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## Leszek Wojtal's *Litania* (2023) for solo guitar: between the composer's and piece's intention

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### Abstract

Leszek Wojtal's *Litania* for solo guitar (2023) constitutes a starting point for the author's reflection regarding the relationship between the composer's intention and the autonomy of the musical piece. The paper discusses the origins of the composition, its formal structure, its sound and some performance-related issues, paying particular attention to the need for the introduction of interpretation techniques informed by the characteristics of classical guitar and this piece in particular. This study contributes to the broader discussion on the performer's role in shaping a piece of music.

**Keywords:** *Litania* for solo guitar, Leszek Wojtal, 21<sup>st</sup>-century guitar literature, contemporary music performance.

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## Introduction

*Litania* for solo guitar (2023) by Leszek Wojtal is a composition dedicated to this paper's author. So far, it has only been performed by the author from a manuscript provided by the composer. The work premiered in November 2023 and has since become a staple of the "addressee's" repertoire. It was presented at many prestigious concerts and festivals, including XXXIII Międzynarodowa Dekada Muzyki Organowej, Chóralnej i Kameralnej ("The 33<sup>rd</sup> International Decade of Organ, Choir and Chamber Music", Cieszyn/Český Těšín), Podgórskie Letnie Koncerty ("Podgórze Summer Concerts", Kraków) and the "Wieczory Uniwersyteckie" ("University Evenings") series in the Bronisław Huberman Częstochowa Philharmonic. It was also presented at the V Konferencja Naukowo-Artystyczna Doktorantów i Młodych Naukowców "Oblicza gitary w badaniach naukowych" (The 5<sup>th</sup> Scientific and Artistic Conference of PhD Students and Young Researchers "The Guitar in Scientific Research"). A video recording of the piece has also been made. The aforementioned experiences, closely tied to the reception of a work of music, became the starting point for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the composer's intention and the work's autonomy. These experiences also sparked a reflection on the performer as a co-creator of the composition's final sound and interpretation.

### 1. Leszek Wojtal – A Biographical Sketch

In order to better understand the origins and the musical language of *Litania*, it is worth taking a closer look at its creator, a man of many interests and with a rich collection of works. Leszek Wojtal, born on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1980 in Kraków, is a versatile artist: a composer, guitarist, educator, photographer, artisan and keen climber. He graduated with distinction from Państwowe Liceum Muzyczne (State Music Conservatory) in Kraków. He is also a graduate of the guitar program of the Instrumental Faculty at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków under prof. dr. hab. Michał Nagy, as well as the Faculty of Composition, Interpretation and Music Education at the same university, specializing in composition under prof. dr. hab. Marcel Chyrzyński. In addition, he studied computer composition under prof. dr. hab. Marek Chołoniewski. Already as a student, he developed a deep interest in Italian avant-garde music, particularly Luciano Berio's solo works, which would later influence *Litania* as well.

Wojtal's works consist primarily of chamber music pieces for different instrumental and vocal-instrumental settings, although works for solo guitar and guitar accompanied by other instruments naturally hold a special place among his compositions. The most important series include: *Landscapes* (stand-alone chamber music pieces for different ensembles, e.g. guitar and electronic sound,

including improvisation)<sup>1</sup> and *Z głębi pustej doliny* (*From the Depths of an Empty Valley*, duets for flute with a non-bowed string instrument, such as guitar or piano), which reflect upon the human psyche when confronted with the monumental and raw mountainous landscape. Besides pieces written for the stage, an educational trend can also be observed in Wojtal's work, e.g. in *Osiem etiud* (*Eight Studies*) for guitar.

Many of Wojtal's works have premiered and been performed at important cultural venues in Poland (including concert halls in Kraków and Częstochowa, the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music, and others) as part of several editions of the Krakow International Festival of Composers and the aforementioned festivals and concert cycles.

Below is a list of Wojtal's works for guitar,<sup>2</sup> according to Internetowy Katalog Polskiej Muzyki Gitarowej XX i XXI wieku ("The Online Catalogue of Polish Guitar Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century"),<sup>3</sup> presented in alphabetical order:

- *A due* for guitar and piano (2017–2018)
- *Brouweriada* a study à la Leo Brouwer for guitar (1998)
- *Chorągiewka i fantazja* for guitar (1998)
- *F.A.C.E.* for guitar and drums (2016)
- *Kontre(trans)Dans* for cello and guitar (2019)
- *Landscape III* for electronic sound and guitar (2005)
- *Landscape V* for flute and three guitars (2015)
- *Lento* for guitar (2008)
- *Litania* for solo guitar (2023)
- *mo(VE)ment(s)* for guitar and harp (2017)
- *Muzyka do nieistniejącego filmu* for guitar
- *November Preludes* for guitar (2022)
- *Obraz spoza wystawy* for guitar and drums (2014–2015)
- *Osiem etiud* for guitar (2019)
- *Preludia kolędowe* for guitar (2022)
- *Tandem* for violin and guitar
- *Toccatina after Carcassi* for two guitars
- *Trzy utwory* for guitar (1998)
- *Z głębi pustej doliny III* for flute and guitar (2025)

## 2. *Litania* for Solo Guitar – Origins, Inspirations and Structure

*Litania* was written in 2023 at the initiative of the author of this study, which arose from the desire to perform universal solo guitar music penned by a Polish

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.sme.amuz.krakow.pl/pages/Intermedium3.pdf> [access: 23.06.2025].

<sup>2</sup> To date, a complete catalogue of L. Wojtal's works has not yet been created.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://nagitare.pl/catalogue/composer/350> [access: 23.06.2025].

composer. At the same time, an additional impulse emerged from the ambition to expand contemporary guitar music with compositions suitable not only for concert halls, but also sacred spaces, particularly for organ and chamber music festivals held in churches. Taking into account current worship regulations, which specify the kinds of music appropriate for presentation in churches, it was important to find a piece of music capable of meeting the formal criteria while being characterized by high artistic value and sharp expression. The search for a suitable composition continued for several years, yet it remained unsatisfactory. To address these needs, Wojtal wrote *Litania* – a moving piece with a sacred, contemplative character, based on the medieval *Dies iae* sequence. This collaboration also had a personal dimension, emphasized by the dedication to the performer. This gesture expresses the creative dialogue between the composer and the interpreter, which is an important aspect of the work's reception.

According to the composer, the inspirations that were influential for the piece in question include two 20<sup>th</sup>-century *Litanies*. The lyrics of the first, *Litany for the Whale* (1980) by John Cage (1912–1992), are based solely on the word "whale", with each letter performed *a capella*<sup>4</sup> by two independent voices singing in the style of traditional monodic liturgical chants.<sup>5</sup> This composition constitutes a synthesis of spirituality and evolution of old religious forms, displayed through a modern-day lens.<sup>6</sup> The second source of inspiration, *Litanies* for organ, Op. 79/JA 119 (1937) by Jehan Alain (1911–1940), is an improvised work with a rich palette of affects, ranging from cheerful and reflective to disturbing and serious. The publication ends with an emblematic comment<sup>7</sup>: "When the Christian soul in its distress finds no new words to implore God's mercy, it repeats endlessly the same invocation [...]" . The idea of prayer-like repetition, expressed through the intensification and transformation of a theme, can also be found in Wojtal's work. Another catalyst for the composer's artistic exploration was the *Sequenzas* series (1958–2002) by Luciano Berio (1925–2003), a collection of fourteen solo works utilizing augmented performance techniques, i.e. unconventional ways of singing and playing, which aim to achieve unusual effects and timbres.<sup>8</sup> The sequentiality of texture-timbre models was particularly inspiring for Wojtal.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: [https://www.johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work\\_ID=111](https://www.johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=111) [access: 23.03.2025].

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://niezla-sztuka.blogspot.com/2016/> [access: 23.03.2025].

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://kromerfestivalbiecz.pl/litany-for-the-whale/> [access: 23.03.2025].

<sup>7</sup> Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan, Allen Schrott, *All Music Guide to Classical Music: The Definitive Guide to Classical Music*, Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005, pp. 12–13.

<sup>8</sup> See Arnold Whittall, *Berio's Sequenzas: Essays on Performance, Composition and Analysis*. Ed. by Janet K. Halfyard, „Music and Letters” 2008, vol. 89, no. 4, pp. 677–679 [doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcn031].

## Background

Proceeding with the analysis of the work, it is important to pay attention to several significant compositional techniques applied to the piece as a whole. A relevant factor is the presence of scordatura. String ⑥<sup>9</sup> needs to be tuned down from E to Eb, which triggers a change in sound and texture. The entirety of the piece is performed using only the four lowest strings, without the use of strings ① and ②, while string ⑤ carries the melody. Such a low register affects the timbre (making it warmer and darker) and the perception of dynamics (which can be regarded as more subtle and quiet). According to the composer, all of these means serve to convey the soothing character and contemplative atmosphere of *Litania*, whose name alone references a specific prayer form (litany). The spiritual reference of the piece is also a consequence of it being rooted in material drawn from traditional religious music. The composition is based on the initial motif of the medieval *Dies irae*<sup>10</sup> sequence. Thus, a modal scale was used (the pattern of intervals used in the sequence corresponds to the seven-tone church Lydian mode, starting from F,<sup>11</sup> used in the Middle Ages for liturgical purposes), enhancing the religious dimension of the work (though its expressive layer lacks a direct reference to the eschatological meaning of Judgement Day). Form-shaping factors include the use of changing meters (with a change occurring in nearly every bar), as well as the sequentiality and alternation of specific models of texture and sound. The use of augmented performance techniques is also necessary.

## Structure of the Piece

The piece is composed of three movements: a **prologue** (*Largo/Lento*) containing a preview of the motifs to be found in the main part; a **central link** based primarily on the *arpeggio p, i, p, m, p, a*<sup>12</sup> sequence, including a climactic middle

<sup>9</sup> Other solutions regarding scordatura will be proposed later in the article.

<sup>10</sup> *Dies irae* (Latin for “Day of Wrath”) is a medieval sequence that was incorporated into the liturgy of the Catholic Church’s funeral mass in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its origins date back to the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, it was an integral part of funeral rites; after the liturgical reforms of the 1960s, its regular performance as part of funeral masses was discontinued. Despite this, the *Dies irae* has retained a strong cultural and musical influence, inspiring numerous compositions over the centuries. It is written in octosyllables (trochaic tetrameters) in three-line stanzas with a single rhyme. This is known as the *Dies irae* stanza or bugle call stanza. See Wiktor Jarosław Darasz, *Mały przewodnik po wierszu polskim*, Kraków 2003, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> Andrzej Chodkowski (red.), *Kościelne skale, Gregoriański chorągiewki* [entries], [in]: *Encyklopedia muzyki*, PWN, Warszawa 1995, pp. 467, 323–325, Jerzy Habela, *Modalne skale* [entry], [in]: *Słowniczek muzyczny*, PWM, Warszawa 1968, p. 116.

<sup>12</sup> *p, i, m, a* – these are commonly used symbols to designate the fingers of a classical guitarist’s right hand: thumb, index, middle and ring finger, respectively.

part; and **an epilogue** with musical material and instrumental techniques which connect it to the previous sections (ensuring a formal coherence of the composition as a whole).

## PROLOGUE

The prologue begins with a two-part *Largo* passage written on two staves. The composer starts with a single Eb sound, played *forte* (*sf*) with a clearly marked accent on the first beats, functioning as a pedal note in the initial five bars. Against this background, halfway through the second bar, a second voice emerges starting as a one-note motif and gradually evolving into a two-, four- and, again, two-note motif, with steadily decreasing rhythmic values (see figure 1). The passage ends with two triads: a wide (eb, f, g<sup>1</sup>) chord, followed by a (d, a, d<sup>1</sup>) chord, evoking the medieval consonance of fourths and fifths. In the latter chord, as well as in most of the harmonic chords (typically played on the 12<sup>th</sup> fret), the composer introduces an effect provisionally called “wah-wah”, marked in the manuscript with a wavy line. The effect is achieved by means of pressing the right hand flatly to the soundboard in a delicate, pulsating manner.

**LITANIA**  
na gitars solo  
6 = Eb  
largo

measures 1-4:

- Measure 1: (1) (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 2: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 3: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 4: (6)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$

Measure 5 (f (sf)):

- Measure 5: (1) (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 6: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 7: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 8: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$

Measure 9 (lento):

- Measure 9: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 10: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 11: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$
- Measure 12: (3)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (4)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$  (5)  $\downarrow$   $\downarrow$

Fig 1. Beginning snippet of Wojtal's *Litania*

The prologue also includes a passage called *Lento*. Here, the composer continues to develop the motif stemming from the first voice of *Largo*, alongside long harmonic chords. In addition, he introduces the *arpeggio*: *p, i, p, m, p, a* sequence, characteristic of the central link and epilogue.

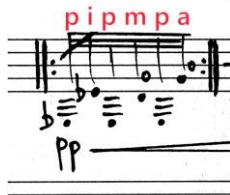


Fig. 2. Litania's leitmotif: arpeggio – *p, i, p, m, p, a*

An interesting effect which utilizes augmented performance techniques is the slapping of the  $e_b$ , found on the 6<sup>th</sup> fret of string ⑤, with a right-hand finger. In the manuscript, it is marked with an "x" written inside the note.

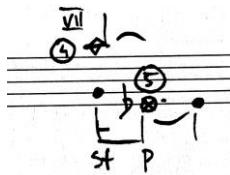


Fig. 3. The  $e_b$  sound, achieved by slapping string ⑤ on the 6<sup>th</sup> fret with a right-hand finger

The prologue closes with a four-tone *arpeggio* sequence, built from the early sounds of the central link. The recurring use of fermatas on long notes and frequent meter changes give it a rather relaxed character.

#### CENTRAL LINK

The central link can be divided into four segments. The opening segment is almost completely based on one formula *arpeggio*: *p, i, p, m, p, a* (see figure 2), with only two exceptions. This pattern is interrupted by *legato* interjections of varying lengths, constituting a contrasting second voice, which forms a dialogue with the melody and is characterized by its unique dramaturgy. It is also in this section that the *Dies irae* motif appears for the first time. Initially, functions as a musical reference. The composer begins in a concealed manner, only marking the melodic movement, played *piano* (*pp*), with a minimal number of tones. To this end, he uses  $e_b$  and  $f$  interchangeably as the second note of the *arpeggio* sequence. Consequently, the accent is moved towards one of the weakest parts of the bar. Leading melodic sounds are always played on string ⑤ with the *i* finger, which contributes to the timbre of the melody becoming more uniform across the segment.

The following section introduces motifs that vary in terms of the number of sounds. These constitute a slight transformation of either the beginning or the end of *Dies irae*'s initial melody. Nevertheless, they serve as a kind of musical

riddle to be solved by the listener. Their constant unfolding and withdrawing makes the whole segment feel improvised. Furthermore, the persistent repetitions of the evolved motif evoke associations with recurring prayer invocations, typically found in litanies. This segment is illustrated in table 1.

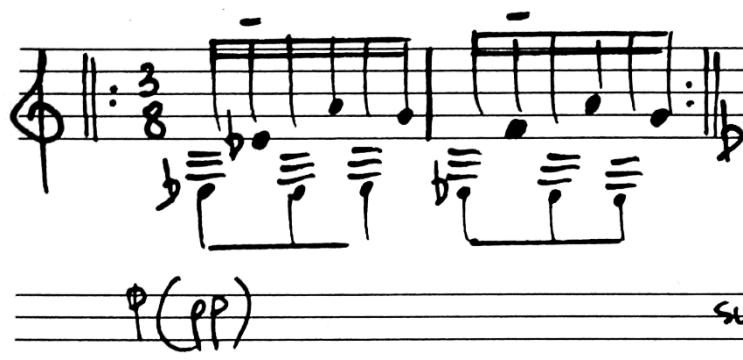


Fig. 4. Introducing melodic movement in the second sound of the *arpeggio* sequence

Table 1. Central link, the 1<sup>st</sup> segment – musical references to the beginning section of the *Dies irae* motif

Melodic structure, interjections	The level of reference to the initial <i>Dies irae</i> motif
bb, bb, bb, a, a, g, g, [HI], [HI]	using the motif's beginning notes
bb, bb, a, [LI-4], g, g, [HI], [HI]	using the motif's beginning notes
bb, a, [LI-8]	using the motif's beginning notes
bb, g, a, [LI-9]	using the motif's beginning notes
f, g, [HI]	referencing the end of the motif
f, g, [HI]	referencing the end of the motif
[LI-5]	
[LI-9]: bb, a, bb, g, a, [LI-9], f, g, g, [HI]	the motif is quoted directly
f, g, g, [HI]	“echo”/the ending of the motif sounds out

[HI]: harmonic interjection, based on a leading *arpeggio* pattern; [LI]: legato interjection, the number next to it indicates the number of notes it contains.

Source: the author's own analysis

Interestingly, in Wojtal's *Litania* the quoted passage starts from B<sub>b</sub>, indicating that a transposed modal scale is used. The choice of key is most likely motivated by the performance characteristics of the classical guitar, as it allows the playing of the melody in its entirety on one string, while preserving the most important building block of the work: the aforementioned *arpeggio* sequence.

The second segment of the central link references the first one through its texture. The *arpeggio* sequence (with melodic sounds played on string ⑤) and contrastive *legato* interjections remain, though the harmonic interjections are missing. Because the melody moves down an octave, the timbre changes. In this section, the melodic motif expands from a three- to a five- and, finally, a six-note sequence (see table 2).

Table 2. Central link, the 2<sup>nd</sup> segment – evolution of the melodic motif referencing the initial *Dies irae* sequence

Melodic structure, interjections	The level of reference to the initial <i>Dies irae</i> motif
B <sub>b</sub> , B <sub>b</sub> , C, [LI-4]	using the first note of the motif's beginning with a change in the melody's direction
B <sub>b</sub> , B <sub>b</sub> , C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, [LI-7]	expansion of the motif
B <sub>b</sub> , B <sub>b</sub> , C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, g	expansion of the motif

[LI]: legato interjection.

Source: the author's own analysis

It is worth mentioning that the final sound of the third motif (g) was moved up one octave. Similarly to what was observed before, this operation seemingly aims to restrict the melodic line to string ⑤. The segment ends with a five-bar, coda-like passage played *forte* (f).

The following (third) segment of the central link is climactic in nature. The composer introduces a new sequence: *arpeggio pp, a, m, i, p* in a quintuplet movement (sixteenth-note quintuplet). The chords move up and down the bass strings with a consistent finger shape, always comprised of a fifth and an octave (referencing the aesthetic of medieval music) and an open string ③,<sup>13</sup> allowing the *Dies irae* motif to be clearly audible. The following steps of the melody lie on string ⑥ and are obtained by fluid position changes (using *glissando*) – starting with the 7<sup>th</sup> position, then moving through the 6<sup>th</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup> again, then the 4<sup>th</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Such chords – characterized by shifting the same fingering through different positions and containing open strings – are frequently found in the works of Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959), one of the most important guitar composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is therefore reasonable to assume that his works may also have inspired L. Wojtal when writing *Litany*.

and the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and finally ending with the 4<sup>th</sup> position. This part also reintroduces the leading *arpeggio* sequence, which occurs four times at the beginning and in the end, and one time in the middle section. The segment ends with a trill played *fortissimo (ff)* using fingers of the right and left hand interchangeably, followed by a four-note motif: f, g, g<sub>b</sub>, harmonic d (see Figure 5).

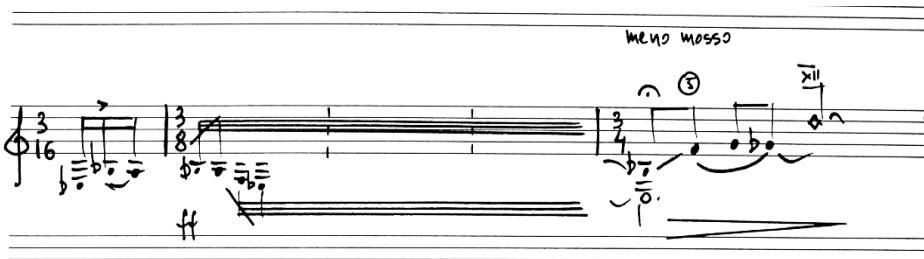


Fig. 5. The ending of the climactic section of *Litania* with the characteristic trill performed interchangeably by the right and the left hand

The fourth segment, which closes the central link through the use of the same motif, draws on the sound of the second segment and can be viewed as its extension. It makes use of a sequence of progressively shortening motifs intertwined with interjections, which, by contrast, become progressively longer (with the exception of the harmonic interjection after the second motif). These interjections fall into different types (legato interjections, harmonic interjections and others, see table 3) and create a separate narrative plane, which engages in a dialogue with the melody contained in the *arpeggio* sequence.

Table 3. Central link, the 4<sup>th</sup> segment – continuation of the evolution of the motif from the 2<sup>nd</sup> segment of the central link

Melodic structure, interjections	References to the motif from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> segment
B <sub>b</sub> , B <sub>b</sub> , C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, [LI-4]	using the second motif
B <sub>b</sub> , B <sub>b</sub> , C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, [HI-1]	using the second motif
B <sub>b</sub> , C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, [HI-2]	motif fades out, the number of notes in HI increases
C, B <sub>b</sub> , A, [HI-5]	motif fades out, the number of notes in HI increases
B <sub>b</sub> , A, [I-10]	motif fades out, the number of notes in HI increases

[LI]: legato interjection, [HI]: harmonic interjection, [I]: interjection.

Source: the author's own analysis

The central link is followed by a short bridge in the form of a four-sound model played *legato*.

#### EPILOGUE

The epilogue is constructed from intertwined sound models of varying lengths: the leading *arpeggio* sequence and triads (e<sub>b</sub>, a, d) as chords in the form of harmonics on the 12<sup>th</sup> fret. A two-bar chord passage called *lento pesante* appears once, and the “wah-wah” effect from the prologue returns. Similarly to previous movements, this part is characterized by grand expression and internal contrasts, while its course can be described as static and linear. Everything leads to a fading, “receding” *niente* ending, played *pianississimo possibile* (ppp) and built exclusively from the *arpeggio p, i, p, m, p, a* sequence, which dominates the entire piece.

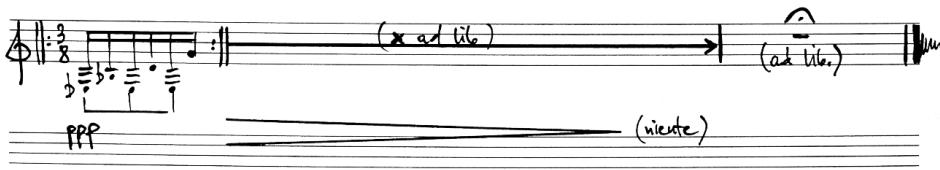


Fig. 6. The ending of Wojtal's *Litania*

### 3. Interpretation- and Performance-Related Issues

During the preparations for stage performances of *Litania*, the author encountered several performance-related issues. These prompted many considerations on how to achieve the best sound and convey the composer's intentions most adequately. Although the musical notation was very precise, some fragments caused interpretative doubts, which were consulted with the composer on an ongoing basis.

The process of learning the piece proved to be challenging, most notably due to the irregular meter and the necessity to memorize sequences of motifs with similar sound, but different lengths. The guitarist's first step was finding the key needed to organize the composer's intentions, which were at times formulated in an almost mathematical manner. This task involved internalizing the frequently changing number of sound model repetitions and durations of sounds and chords, among other things. In spite of moments of doubt, the performer persisted in her mission to accurately represent the musical notation and memorize the piece, feeling that this was necessary in order to fully connect with the music and interpret it more consciously. As a next step, attention was shifted to

expression and dramaturgy, with simultaneous care for a faithful implementation of all of the composer's suggestions. During the search for the best possible interpretation, many reflections arose regarding the **relationship between the composer's intention and the autonomy of a work of music**, as well as **the role of the performer in the process of determining the piece's final shape**. At this stage, the author often referred to the idea formulated by Umberto Eco (1932–2016). This Italian semiotician pointed to the complicated relationship between the author and the text, noting that there can be a match or a mismatch between the author's intention and the intention of his work, which may produce its own effects that are independent of the author.<sup>14</sup> A confirmation of this notion can also be found in *Litania*, where the work itself dictated certain approaches to performance and interpretation. These are independent of the composer's assumptions (though they became the subject of frequent discussions with Wojtal) and include tuning strings ① and ② down to eb<sup>1</sup> and bb,<sup>15</sup> respectively. This decision is motivated by the benefit of achieving increased resonance and pragmatic reasons. By design, *Litania* is rich in sound and allows different figures and textural models to intertwine. The looped motif builds a trance-like atmosphere and creates a unique aura, while the dark timbre and frequent occurrence of the sounds eb and bb push the harmony towards flat keys. The use of this type of scordatura also prevents accidental disturbances in harmony, which could arise from unintentional jostling of the unused string ②, for example during the fast-paced *arpeggio* sequences.

Another problem was caused by the fact that *Litania* is only performed using the four lowest strings. In the piece's culminating section, the *Dies irae* motif occurs, as mentioned, in chords built from fourths and fifths played *fortissimo* (ff) and sliding across the bass strings using *glissando*. The aesthetic interpretation assumptions did not account for the presence of buzzing sounds, which can occur quite easily in that register and could not be eliminated completely. For this reason, it was necessary to replace *glissando* with another technique, namely *portamento*. Obtaining optimal, possibly selective and yet pastel-like timbre became a priority and served to prevent the listener's attention from shifting towards unwanted sound effects.

Another important change "enforced" by the piece regarded the abandonment of the previously mentioned "wah-wah" effect in favour of a much sharper modulation of the long chords' sound. This modulation is achieved by moving the instrument relative to different planes. The effect evokes the rocking motion of church bells and the swinging of the thurible during church services. Its visual

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<sup>14</sup> U. Eco, *Pomiędzy autorem i tekstem* [in:] *Interpretacja i nadinterpretacja*, translated by T. Biedroń, Znak, Kraków 2008, pp. 76–98.

<sup>15</sup> The notes of the open strings without scordatura ① and ② are e<sup>1</sup> and b (author's note).

nature makes it a means of artistic expression that is interesting for the audience and creates an atmosphere of mysticism and contemplation. What is more, using a spatially planned and carefully calculated number of movements allows the time spent on long-sounding notes (e.g. single chords in bars 7/4 and 9/4) to be filled in a creative way.

The months spent working on *Litania* and its many stage performances made it possible for the artist to develop a variety of original solutions. The most significant examples include well-thought-out fingering, timbre and the use of augmented performance techniques. These elements ensure the interpretative integrity of the piece and permit an execution of both the composer's and the work's intention as fully as possible, while also animating the composition. From the point of view of the performer, it is important that Wojtal treats *Litania* as an open-form piece. Consequently, he leaves ample room for individual interpretation, creating an opportunity for creative interaction between the musical notation, the composer and the performer.

## Summary

Reaching for music literature that has not yet been performed, discovering it and showing its beauty and artistic value to others is a source of satisfaction and an important developmental stimulus for the guitarist. Challenging oneself with such works allows for a deeper understanding of contemporary music's aesthetics and enriches the performer's skillset with a new range of interpretative means. The work on *Litania* also demanded significant engagement and creativity in the search for the right sound and expression. This effort translated into intense emotions experienced during concerts by the artist and the listeners alike, which should be viewed as one of the piece's greatest assets. Wojtal's *Litania* thus emerges as a deeply moving work of music, characterized by mysticism and expressiveness. Simultaneously, it serves as an example of a harmonious coexistence of the composer's intention, the work's own autonomy, and the performer's creative role. The author hopes that this piece will become a staple of the modern guitar repertoire for the stage and will be seen by classical guitarists as an inspiration for further exploration of contemporary guitar music.

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## *Litanie* (2023) na gitarę solo Leszka Wojtala – między intencją kompozytora a intencją dzieła

### Streszczenie

*Litanie* na gitarę solo (2023) Leszka Wojtala stanowi dla autorki pracy punkt wyjścia do refleksji nad relacją między intencją kompozytora a autonomią dzieła muzycznego. Artykuł omawia genezę kompozycji, jej strukturę formalną, materiał dźwiękowy oraz kwestie wykonawcze, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem konieczności wprowadzenia rozwiązań interpretacyjnych wynikających ze specyfiki gitary klasycznej, ale i utworu. Opracowanie to wpisuje się tym samym w szerszą dyskusję nad rolą wykonawcy w ostatecznym kształcie dzieła muzycznego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *Litanie* na gitarę solo, Leszek Wojtal, literatura gitarowa XXI wieku, problemy wykonawcze muzyki współczesnej.