitarists to achieve high levels of technical mastery and ensemble coordination, fostering skills that are essential for contemporary performance.
3. Enrichment of Performance Practice: By offering practical guidance on tackling the work's complexities, the study supports musicians in bringing "*Niterói*" to audiences with confidence and artistic integrity. This contribution is vital for keeping the repertoire alive and dynamic.
4. Academic Contribution: The scarcity of scholarly literature on guitar duo music, "*Niterói*" and Dyens's duo works highlights the need for in-depth studies. This research fills that gap, providing a resource for further exploration and encouraging continued scholarship in the field.
5. In essence, this study not only sheds light on a remarkable composition but also enhances the understanding of the guitar duo's evolution, inspiring performers and scholars alike to engage deeply with this rich and evolving art form.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological approach employed in analyzing Roland Dyens's "*Niterói*". The analysis is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the work's form, rhythmic and melodic structures, and the technical techniques utilized. The following steps were taken to achieve the objectives of the study:

### 2.1. Analytical Framework

An integrated analytical framework was adopted, combining elements of musicological analysis with performance practice considerations. The framework includes:

- **Form Analysis:** Examining the overall structure of the piece, identifying sections, subsections, and the relationships between them.
- **Rhythmic and Metric Analysis:** Analyzing the rhythmic patterns, time signatures, and the use of techniques such as hocket to understand how they contribute to the interplay between the two guitars.
- **Melodic and Harmonic Analysis:** Investigating thematic development, melodic motifs, harmonic progressions, and their interactions across the guitar parts.
- **Technical Analysis:** Assessing the specific guitar techniques employed, including articulation, dynamics, and special effects that contribute to the unified sonority.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparisons were made between "*Niterói*" and Dyens's earlier duo works, such as "*Côte Nord*" and "*ConcertOmaggio*," to identify stylistic developments and continuities.

### 2.2. Source Materials

The primary source for the analysis was the published score of "*Niterói*" by Roland Dyens. Additional materials included:

- **Recordings and CD Booklet:** Reference recording by ChromaDuo was consulted to gain insights into performance interpretations.
- **Composer's Notes:** Any available commentary or notes by Dyens regarding the piece were reviewed to understand his intentions and stylistic directions.
- **Literature Review:** Existing scholarly articles, interviews, and analyses of Dyens's works and guitar duo literature were examined to contextualize the study.

### 2.3. Limitations

- The analysis is primarily based on the published score and available recordings. Direct input from the composer is limited to documented notes and interviews.
- Interpretations may vary among performers, and the study acknowledges the subjective elements in musical analysis.

## 3. FINDINGS

Composed in 2010 for ChromaDuo, *Niterói*—whose title derives from the Classical Tupi term meaning "hidden waters"—draws inspiration from the eponymous Brazilian city located across Guanabara Bay from Rio de Janeiro. This work is dedicated to Oscar Niemeyer, a pivotal figure in the history of modern architecture and the architect of the iconic Museu de Arte Contemporânea (MAC) situated in *Niterói*. This act of homage—acknowledging and incorporating diverse influences—is a defining characteristic of Dyens's creative approach. As Sean Beavers observes:

Dyens attempts to consciously recognize the diverse sources from which his musical style is drawn. He often pays homage to composers of the past who have influenced his work. It is perhaps ironic that a composer as creative and original as Dyens writes many works that are titled as homages, but this is

characteristic of Dyens' humility and desire to recognize small details drawn from prior works. Even if the majority of a work is newly composed and one or two small elements drawn from another composer, Dyens is likely to title the work as an homage (Beavers, 2006).

While the piece is essentially in ABA song form, the sections exhibit complex structures due to the techniques employed within them. Each section is based on two musical ideas: the rhythmic material presented at the piece's beginning and the lyrical, *Suadade* melody at the B Section. The music develops by expanding the orchestration, diversifying the palette of nuances, and superimposing melodic structures onto the established rhythmic material.

In the B section, the inscription "Di un altro mondo" ("from another world"), written by the composer above the score, highlights a significant conceptual element. Similar to Oscar Niemeyer's approach to museum design—which integrates Brazil's modernist aesthetic with the natural beauty of Niterói's coastline—Dyens, in *Niterói*, juxtaposes the rhythmic, fast-paced modern life of Brazil in the A section with the introspective, classical *saudade* rooted in the country's traditions in the B section.

As revealed through the analysis of the piece, even the materials in the A and B sections are interconnected. The material heard in the B section shares similarities with the melodic material of the A section; however, it is perceived in a broader temporal context—in "another world," as Dyens described it—much like the difference in sound transmission between underwater and in the air. This similarity also reflects Brazil's cultural landscape, as interpreted through Niemeyer's architectural vision. Just as the Niterói Contemporary Art Museum features two white outer layers enveloping a central black layer in Figure 1, Dyens's compositional design exhibits a similar interplay of form and contrast. The orchestral arrangement of the piece further mirrors the museum's structural progression from foundation to apex, reinforcing the thematic cohesion between music and architecture.

#### Figure 1

*Niterói Contemporary Art Museum General Look*



This duality, this interplay between the vibrant and the introspective, is central to the work's conception. As Dyens himself confirms in the liner notes for ChromaDuo's 2011 album *Hidden Waters*, *Niterói* is conceived as a synthesis of Brazil's vibrant, rhythmic character and the introspective depths of *saudade*. He further elaborates on his approach as follows:

"The composition, *Niterói*, reflects this juxtaposition of sleek modern art set into the natural splendor of Brazil's eastern seaboard. Written in Brazil, its outer sections vibrate unmistakably with the syncopated rhythms of Brazilian contemporary life, while the central section features the most exceptionally intimate, yet universally beloved, of Brazil's musical output: the *saudade*" (Dyens, 2010/2011).



In the fast sections at the beginning and end of *Niterói*, the vibrant and rhythmic character of Brazil is reflected through intricate and constantly shifting time signatures, which are interwoven between the two guitars to create a near-seamless texture—as if played by a single instrument. Even in the rapid sixteenth-note passages, perfect synchronization is required from the performers to achieve this interwoven quality and to evoke a timbre reminiscent of a single guitar with an exceptionally wide range. This writing style, reminiscent of the hocket technique frequently employed in 13th-century vocal motets to generate rhythmic interest, textural variety, and interplay, is prominently observed in Dyens' compositions for two guitars. According to Sanders (1974), hocket involves the division of musical phrases by rests and their distribution among different voices. In this context, it manifests as the “cutting” of a melody between the two guitars to create a shared passage, with rests inserted in each guitar part during the moments when the other plays. This stylistic feature is also discernible in Dyens' earlier works for two guitars, such as *Côte Nord* and *Concerto en Si*, producing a syncopated effect wherein the rhythmic emphasis shifts between the voices.

Subsequently, the introspective, melancholic, and longing *saudade* in the B section presents multi-layered material, with the parts of Guitar I and Guitar II again interwoven to create a unified guitar part—but over broader periods.

Roland Dyens composed this work in a manner that presents significant challenges for many guitar duos. One might argue that he designed it as a piece for two guitars that, while extending beyond the capabilities of a single instrument, maintains a soloistic conception. To achieve an ideal performance of this music, it is essential not only that the duo possesses a profound understanding of the piece itself but also that their sound production techniques and tonal concepts are virtually identical. The parts are so intricately interwoven that creating the perception of a single guitar requires more than simply following the composer's directions; it necessitates that the two guitarists develop the ability to make music as a unified entity. This is why the work is identified as a pedagogical piece—not for students, but for a professional guitar duo.

Early examples of Dyens's concept of unified guitar writing can be observed in his 1993 work, *Côte Nord*. While *Côte Nord*, Dyens's first duo guitar piece, appears to diverge from his established compositional style—particularly in its first movement, which embraces atonality and lacks a defined time signature—connections to *Niterói* can be drawn, especially in the second and third movements. The timbres resulting from the design of the two guitars as a single instrument, often achieved through the hocket technique, are frequently discernible. This approach not only enhances the textural richness of the music but also challenges the performers to synchronize meticulously. Unison passages and the use of stratification techniques with different motivic structures, which are relatively uncommon in two-guitar music, emerge as a consequence of this technique, further blurring the lines between the individual parts.

Similar conceptual links are evident in both works, highlighting Dyens's exploration of blending traditional techniques with contemporary guitar composition. By integrating the hocket technique and creating unified guitar textures, Dyens pushes the boundaries of the guitar duo format, contributing to the evolution of the instrument's repertoire.

Regarding this work composed for ChromaDuo, Tracy Anne Smith, a member of ChromaDuo, briefly shared her thoughts on the piece during the 44th episode of the *Masters of the Guitar* program broadcasted on Borusan Classical Radio in January 2025:

“...It's a wonderful piece, very energetic, exciting, with a beautiful *saudade* section in the middle that is very meaningful and partially because of the idea of *saudade*. So, it is a word, Portuguese word, that refers to something that you miss, that you feel kind of a nostalgia for that could have existed or may never have existed, but you feel this sort of longing... The piece is evocative, rhythmically with a lot of incredibly inventive elements for the guitar; very tricky, but idiomatic in a way that works just beautifully...” (Ünlenen, 2025)

### 3.1. Form and Motivic Analyses

As mentioned above, the work was designed in ABA song form. The form design is examined in Table 1.

**Table 1***The Form Analysis of Niterói*

Introduction		A		B		A1		Coda	
a	m. 1-8	b	m. 20-21	g	m. 60-61	b1	m. 94-95	a	m. 118-125
a1	m. 9-16	c	m. 22-24	g1	m. 62-63	c	m. 96-98	a1	m. 126-133
a2	m. 17-19	c1	m. 25-27	h/g	m. 64-65	c1	m. 99-101	a3	m. 134-141
		d	m. 28-31	g1/h1	m. 66-67	d	m. 102-105	a4	m. 142-149
		d1	m. 32-34	j/i	m. 68-71	d2	m. 106-108	n	m. 150-153
		e	m. 35-36	g2	m. 72-73	e	m. 109-110	a3	m. 154-157
		b	m. 37-38	g3	m. 74-75	c5	m. 111-112	a4	m. 158-161
		c	m. 39-41	h/g	m. 76-77	f	m. 113-115	o	m. 162-166
		c2	m. 42-47	h1/g1	m. 78-79	c4	m. 116-117	p	m. 167-169
		c3	m. 48-49	i/j	m. 80-83			r	m. 170-172
		f	m. 50-52	k	m. 84-85				
		c4	m. 53-59	l	m. 86-87				
				l1	m. 88-89				
				m	m. 90-93				

In Figure 2, the composition opens with a rhythmic interplay between the two guitars, structured around alternating 2/4 and 3/8 time signatures, requiring precise synchronization between the performers. The a subsection, extending up to m.(m.) 8, establishes this foundational rhythmic texture. The Guitar II plays in scordatura by dropping 5th string to Sol and the 6th string to Mib.

**Figure 2***Roland Dyens, Niterói mm. 1-8*

Figure 2 shows the musical score for the first 8 measures of Roland Dyens' *Niterói*. The score is for two guitars. The tempo is 'Tempo moderato' with a metronome marking of 66. The time signature alternates between 2/4 and 3/8. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked 'pizz.' and 'mp'. The second system (measures 5-8) is marked 'f sub.' and 'ord. II'. A red box labeled 'A' highlights the first system. A green circle highlights the tuning for Guitar II: ⑤ = Sol and ⑥ = Mib. A red line connects the notes in the first system. A red box highlights the second system. The score includes various musical notations such as accents, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Subsequently, in Figure 3, the a1 subsection between m. 9 and 16 continues the dialogue between the guitars, introducing a percussive layer that enhances the preceding texture. In mm. 17-19, the orchestration expands further, incorporating chordal structures into the rhythmic framework sustained in the bass registers of both

guitars. Notably, in m. 17, a shared motif—executed in a call-and-response fashion—is abruptly interrupted, creating a direct reference to the work's opening material. This initial motif is reintroduced in a condensed form, heard concurrently with the emerging rhythmic pattern of the b subsection, thereby establishing a bridge that culminates in a metallic-sounding chord in m. 19, marking a sudden transition into the b subsection at m. 20.

**Figure 3**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 9-20

The musical score for measures 9-20 of Roland Dyens's *Niterói* is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 9-13) features a call-and-response motif in measure 17, highlighted by a red circle. The second system (measures 14-18) shows a transition to a new rhythmic pattern, with a red box highlighting the beginning of the b subsection. The third system (measures 19-20) shows a metallic-sounding chord in measure 19, marking the beginning of the b subsection. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (pp, mp, mf, sfz, f, ff), articulations (pizz., p, mp, mf, sfz, f, ff), and performance instructions (m.g. ongle éclipse, nail on the side, metal, ord., a1, a2, b, p dolce sub., cresc. poco, p sub., f sub., T.R.). Red and yellow boxes highlight specific musical elements and subsections.

At m. 20, the b subsection begins (Figure 4). A rhythmic pedal, subtly foreshadowed after the a subsection, is introduced in Guitar I, reinforcing the piece's continuity and propelling its forward momentum. In m. 22, this rhythmic pedal is superimposed with a series of recurring motifs in Guitar II, comprising a four-note figure. These motifs, enriched by bends and glissandos, establish a fluid and expressive foundation for the melodic framework while forming the c subsection. This structure is reiterated as the c1 subsection between m. 25 and 27.



**Figure 4**Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 21-24

In m. 28 (Figure 5), the d subsection emerges as a rhythmically shifted-developmental reflection of the motif introduced in the a subsection. To heighten its effect in m. 31, the two guitars engage in a unison passage across different octaves, with harmonics incorporated into Guitar I. This technique, also employed in Dyens's *Côte Nord*—his first duo guitar composition from 1993—serves to reinforce the orchestration and increase the musical momentum. This unison passage seamlessly transitions into the d1 subsection at m. 32.

**Figure 5**Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 27-31

In mm. 35 and 36 (Figure 6), the e subsection extends the rhythmic framework of the d subsection within Guitar II, while the addition of chords in Guitar I enhances the harmonic depth, preparing the return of the b and c subsections.

**Figure 6**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 35-36

By m. 42 (Figure 7), within the textural environment established by the c subsection, a modulation in the c2 subsection leads to a lyrical melodic passage in m. 44. This atmospheric transformation, enriched by the melodic line, reaches the c3 subsection at m. 48.

**Figure 7**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 41-47

Serving an accompanying function in the c subsection, Guitar I now actively integrates into the rhythmic pattern and a canonic response to the Guitar II in the c3 subsection. This integration culminates in a unison passage, which transitions the music toward the bridge, f subsection at m. 50 (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 48-49

From m. 50 to 59 (Figure 9), the bridge between the A and B sections is structured by the f and c4 subsections. In m. 50, rhythmic fragmentation occurs as previously established longer rhythmic patterns are broken down into shorter units. By m. 53, a motif introduced in the c4 subsection is now distributed between the two guitars, creating an expanded arpeggiated texture. With a modulation to a major-like mood in m. 58, the section concludes with an abrupt cessation in m. 59, followed by a two-second silence, leading into the B Section.

**Figure 9**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 56-60



As can be seen in the figure above, the B Section commences with the inscription “Di un altro mondo” (in another world), annotated by the composer on the score. This section can be interpreted as a temporal expansion of the rhythmic material from the A Section, but within a broader and more fluid context. Once again, the two guitars engage in hocket technique, exchanging phrases in a complementary manner, as in the A Section. However, this section introduces a new rhythmic but a tricky thematic material, previously unheard in the piece, evoking an underwater realm where sound is perceived and transmitted differently. The blue circles in the Figure 10 show that, Dyens created this new atmosphere from the exact melodic material of the a subsection by adding the neapolitan chords-like appoggiatura notes, Eb to D and Bb to A.

In m. 60, the B Section commences with a triple acciaccatura, which, when tied to the succeeding note, must be executed as swiftly as possible while maintaining the regularity of the triplet structure. This articulation establishes a serene atmosphere in the g subsection, where the two guitars weave triplets through shared-note phrasing as an introductory bass line. The way Dyens' composition style leads the music to be heard as Campanella, the harp-like atmosphere in this passage.

**Figure 10**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 59-63

In m. 64 (Figure 11), while Guitar I and Guitar II sustain the triplets in the bass register, Guitar I also performs the “con saudade” melody in the upper register as simultaneously played, the h subsection by exerting the stratification technique. This melodic material in m. 64, characterized as saudade, embodies a poignant and nostalgic essence deeply rooted in Brazilian musical tradition. This multi-layered stratification, where both guitars merge to produce the timbre of a single instrument, demands exceptional precision and coordination from the performers to successfully engrave the B Section’s opening. Besides, guitarists are advised to gain experience in dividing the time in 3:4, the polyrhythmic structure, while playing g subsection as triplets, applying the melody in the four-sixteenth layout.

**Figure 11**Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 64-65

In m. 66 (Figure 12), the g1 and h1 subsections appear, but this time with Guitar I and Guitar II exchanging roles. As the piece develops, between m. 68 and 71, the accompaniment pattern from the g subsection evolves into the i subsection in m. 68, while the melodic material from the h subsection transforms into the j subsection melody. The motivic structure doubled by its size.

**Figure 12**Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 66-71

Within these subsections, dissonant notes—a recurring characteristic in Dyens's compositions—serve as structural dividing elements. These appear as extraneous eighth notes, positioned outside the metric beat, and are performed using ponticello and staccato articulation by both guitars at the phrase endings. These



fleeting moments of dissonance, briefly disrupting the musical flow, can be perceived metaphorically as the bubbles rising to the surface, offering brief glimpses of the “world” above, momentarily interrupting the submerged sonic landscape of the B Section. It can be also perceived as a referring to the end of the A section, which is disrupted with an accented dissonance chord in m. 59. These dissonances can be seen within purple circles in figures 10, 11, 12, and 13.

In m. 72 (Figure 13), the g2 subsection, and in m. 74, the g3 subsection, reintroduce the familiar triplet figures from the B Section's opening. However, now a C# trill in the upper octave enriches the orchestral texture. By m. 76, both guitars simultaneously perform the h and g subsections, yet what distinguishes this passage is that both guitars articulate the accompaniment and melodic elements concurrently, effectively blurring the distinction between the two parts to create the impression of a single instrument. This integrated approach persists as the music progresses into m. 80, in which the i1 and j1 subsections develop further, with each guitar carrying the melody in distinct octaves.

**Figure 13**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 72-80

The figure displays a musical score for two guitars, measures 72 through 80. The notation is in 2/4 time. The score is annotated with several key elements:

- Measures 72-73:** Grouped by a red bracket labeled *g2* and *lento*. A purple circle highlights a dissonant chord in measure 72.
- Measures 74-75:** Grouped by a red bracket labeled *g3* and *eco*. A purple circle highlights a dissonant chord in measure 74.
- Measures 76-77:** Grouped by a red bracket labeled *h/g*. A purple circle highlights a dissonant chord in measure 76.
- Measures 78-79:** Grouped by a red bracket labeled *h1/g1*. A purple circle highlights a dissonant chord in measure 78.
- Measure 80:** Grouped by a red bracket labeled *i1/j1*. A purple circle highlights a dissonant chord.

Other annotations include dynamic markings (*p*, *mf*, *sf*), articulation (*metal.*), and performance instructions (*ord.*, *sub.*, *tempo giusto*). The score shows complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes.

Between m. 84 and 94 (Figure 14), a ten-measures. codetta, structured by the k, l, l1, and m subsections, functions as a transitional link reconnecting the B Section to the A Section. In contrast to the expansive and highly developed A and B Sections, this C-section-like codetta passage can be metaphorically described as a palate cleanser, akin to an aperitif served between two main courses. It provides a momentary respite, allowing the listener to re-engage with the returning A Section with renewed focus. The material has a rhythmic Brazilian dance-like character. Each two-bar subsection increases the tempo gradually from 56bpm to 74bpm.

**Figure 14**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 83-88

The musical score for measures 83-88 of Roland Dyens' *Niterói* is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a guitar I staff (top) and a guitar II staff (bottom). The first system (measures 83-84) is marked *rit. poco, pesante* and *con dolore*. The second system (measures 85-86) is marked *accel. poco* and *Tempo naturale ♩ = ca 60 \**. The third system (measures 87-88) is marked *Tempo naturale ♩ = 69*. Red brackets and letters (k, l, l1, m) indicate subsections. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *mp*, *sfz*, and *p*. Fingerings and articulations are indicated throughout.

At m. 90 (Figure 15), the m subsection begins from the remnants of the f subsection. Guitar II introduces an effect achieved by gently rocking the guitar after executing harmonic chords, resulting in a major key inflection reminiscent of the transition from A to B, now marking the return from B to A. At the end of m. 91, the melodic motif in the Guitar II is the modulated line of the f section. The same motif is shown as a canon between two guitars in m. 93 which ends by dissolving to the original tone of the f subsection.

**Figure 15**

 Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 89-94

The musical score for measures 89-94 of Roland Dyens's *Niterói* is presented for two guitars. The score includes various dynamics and performance instructions. Red circles and a red box labeled 'A' highlight specific musical phrases and sections.

The reappearance of the A Section in m. 94 remains largely unchanged (Figure 16), apart from the snare drum roll effect and the chordal expressions executed by Guitar II in m. 95.

**Figure 16**

 Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 95-96

The musical score for measures 95-96 of Roland Dyens's *Niterói* is presented for two guitars. The score includes various dynamics and performance instructions. A green oval highlights a specific musical phrase in measure 95.



In m. 113 (Figure 17), the *f*, and *c4* subsections, previously functioning as the bridge from A to B, reappear, now serving as a transition from A to the coda. In m. 118, the introductory motif from the *a* subsection reappears as the Coda Section. In m. 134, the *a3* subsection, is presented as a thirteen-measures unit, and the orchestration is expanded as the music develops. Here, each guitar simultaneously executes two distinct musical layers using the *hocket* technique—the upper register carrying a chordal, dance-like structure, while the bass register reiterates the melodic material from the *a* subsection.

**Figure 17**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 132-135

Between m. 150 and 154 (Figure 18), the *n* subsection emerges as an interlude which disrupting the rhythmic flow and can be described as a one-time used block idea. This section establishes smooth and continuous motion through the *hocket-glissando* technique, followed by *hocket-pitch* manipulation via tuning peg adjustments as an extended glissando technique.

**Figure 18**

Roland Dyens, *Niterói* Measures 150-154

From m. 162 to 169 (Figure 19), the two guitars engage in a call-and-response musical dialogue, propelling the piece towards its finale through two distinct percussive techniques. The first involves striking the soundboard with the wrist using eighth-note strokes, while the second features a bass line articulated with the slap technique on the 6th string in triplets. Throughout this passage, dissonant notes—another defining characteristic of Dyens's style—resurface. By m. 170, Guitar II introduces additional dissonant elements, culminating in a unison passage where the pitch clashes throughout the piece converge to bring the composition to a resolute conclusion.

### Figure 19

*Roland Dyens, Niterói Measures 162-172*

[illegible]



#### 4. DISCUSSION

An analysis of Roland Dyens's duo guitar works reveals two key creative periods: the early 1990s and 2010, the years preceding his passing. Though Dyens did not produce a vast number of works for guitar duo, his compositional approach—developing a musical language built on the experience of solo guitar skills and expanding it for two guitars—remains evident in both his early and late duo pieces. His eclectic compositional style combined with his explorations of extended guitar techniques resulted in a unique and recognizable guitar voice. *Niterói*, in this manner, represents a refined synthesis of these explorations, demonstrating remarkable clarity in musical interaction and structure.

A defining feature of *Niterói* is Dyens's use of the *hocket* technique, a rarely employed approach in classical guitar duo music. However, this technique is not unique to *Niterói*; it can also be observed in Dyens's earlier duo compositions. As illustrated in Figures 20 and 21, Dyens utilized the *hocket* technique in *Côte Nord* and *ConcertOmaggio*, demonstrating his ongoing exploration of interwoven textures and rhythmic interplay in guitar duet writing.

**Figure 20**

Roland Dyens, *Côte Nord* – First Mov. Pg.9

The musical score for *Côte Nord* – First Movement, Page 9, by Roland Dyens, is presented for two guitars. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a variety of musical notations and techniques. Red circles and lines highlight specific hocket techniques, where notes are passed between the two guitars. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *sfz*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*, as well as articulation like *metal.*, *rosace*, *touche*, and *pouce pulpé*. Tempo and mood changes are indicated by *rall. molto*, *vivo subito (III)*, *Più agitato*, and *accelerando*. The score is divided into measures with Roman numerals (XIV, III, IV, IV) and includes a *breve* section at the beginning.

**Figure 21**Roland Dyens, *ConcertOmaggio* – Third Mov. Measures 92-94

The musical score for measures 92-94 of the third movement of *ConcertOmaggio* by Roland Dyens. The score is written for two guitars and a string quartet. The guitars play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with some notes circled in red and connected by lines to illustrate a hocket technique. The string quartet provides a harmonic accompaniment, with each instrument marked with a 'compter' (count) and a specific note value. The score is in 4/4 time and includes dynamic markings like *sfz* and *(ff)*.

This technique, which requires precise synchronization between the two guitars, fosters the illusion of a single, seamless instrument. Dyens employs it as a compositional device to enhance musical cohesion. At the beginning of the A section, the hocket technique creates a rhythmic interplay between guitars, leading to a unified sonority, whereas, at the beginning of the B section, the texture transforms into a *Campanella*, a harp-like atmospheric effect that plays a fundamental role in shaping the piece's expressive power. Unlike *Comme des Grands*, another late duo work by Dyens written for younger guitarists, *Niterói* is not a study but rather a guide to advanced musicianship, demanding deep sensitivity to timing, unified sonority, articulation, and ensemble cohesion.

Dyens's compositional skills in *Niterói* also mark a shift in his treatment of the guitar duo format. His earlier duo works often assigned distinct, independent roles to each guitar. In contrast, *Niterói* aspires to an unprecedented level of unity, requiring performers to achieve near-perfect tonal blending and balance. This demand elevates the piece beyond technical execution, transforming it into an opportunity to engage in musical dialogue and interpretation at the highest level. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the rhythmically energetic outer sections with the introspective B section creates interpretative challenges that further cement *Niterói* as a pedagogical milestone for professional guitarists.

Mastering *Niterói* requires more than technical precision; it calls for a profound understanding of Dyens's stylistic idioms, notably his fusion of jazz and Brazilian influences. The work embodies the essence of Dyens's musical identity, combining rhythmic vitality with melancholic *saudade*. As such, *Niterói* is not only an essential addition to the guitar duo repertoire but also a valuable pedagogical tool, fostering ensemble cohesion, interpretative depth, and stylistic awareness, as explained above.

## 5. CONCLUSION

*Niterói* stands as a testament to Roland Dyens's distinctive compositional voice and his innovative vision for the guitar duo. Drawing inspiration from the vibrant Brazilian landscape and the deeply nostalgic essence of *saudade*, Dyens constructs a work that seamlessly interweaves rhythmic drive with lyrical introspection. The analysis presented in this study underscores *Niterói* as a culmination of Dyens's explorations in guitar writing, particularly his concept of unified sonority.

The integration of the hocket technique, intricate rhythmic interplay, and contrasting musical textures—especially the evocative “underwater” atmosphere of the B section—distinguishes *Niterói* within the guitar duo repertoire. More than a concert piece, the work embodies an advanced pedagogical approach, challenging performers to refine their synchronization, tonal balance, and musical conversation.

Beyond its artistic and technical merits, *Niterói* holds a significant place in the evolution of guitar duo literature. Its structural ingenuity and expressive depth provide a rich resource for both performers and scholars seeking insight into Dyens’s musical language. Future studies might compare *Niterói* with other contemporary duo compositions, further exploring its influence on modern guitar repertoire.

In sum, *Niterói* is a mature and compelling example of Dyens’s artistic and pedagogical vision. As a work that simultaneously challenges and inspires, it solidifies Dyens’s legacy as one of the most innovative composers in classical guitar history.

#### **Ethical approval**

This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve human, animal or sensitive data.

#### **Author contribution**

Study conception and design: EÜ, AG; data collection: EÜ, AG; analysis and interpretation of results: EÜ, AG; draft manuscript preparation: EÜ. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

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