

## Performer's notes (by Tony Peña)

Although the standard guitar repertoire includes some passages of minimal language, mainly represented by Leo Brouwer's works, there are not many pieces completely developed in that style of composition. With that in mind, it was very challenging to approach the study of the entire guitar works of Tom Johnson. Fortunately, the support of the musical producer was crucial to go into Johnson's style in depth, considering that Javier Ruiz has been his student and editor.

Every time a performer faces a new genre, with demanding requirements, it is necessary to refine some skills and acquire new ones. In particular, the development of a balance between the two hands has allowed me to play complex polyphonic textures with a stable sense of pulse, beyond the click of the metronome. Hence it is feasible to express the minimal discourse with an organic rhythm, both accurate and flexible. Moreover, the use of an extremely slow metronome tempo (e.g. 25 bpm) and the independence of the right thumb have helped me to build up an effective routine practice.

Perhaps the most important decision was to select the color of the sound. Among several options, Javier and I preferred to use the electric guitar because of the wide range of timbres and sustaining capabilities, though this latter aspect implies an effective use of damping.

This project tries to compile the whole guitar production of Johnson, encompassing more than 40 years of music. I was encouraged by Javier to add a guitar version of *Septapede*, an important 1973 piano piece in Johnson's catalogue. The experience of adapting those seven piano keys to six guitar strings in a new way, led to a set of technical notes to support the study.

Finally, I would like to mention my personal process during this project. A couple of years ago, I was entranced by *Weaving*, the third movement of *Arpeggios*, probably because the writing texture was closer to my previous influences. The recording of the whole piece made me realize how simplicity can be complex at times, demanding subtle nuances of expression and a pristine performing of the texture. And as I was studying every new score, I taught myself how to make audible the refined aspects of Tom Johnson style.