MUSIC AS A COMMUNICATIVE ART: KURTÂG, LACHENMANN, PEARSON

BY

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I introduce and defend the notion of 'communicative music,' describing it both as a compositional orientation and applying it as an analytical lens to three works of music: Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel* for solo piano, György Kurtág's *Játékok Vol. I* for solo piano, and my own *Crazy Weather* for chamber orchestra. In this paper I define communication as an interpersonal activity aimed at understanding what is meant and/or being understood in what one means. Communicative music, by my lights, is *not* simply 'music that communicates' or even 'music that communicates particularly effectively,' but is instead music that is preoccupied with, focused on, or particularly guided by the elements and challenges of the communicative activity.

To begin, I contextualize the musical artform and its communicative potential relative to other artforms, primarily painting, photography, and poetry. I use the scholarship of various critics, historians, theorists, and philosophers to derive a set of artistically wrought communicative characteristics and articulate a nascent vocabulary for describing communicative art: as anti-theatrical, anti-affective, phenomenological, and ostensive.

I then present the artform of music as posing particular challenges to the communicatively-minded composer—the multiplicity problem, the language problem, and the passive listener problem—and describe potential strategies composers might therefore employ to deal with such problems: using ostension, eliding together communicative junctures, and employing flexible or 'pedagogically shaped' musical structures. I analyze the three works listed above, describing how each work employs these communicative strategies in different ways.

Finally, I conclude by considering the potential value of this communicative approach for composers os music who are interested in unifying or harmonizing their compositional process with their pedagogical and ethical lives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I was 10 years old I joined a professional choir, and it became the absolute center of my young life. David E. Lamb, the director of that choir, was abruptly fired several years later, an episode I found profoundly destabilizing. This early experience of having primarily conceived of my life within a larger musical context, in which musical norms were difficult to distinguish from other civic or ethical ones, and the subsequent painful loss of that context and source of meaning, has greatly influenced my creative practice, including, I think, the topic of this paper. For that, I would like to thank Mr. Lamb, who once told me I would one day be a great musician.

At my parent's house in New York, just above the antique Steinway upright I learned to play on, there hangs a photograph of my maternal grandparents playing a four-hands arrangement of a Chopin *Etude* on that very same piano. I would like to thank my parents, Pamela Ralph and Ellis Pearson, for raising me within a family tradition so aesthetically and ethically saturated.

I've had such amazing teachers. I would first like to thank my entire dissertation committee for helping me through this long, harrowing process. I would like to thank Suzanne Farrin for helping me compose my earliest works, Erin Gee for helping me compose my more recent ones, Frank Farrell for introducing me to the poetry of John Ashbery in his class, Dan Korman for guiding me through my paper on musical Platonism, Christopher Macklin for being a tremendous model of communicative pedagogy, Carlos Carrillo for providing me with structure and support as I learned how to teach, and Stephen Taylor for his tremendous encouragement, help, and support throughout this process and my entire graduate studies.

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Chapter I: Introduction

I am a composer, and at the core of this paper is a fundamental compositional question: how should a composer approach writing a work of music, and why? This question is unsettled today, perhaps more than ever. Conventions are many, techniques are diverse, and the stable engine of history which seemed to thrust our forebears forward in progressive linearity has ceased to be so compelling. Further, the heaviness of historical and technical possibility that a contemporary composer feels when considering the blank page is only the beginning of her concerns, as that page, once inscribed, must go on to be interpreted by individuals, shared within groups, and reiterated through instruments before it is finally heard and understood, however incompletely, by an audience. For these and many other reasons, a crisis of purpose saturates the music-compositional task. While the difficulty of such a task is not any greater or lesser than, for example, poetic, sculptural, or photographic challenges, it is idiosyncratic. Elucidating these idiosyncratic compositional problems and finding answers to them is much of what I do in my own musical practice, including, hopefully, in this dissertation.

In order to fully appreciate these specifically musical-compositional issues, it is important to first situate the musical artform and the dialectic surrounding music within a broader artistic context. The goal in providing this context is not to re-adjudicate the perennial questions of art—though positions in such debates may well be implicit in these discussions—but is instead to provide a background against which various attitudes towards music-making might appear more clearly. The explanation for why a sculptor, for example, tends to ask one kind of question over another can subsequently inform an understanding of why composers or music theorists ask the kinds of questions and give the kinds of answers they do. Just as important as the practical benefits of comparing musical works to other media, however, is that the artistic disposition I

hope to articulate in this dissertation will have an potential interdisciplinary applicability broad enough to orient a path through any artistic discipline, and indeed through life outside of an artistic practice.

The central thesis of this paper is that there is a particular path a composer can take—a *communicative* path which can be found in the works of György Kurtág, Helmut Lachenmann, and perhaps most self-consciously in my own work—which is worth forging despite the considerable obstacles it presents. This path is worth taking not because it is the ‘one true path,’ nor because it points toward some single best style or methodology, some single stable answer to the compositional riddle. Instead, the communicative approach is valuable because it provides a guiding orientation which is compositionally and analytically useful without being narrowly prescriptive. And crucially, as a general principle or orientation, the communicative can serve to articulate a broadly artistic form of life rich with philosophical, political, social, and pedagogical implications. In addition to casting some light on the works of two great living composers, it is thus also my hope in this dissertation to provide a picture to young artists wondering what it might mean to live as a composer of music, fully.

Chapter II: What is a 'Communicative' approach to art?

Before applying 'the communicative' to specific artistic contexts I want to articulate what I mean by it, generally. I will do this by giving three points of reference which can be used to triangulate the communicative space I have in mind. First, my use of "communicative" is not meant to be a counter-intuitive or technically narrow reformulation of a common word, but is intended to describe the artistic applicability of a familiar space of human activity wherein we collaboratively attempt to reach shared understanding, often, though crucially not always, through the use of language. In this way, the communicative is **conversational**. The everyday or casual connotation of the term 'conversation' is important to my view, as I see much of the value of a communicative music in how it can make a composer's artistic activities continuous with the rest of her ordinary life in all its professional, social, ethical, and civic complexity. Another way of putting this is to say that the cliché that 'communication is the key to a happy relationship' is true on my view, and not for fundamentally different reasons than it is true that a communicative approach can be valuable to an artist.

The continuity of art with ordinary life, taken on its own, can appear deflationary insofar as it denies art a privileged aesthetic space and moves it into the banal world of ordinary objects and occurrences. Such a flattened-out view of art is expressed quite explicitly by John Cage in his book *Silence* when he asks, "Is music just sounds? / Then what does it communicate? / Is a truck passing by music?"[1] As Cage's skepticism in this passage regarding the communicative possibility of music implies, an overly deflationary 'everyday' music may *not* be compatible with the communicative view of music I am attempting to describe. However, my view is not that artworks are confined to the ordinary world of "just sounds," but instead that we are able to find a point

[1] John Cage and Kyle Gann, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 56.

of contact with artworks from within our ordinary human practices, from within our everyday life. Put slightly differently, I agree with Cage that artworks and aesthetic experience do not and cannot exist in some *entirely* autonomous artistic realm requiring privileged access, but I disagree with him that we should therefore give up the goal of partial artistic autonomy altogether, and with it, familiar notions of musical expression, interpretation, meaning, and understanding.

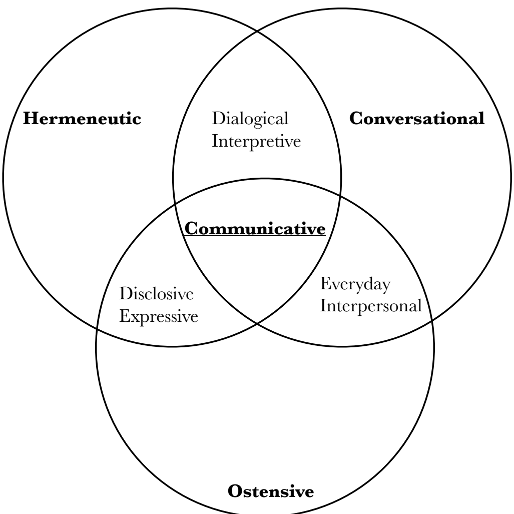
A second touchstone for delineating the space of the communicative highlights the **hermeneutic** qualities that may or may not be achieved in everyday conversation but are crucial to my understanding of communicative art. These hermeneutic qualities can be summarized as involving a *dialogical* and *open-ended* process of *meaning-interpretation*. This is to say that the paradigmatic conversation for our purposes is one in which the goal is to understand what the other interlocutor means, but for which there is no final achievement of a perfect or stable mutual understanding: a conversation both directed *and* open.

The musicologist Lawrence Kramer is one of the most outspoken defenders of a distinctively hermeneutical approach to understanding and analyzing music. I agree with him generally about the importance of maintaining an emphasis on interpreted meaning in music, and with many of his characterizations of interpretation, for example that "interpretation is neither the uncovering of a hidden meaning nor the enunciation of a fixed one. It neither decodes nor deciphers."[2] Indeed, code-seeking approaches to artistic understanding could be described in analogy as mistaking small-talk—an exhaustible game involving the trading of recognizable linguistic tokens—for genuine 'communicative' conversation. However, I also believe that in his well-intentioned attempt to avoid "both empiricism and dogmatism as sources of knowledge,"[3] that is, to see the

[2] Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 7.

[3] Kramer, 2.

meaning of artworks as given in an unmediated way through either experience or authority, Kramer's hermeneutical view sometimes fails to provide musical meanings, and the cultural space generally, with a satisfying enough grip on the world. As such, Kramer's view of the cultural and artistic space can sometimes resemble Richard Rorty's sense of the conversational character of *all* human inquiry, and his corresponding project "to move everything over from epistemology and metaphysics into cultural politics, from claims to knowledge and appeals to self-evidence to suggestions about what we should try."[4] It is my belief that we can be sympathetic to many of the very worthwhile concerns of such a view—the centrality of conversation to human progress, the danger of authoritarian certainty, the rejection of unmediated empirical 'givens'—and still maintain a conception of the artistic space or of artistic experience as having a genuine point of friction with the world.



Example 1: The communicative space: Hermeneutic, Conversational, and Ostensive

Toward this end, the third and final part of my triangulation of communicative art is **ostension**, sometimes summarized as the "manifestation of intentions in physical movement."[5] Ostension in everyday conversation can take the form of expressive body language, facial

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[4] Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 57.

[5] Chad Engelland, *Ostension: Word Learning and the Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), xviii.

expressions, and any other ways—*pointing* is the most archetypal example—that we communicate physically and bodily, which are distinguishable from (though intimately connected to) our use of language. For artforms like music which do not necessarily involve the use of language, an appreciation of this bodily or enactive dimension is especially important to any communicative conception. It is important to appreciate that ostension goes deeper than what we often think of as 'body-language,' which can too easily be thought of as a mere gestural accoutrement to the real stuff of language. Indeed, ostension also plays a crucial role in interpersonal practices of sharing and understanding the world, or as Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance have put it, how "in a joint process of ostension, [we] com[e] to see things differently or make new discriminations together by one another's practices of attending."[6] Further, it is through this world-sharing capacity that ostension plays heavily into how human beings acquire language as infants, entering into the communicative space for the first time.[7] This analogy between artistic practices and an infant's acquisition of language suggests again that a communicative musical or compositional practice is not simply one focused on enabling or producing a fixed *translation* of some yet-to-be-decoded musical language, but instead may likely involve gaining a grip on a musical meaning—whether that be a composer finding a way of expressing a meaning on a score, a performer finding a way of interpreting it on an instrument, or a listener finding a way of understanding a performance—*apart* from any explicit use of language. It is in this deeper ostensive sense that the explicit references to children or childlike behaviors in all three of the works analyzed in this

[6] Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance, "Intersubjectivity and Receptive Experience," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52, no. 1 (2014): pp. 22-42, https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12047, 40.

[7] See: Michael Tomasello and Luigia Camaioni, "A Comparison of the Gestural Communication of Apes and Human Infants," *Human Development* 40, no. 1 (1997): pp. 7-24, https://doi.org/10.1159/000278540, Suzanne Hall et al., "Associations among Play, Gesture and Early Spoken Language Acquisition," *First Language* 33, no. 3 (2013): pp. 294-312, https://doi.org/10.1177/0142723713487618.

dissertation, as well as their liberal use of physical-gestural elements, will be seen as central characteristics of their deeply communicative character.

It is important to underscore how each of these three nodes of the communicative triangulation (conversational, hermeneutical, ostensive) have a similar dialogical tension and open-endedness: everyday conversation of course involves an ongoing back-and-forth between interlocutors, while hermeneutic inquiry is often described as consisting of an interpretive oscillation between the part and the whole, and ostensive actions like pointing are often simultaneously disclosive (in the world-sharing sense) *and* expressive (in the body-language sense). Indeed, the various artistic views I will describe in this paper which *fail* to be sufficiently communicative by my lights will often fall short in ways that could be summarized as insufficiently appreciative of this exact dialogical tension or open-endedness, a tension which communicative forms of art must strive to maintain.

With this lingering tension comes certain anxieties (which I will later articulate as several music-specific 'problems') which can make the communicative approach unattractive to artists or interpreters. Perhaps the most general anxiety is best expressed again by John Cage: "I could not accept the academic idea that the purpose of music was communication, because I noticed that when I conscientiously wrote something sad, people and critics were often apt to laugh. I determined to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication."[8] Indeed, Cage's conception of music as sound that "doesn't mean anything" allows him to sidestep the potential failure of music-based communication.[9] It is easy for any artist to relate to Cage's frustration with his work being misunderstood, and it is his articulation

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[8] John Cage, "John Cage: An Autobiographical Statement," *John Cage: An Autobiographical Statement*, accessed July 15, 2020, https://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html.

[9] *Écoute (Listen)*, Écoute - JBA Production, 2017, http://jbaproduction.com/ecoute/.

of this particular vulnerability that makes him and his work, in my view, so central to the story of modern music-making. In my conception of communicative art, however, the *possibility for misunderstanding* is itself another requirement to be maintained, and not a problem to be circumvented. An artwork which cannot possibly be misunderstood cannot be thought of as communicative. Indeed, 'can't-miss' non-communicative expressions of this sort—which can often be described in terms of *working on* or *affecting* an interlocutor—have a musical history that stretches far beyond Cage's modern articulation. Such a view is at work, for example, in Aristotle's admonishment in *Politics* that people should refrain from using the Lydian or the Ionian modes for fear of the drug-like effect they might have on the polis.[10] The communicative requirement for the possibility of misunderstanding again highlights how, insofar as a confrontation with a communicative artwork is analogous to a confrontation with a language, it is not in the sense that there is some final, fixed, or exhaustive culmination of deciphering. Instead, confronting a communicative artwork is much more like the broaching-of and open-ended groping-within a meaningful space where understanding becomes possible, as exemplified in the process of infant language-acquisition.

It is important to underscore how the maintenance of the tension between the potential for understanding on the one hand and the possibility of misunderstanding on the other protects communication from being either an inert, determinate, and game-like interpersonal connection or an arbitrary, indeterminate, and contingent one. To fall into either of these two extremes is to fail to appreciate the directed openness which characterizes the communicative. A communicative artist is therefore simply one who appreciates and takes up this communicative

[10] Frederique Woerther, "Music and the Education of the Soul in Plato and Aristotle: Homoeopathy and the Formation of Character," *The Classical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2008): pp. 89-103, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0009838808000074, 91.

challenge as central to their work, and a communicative artwork is simply one which maintains, encourages, and interrogates the communicative in its implementation. In the coming subsections I will introduce a series of critics, historians, and philosophers of art who help to articulate different strategies artists mights have for promoting or maintaining the communicative in their work. These thinkers are chosen both because their subject is specifically relevant to the later musical analysis (i.e.: Frank Farrell's discussion of the poetry of John Ashbery will bear on how I use John Ashbery's words in my own work) *and* because the artforms they focus on in general draw attention to different facets of the complex set of musically-relevant communicative concerns (ie: Cronan's discussion of the beholding-relationship with paintings bears on the beholding- relationship in musical performance, Farrell's discussion of language bears on musical notation, etc.). To begin, Michael Fried and Todd Cronan describe how the visual arts can resist falling prey to overly-determinate or mechanistic beholding-relationships. They articulate this in different ways—Fried warns against what he calls "theatricality" in artworks, while Cronan worries about "affective formalism"—but the type of artworks they describe share characteristics which will help us more clearly define the communicative approach.

Anti-Theatrical

Much of Michael Fried's work in the history of the visual arts has orbited around his opposing concepts of "absorption" and "theatricality," first presented as a pair in his 1980 book *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*[11], but importantly foreshadowed in his 1967 essay, "Art and Objecthood."[12] Fried first located the absorptive paradigm through his analysis of 18th century French paintings, noticing that depicted subjects often appeared as

[11] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).

[12] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

entirely and utterly *absorbed* in various everyday activities, and thus unaware, it would seem, that they were being beheld by a viewer. The painting's subject's absorbed indifference to the viewer in these paintings thus prevents the viewer, according to Fried, from becoming too self-consciously aware of their own act of beholding. The opposite of absorption, which Fried termed *theatricality*, is the promotion or maintenance of this kind of self-consciousness on the part of the viewer, and is what famously led him to make the bold claim that "art degrades as it approaches theatre."[13]

For Fried, what is so problematic about artistic theatricality is that the theatrical work *needs* to be beheld in order to be meaningful, that the activity and experience of beholding is itself constitutive of the work, and thus that the work is not sufficiently autonomous. As Fried puts it, quoting Robert Morris, "[theatricality] is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters [theatrical] work… Whereas in previous art 'what is to be had from the work is located strictly within [it],' the experience of [theatrical] art is of an object in a situation - one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder."[14] Fried's enthusiasm for artistic autonomy and his dismissal of factors which do not lie "strictly within" the work may give pause as such strong declarations smack of a naive ahistorical and asocial perspective. Whether or not Fried is guilty of this naivety in general, anti-theatricality—an artwork's resistance to its meaning being exhaustible simply in being experienced—does not require that the experiential element of artwork-beholding is itself undesirable or unimportant.[15] Indeed, the inescapable relationship artforms have with their beholders or interpreters is what makes theatricality a *constant* threat to artistic autonomy, according to Fried, and what accounts for the "utter pervasiveness—the virtual

[13] Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 164.

[14] Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 153.

[15] John Cage again comes to mind as embracing theatricality in precisely this way.

universality—of the sensibility or mode of being that I have characterized as corrupted or perverted by theatre."[16]

There is another potential concern if, as I claim, anti-theatricality in general and absorption in particular are truly hallmarks of the communicative. It may seem that a theatrical reliance on the beholder is fully resonant with a communicative view, as the theatrical work tightly secures that crucial communicative interface between the artwork and the beholder. Further, it may seem that the anti-theatrical or absorptive work, which seems to resist or ignore the beholder, diminishes the possibility of the work having the communicative artistic connection we are after. But this would only be an issue if the goal of a communicative artwork was to make a communicative interaction *certain* or *fixed*. The goal of a communicative artwork is quite the opposite, it is aimed at creating and maintaining the robust expressive and interpretive dimensions necessary for an open-ended communicative interaction to come about. Again, it is not enough for just *any* relationship between artworks and beholders to be secured for a truly communicative artistic practice, that relationship must be of a particular communicative kind (one characterized by the triangulation described previously). The artwork's resistance to easy or conclusive understanding in the anti-theatrical or absorptive paradigm is thus totally of a piece with the communicative requirement of the possibility of misunderstanding.

The difference between the beholding relationship offered by theatrical art and that of absorptive art can be drawn out more clearly in Fried's recent writing on photography.[17] In the works of the photographers Jeff Wall and Thomas Demand, for example, Fried sees novel and

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[16] Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 168.

[17] Fried's discussion of recent photography provides a useful contrast with recent music, which will be discussed later. The thrust of that contrast will be that one of the idiosyncratic problems of music, which make it particularly resistant to communicative consideration, can be seen clearly when contrasted photography's problem of indexicality.

nuanced approaches to the constant artistic threat of theatricality. These new strategies are tied to photography's unique relationship to the world: the strong causal or 'indexical' link between the photograph and the physical world it depicts. Because of this issue of indexicality, photography has been compared unfavorably to the other pictorial arts throughout its history, particularly to painting. Both photography and pictorial painting involve a clear relationship between the artist and the artistic subject, mediated by either the brush and canvas or the photographic lens. But the rigidity of the causal relationship between the camera and the subject it photographs, the fact that a photograph can count as evidence for the existence of its subject in a way that a painting can not, has produced a long history of suspicion regarding photography's artistic viability. Thomas Demachy voiced this concern as early as 1907 by simply denying that a "straight print," an un-manipulated snapshot, can ever be considered a work of art.[18] Roger Scruton's criticism of photography in his famous 1981 essay "Photography and Representation" is somewhat more measured, claiming only that photographs are incapable of representing their subject in the way that paintings can.[19] What both Demachy and Scruton suggest is that the photograph is so closely and rigorously connected—causally connected—to the real world subject which it depicts there exists little room for human artistic expression to be implicated in the making of the photograph. If these critics are correct, it would seem that this indexical relationship is not only a problem for the photographer, but also threatens to recur in the relationship between the photograph and its beholder as well. On this view, a photographic snapshot is more like a fossil than it is like a work of art, and so the whole question of what it

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[18] Robert Demachy, "On the Straight Print," *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography 1889-1923* (Peregrine Smith Inc: Salt Lake City, 1980), 172.

[19] Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation." *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 3 (1981): 577–603. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343119.

means communicatively is moot. Fossils might provide us with important information, but they don't, on their own, mean anything communicatively.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the history of photography can be seen as a continuous grasping towards, or at least a preoccupation with, the kind of representation which comes so naturally to painting.[20] The painted representation of a landscape cannot be as easily equated with or exhausted by its subject as the photographic print of a landscape can be. With these issues in mind, the photographer Jeff Wall has created what he calls a 'cinematographic; approach to photography, in which elaborately life-like sets and situations are constructed (as they often are in films) and then subsequently photographed in ways which very much resemble, and are often indistinguishable from, snapshots. Wall's work is thus often concerned with the inability of the viewer to determine how much of a 'painterly' representation what they are looking at truly is. The photographer Thomas Demand does something analogous in his work, meticulously constructing incredibly life-like paper models of everyday settings—the inside of a copy shop, a bathroom wall, a hotel door, a cluttered office—which he then subsequently photographs. In creating, essentially, photographs of sculptures (they could just as easily be photographs of paintings), Demand and Wall ensure the presence of painterly representation in their work.

Why do these artists go to such extremes to complicate their works' relationships to their beholders? In slightly different ways, both photographers are preserving an instability which is absolutely central to the communicative. They achieve this by expanding their expressive interference away from the troublingly determinate shutter-action of the camera, and sculpt, paint, and construct the world on the other side of the lens, thus ensuring an escape from

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[20] Because each artform describes some set of basic or fundamental constraints, one can think of it as having a kind of gravitational pull. In other words, to succumb to an artform's center of gravity is to allow for the simplest possible expression of that particular genre of art. In the case of photography, the snapshot or straight print is that simplest method, and thus photographers have continuously thought up new, ingenious ways of complicating their artform, and attempting to break free from the snapshot's gravity.

photography's indexical dilemma. And while some of Wall's photographs are characterized by a self-conscious acknowledgment of the artificiality of his constructed subjects and settings, his mature works aim to completely blur the lines between the indexical snap-shot and the artificial tableaux. In his 'cinematographic' approach, Wall often spends such enormous amounts of time photographing his subject in his highly constructed settings (sometimes hours and hours of photography each day, for weeks on end) that the 'artificial' elements—including the presence of the photographer and the constructed sets—gradually become 'real' again, a genuine part of the everyday experience of the subject.

Jeff Wall's elaborate push-and-pull with his artform is indicative of communicative concerns. Indexicality is a problem for Wall, because it threatens to turn his photographs into something like meaningless fossils. To combat this, he re-configures the photographic situation in order to ensure the presence of his own artistic expression. But the artificiality of this fix again threatens to undermine the reality and robustness of the meaning of the work, which Wall further counter-acts by essentially 'waiting-out' the artifice he previously constructed. All of this, Michael Fried has noticed, can be described as an elaborate and distinctively photographic process of *absorption* at a historical time, and within a particular medium, when the task of creating artworks which elude theatrical, self-conscious beholding relationships is even more daunting than it may have been in the 18th century.[21] As the title of Fried's 1967 essay suggests, the threat of theatricality is analogous to a threat of "objecthood," of artworks being conceived of as inert objects—like fossils—that can only partake in a one-sided causal interaction with their beholder. Jeff Wall's idiosyncratic and anti-theatrical "cinematographic" strategy is one example of an artist

[21] Modernism's exacerbation of the problem of theatricality, which makes the possibility of communicative art even more precarious, will continue to be an issue in our musical analyses, recent as they are. But so too will idiosyncrasies of the musical artform which are in some ways opposite those of photography.

attempting to keep his artworks from being overly submerged into this causal, objective space, and to thus retain the possibility of communicative meaning.[22]

Just as Wall found it necessary to come up with a special photographic strategy for 'defeating theatricality,' so too will *musical* absorption entail unique anti-theatrical strategies which push-and-pull the constraints of the medium. On the one hand, music which is performed on the stage in front of an audience seems already quite in danger of being overly theatrical. On the other hand, one can hardly imagine a more compelling exemplar of anti-theatricality than the image of a performing musician deeply absorbed in her playing. Fried's concepts of absorption, theatricality, and their various possible medium-specific incarnations will later be used to describe and explain theatrical elements in the works of Kurtág, Lachenmann, and in my own work. In doing so, I hope to provide an alternative lens for how to understand recent preoccupations in contemporary music with theatrical elements, generally.[23]

Feeling, not Affect or Fact

Todd Cronan's *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* supplements Fried's account of theatricality with an argument against what Cronan terms "affective formalism," the view that the meanings of artworks consist of the affect they produce within their beholder. Or, to put it in a way more specific to the artform of painting, that "color and line produce bodily responses that function and mean independent of the artist's agency."[24] Cronan instead argues in

[22] Wall doesn't want his works to be *overly* submerged in the causal, but no artwork can escape causality absolutely or be *entirely* autonomous. Indeed, Fried's overzealousness about artistic autonomy has been softened over the years in part by his appreciation of artists like Wall.

[23] So many of the most prominent 20th and 21st century composers can be described as embracing theatricality in one way or another — Ligeti, Stockhausen, Kagel, Cage, Crumb, Walshe, Czernowin, etc. My hope is to provide a way of describing the theatrical elements of Kurtág and Lachenmann as of a particular communicative sort, and one which is wholly distinguishable from the musical theatricality of other composers like Cage and Walshe, for example.

[24] Todd Cronan, *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 27.

favor of an 'intentionalist' view of meaning in artworks, believing that works of art mean what they are intended by the artist to mean.[25] Only within an intentionalist framework, Cronan argues, can we make normative judgements about artworks, which is to say be more or less correct in our interpretation of what those artworks mean. Affective views are problematic for Cronan because "the question of disagreement becomes impossible, for no experience, no affect can ever be right or wrong. To imagine a world where what matters is 'what happens' to us is also to imagine a world where bodies differ but never disagree because there is nothing to disagree about."[26]

Cronan's whole-hearted embrace of these normative stakes in art and his strong eschewal of affect can at first appear at odds with much of what we tend to appreciate about artworks. Of the countless things which go into an aesthetic experience, affect seems absolutely indispensable. It is important to note, then, that Cronan distinguishes "feeling," which he agrees is totally central to the aesthetic experience, from affect, which he defines as something like 'raw' or 'non-conceptual' feeling. The crucial difference has to do with whether or not those feelings produced by the artwork can be articulated conceptually or not. As he puts it, "works of art are received largely at the level of feeling," but it is crucial that these "feelings… are publicly transmittable through language to others."[27] Affect, for Cronan, constitutes a raw experience which cannot by its very nature be transmittable through language. Cronan's critique of affective formalism is thus a critique of the view that a work of art should be thought of as a kind of object, an "affect-

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[25] 'Intentionalism' involves one of those perennial questions I'm trying not to get too bogged down in. Albrecht Wellmer is one of many philosophers who equate 'intentionalism' with the mistaken belief that there is "a mysterious 'meaning-intention' *behind* [the] words," that can be "grasped." This "mysterious" construal of intentionalism is *not* the intentionalism Todd Cronan defends, and it's not one I would defend. I am agnostic about whether or not "intentionalism' is a bad label for these views.

[26] Cronan, 64.

[27] Todd Cronan, *BOMB Magazine*, 2015, https://bombmagazine.org/articles/todd-cronan/.

machine," which *works* on a person to produce the desired affect in the way a psychotropic drug might. If the end goal of a work of art is to produce such an affect, a work can never be understood or misunderstood, it can only succeed or fail in delivering the appropriate affect. The way a work of art makes us feel may, and often is, a crucial part of our process of understanding its meaning, but the way it makes us feel must not in itself be *exhaustive* of its meaning.

For some, Cronan's view that aesthetic feelings must be "transmittable through language" fails to appreciate the irreducibility of the affective dimension of art, or to over-conceptualize it. Indeed, the philosopher Andrew Bowie has criticized philosopher Robert Brandom's conception of human rational practices along similar lines, as unable to account for artistic practices, music in particular, which Bowie believes cannot be reduced to mere discourse. Bowie believes that, "Forms of articulation like music, which *show* something intelligible that resists translation into discursivity, seem for Brandom necessarily to have to be translated in the last analysis into something which must be cashed out in discursive claims."[28] (*my italics)* This kind of criticism is tempting, especially when considering more abstract artforms like music, but it remains unclear how artistic practices could be meaningful without *any* connection to pre-existing discursive practices. In the words of a third philosopher, Terry Pinkard, summarizing Hegel, "If you can't *say* it or *show* it, you don't *know* it."[29]

One easy way of articulating what I see as valuable in Bowie's criticism is that language-dependent views of feeling like Cronan's run the risk of over-emphasizing *saying* at the expense of *showing*. If this were Bowie's only point, it would be well taken, even if 'showing' of this kind is not necessarily ruled-out within a language-dependent conception, so long as it exists, as

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[28] Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120.

[29] Terry P. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: the Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 27.

Brandom puts it, "against the background of us being talkers in the ordinary sense."[30] But Bowie's concern is broader than that, and, in addition to emphasizing showing, also involves the notion that meaningful artistic experiences and practices must "be seen as showing a dimension of human existence which cannot be subsumed into the determinate ways of speaking… a dimension where the very *lack* of verbalized ideas enables things to happen which such ideas can obstruct."[31] There are deep philosophical issues at play in Bowie's view that are beyond the scope of this paper to fully engage with (particularly the question of whether or not it is necessary to carve out a *fully* non-conceptual and distinctively non-discursive space for aesthetic experience).[32] In any case, the coexistence in all art, music included, of the discursively articulable and "those things which *resist* verbal articulation"[33] (*my italics*) is uncontroversial. A sense of the critical importance of *that* tension—the tension of the simultaneous possibility of understanding and misunderstanding, as I have put it previously—is certainly at play in both Cronan's *and* Bowie's work, regardless of other potential disagreements.

Further common ground is apparent in that one of the primary reasons Bowie has for emphasizing the language-resistive quality of music is that, as he puts it, "Locating music as part of a world of facts as true claims would precisely fail to capture the specific kind of

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[30] UCD - University College Dublin, "On Autonomous Languages and languages of Art | Prof Robert Brandom," YouTube video, 2:11, July 3, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgAp4ePrpE8.

[31] Bowie, 408.

[32] Rebecca Kukla, in her essay *Ostension and Assertion*, offers a potential way of dealing with this conflict between inferential views like Brandom's and what might be called 'expressive' views like Bowie's. Kukla contemplates the potential compatibility of ostension (which is embodied, social, expressive) with assertion (which "can be merely passed on and used by others as entitlements to make further claims.") p.119 Following Heidegger, Kukla still sees a "minimal ostensive core" in the inferential structure of assertion, providing "an inferentially fertile framework that fills in and gives shape to our shared interpretive space within which genuine uncovering and ostending are possible." p. 121 We will see examples of 'merely passed along' language later in John Ashbery's work in the form of clichéd small-talk, and in my work, *Crazy Weather*, which takes 'small-talk' as one of its central themes.

[33] Bowie, 397.

understanding it sometimes demands."[34] In exactly the same way, Cronan's discussion of affective formalism is important to understanding communicative *music* not only because of how he helps to describe a communicatively viable "feeling" (as opposed to raw, medicinal affect) which is entirely resonant with Michael Fried's worries about overly-theatrical modes of art-engagement, but also because Cronan sees the problem of "affective *analysis*" as analogous to a second important problem of "factual analysis." The affective problem has obvious relevance to musical *reception*, but the second 'factual' problem also plays a large role in musical concerns surrounding *notation*.

Cronan sees the role of the art-interpreter as fundamentally centered around answering the following question:

> Here are some marks, what do they mean? Not what do they mean for me (which is not meaning at all) or what did they mean for their audience—or any audiences—or how does that meaning change over time—those are all fact-based approaches, and they are designed to preserve one's immunity from dispute. Or rather, disputes become a matter of sorting out sets of data (how did an audience actually respond to a work of art, for instance), data that by its nature seeks to bypass the murky waters of figuring out what someone meant (there is no data for that).[35]

Just as communicative musical works cannot be machines for producing a 'can't-miss' affective response, they also cannot be machines for transmitting 'can't-miss' messages or codes which need only to be recognized and exhaustively translated by their beholder in the way that the dots and dashes of morse code might be.[36] Both approaches to art—the raw affective approach and the code-breaking approach, let's call them—are insufficiently hermeneutical, and situate

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[34] Bowie, 118.

[35] Todd Cronan, *BOMB Magazine*.

[36] For an interesting thought experiments along these lines, see Daniel Dennett's wonderful thought-experiment, *Two Black Boxes: a Fable*.

artworks solely within a causal or objective space, whereas communicative art must also broach a rational, interpretive space.[37]

Cronan uses the artistic approach of Matisse, whose works are often described in affective terms he finds insufficient, to demonstrate the nuances of an artistic practice which steers clear of both the affective and the factive. Cronan describes Matisse's artistic approach as one which, at certain points in his career, oscillates between what Cronan terms a *phenomenological* mode and a *realist* mode, striking "a balance between closed unity and empathetic openness without collapsing these terms into a surefire effect or a visual pattern."[38] This balancing-act is most starkly realized for Cronan in several paintings Matisse created between 1895 and 1917 as pairs, with each half of the pair depicting a different perspective of the same or similar objects or places, one painting characterized by the realist approach and the other painting characterized by the phenomenological. The phenomenological, for Cronan, is typified by paintings which give a "view of the world continuous with the painter's body,"[39] paintings which, by extension, "involve the beholder."[40] The realist mode is exemplified, on the other hand, in paintings where "objects are situated close to the beholder, filling up the picture's surface."[41] Crucially, neither mode is in any sense a pure distillation of these characteristics, but is instead something like the taking-up of one artistic hypothesis such that its *impurity*, its insufficiency, might be made more stark in contrast to the other, as if in relief.

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[37] As will be discussed later on, the truly worrisome thing about these twin non-communicative approaches isn't just that communicative *art* can be misidentified with them, but that communication, period, can be seen as synonymous with them, with something that might be called *negotiation* or *persuasion*. This political or ethical concern is the main organizing theme of my work *Crazy Weather*, but it also resonates with Lachenmann's Adorno-influenced sense of the political value of art.

[38] Cronan, *Against Affective Formalism*, 220.

[39] Cronan, 17.

[40] Cronan, 175.

[41] Cronan, 175.

For example, take the pairing of *Still Life with an Oil Jug* and *Still Life with Pitcher*, two paintings from 1898, which both depict the same collection of objects on a table. *Oil Jug*, according to Cronan, takes the phenomenological perspective, especially in its inclusion of a blurred reflection of the artist—and perhaps therefore a suggestion of the beholder's reflection—on the surface of a glass of water. The imperfect tension of the phenomenological is present in how despite the way this painting "suggestively runs up to and under the viewer's feet," it "nonetheless situates objects at a distance."[42] The more formalized elements of this painting—its straight verticals and horizontals, the flatness of the table top, and the clarity and distinctness of its depicted objects—counteract the involvement of the beholder, receding from her as a self-contained formal whole, even as they reflect her. *Still Life with Pitcher*, on the other hand, brings the same objects up closer for realist inspection, filling the frame. And yet, despite this closeness, the objects here are depicted in "thick dabs of viscous paint… applied with seeming abandon, evoking a set of tactile sensations…[and] contrasting weights and textures."[43] The objects which were so distinct and formally precise in *Oil Jug* are now rendered as blurred together, and a reflective surface depicted in *this* painting—a mirror, perhaps used to paint its twin—presents no image of the beholder at all, only a smudged opacity.

These two works, and their corresponding approaches, can thus be described as oscillating between two versions of communicative tension. The phenomenological approach in *Oil Jug* attempts to produce an experiential rendering, an artwork which includes within it the experience of the beholder. But this attempt to contain that phenomenology is foiled by the formal properties, the "visual patterns," of the objects depicted. It is the very possibility of making sense

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[42] Cronan, 175.

[43] Cronan, 187.

of the depiction, of understanding it, which disallows the possibility of a purely affective, embodied experiential rendering: raw feeling neutered by conceptuality. The realist *Pitcher*, on the other hand, attempts to produce a factive ideal, an up-close and detailed rendering of the depicted objects 'in themselves.' But this approach is equally futile, undermined by the blurred contingencies of individual aesthetic experience. It is the presence of opacity in *Pitcher*, the possibility for misunderstanding, which dilutes the realist hypothesis: authoritative truth diluted with particularity.

Given that the communicative artistic approach is defined by the maintenance of an instability, neither the dissonance found within each of these paintings *nor* the 'oscillating' approaches to render them is at all surprising. This is because communicatively-minded artists not only need to *cultivate* such an instability, but also need to *locate*, within their artform and the specific works they create, the unstable coexistence of potential understanding and potential misunderstanding. Communicative artworks are thus often characterized by some element of active probing: oscillating and triangulating between alternatives (as we will observe in György Kurtág's *Játékok*), scanning spectra of possibilities within the work itself (as in Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*), or even the explicit undertaking of or reference to pedagogical or educational processes (found in both!).

Phenomenological, not Grammatical

Frank Farrell's *Why Does Literature Matter?* is concerned with a different specter than the affective or theatrical threats haunting Cronan's and Fried's work. Farrell's worry begins with what he characterizes as a flawed or incomplete historical process of disenchantment, wherein the disenchantment of a single register of human life (the world, the self, language, etc.) has led to a skewed or inappropriate perspective on the others. For example, "To disenchant the world

but not subjectivity," he says, "seems to lead to an emptied-out world."[44] The trouble with any partial disenchantment of this kind lies in how it severs the meaningful connections *between* given registers. This always has two sides: an 'emptying out' or 'flattening' of the now disenchanted level(s), and the over-inflated "theological" role now placed on the remaining enchanted level(s). Farrell sees this process of disenchantment in roughly three steps, historically: first the world was disenchanted and subjectivity took on the theological role, then the subject was disenchanted and language was divinized, and finally language was disenchanted and "machineries of social power"[45] take on the theological mantle.[46] Farrell instead argues that a "full disenchantment," one which "assign[s] no such theological position" and which preserves both the meaningful connections between registers as well as the "irreducible richness" within them, is necessary in order to fully understand and appreciate works of literature and poetry.

Farrell's vocabulary of disenchantment and theology may differ from my communicative terminology, but ultimately he is defending an approach to literature and poetry which is analogous to my communicative one. Farrell's view could be described as being centered around the richness and complexity of the *everyday* or *conversational*, around the fully disenchanted ordinary experience of humanity. Farrell's everyday is not like, however, the everyday of John Cage, wherein artistic works, knocked off the mantle of total aesthetic autonomy and brought into the ordinary world of buckets and raincoats and seashells, lose their communicative meaning as soon as they touch the shelf. Cage is understandably liberated by this flattening move, but

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[44] Frank B. Farrell, *Why Does Literature Matter?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 7.

[45] Farrell, 9.

[46] I want to make it clear that the political upshot implied by Farrell's description here, particularly his focus on the ultimate theologizing of "machineries of social power," is *not* where this dissertation is heading, politically. To some extent, I believe Farrell falls victim to an over-simplified political critique of 'post-modern' forms of scholarship and their emphasis on 'structural' or 'systemic' inequity. Ultimately, however, the concern I share with Farrell is that *any* single framework for understanding the world is inadequate on its own, and that such a problematic flattening can happen in any number of 'registers' of human experience.

Farrell would argue that the ease it affords comes at a great cost. To truly disenchant the artistic space, for Farrell, is to allow it to be made meaningful in the only way it can be, from our everyday activities of sense-making.

Farrell's work will serve several specific purposes in the context of this dissertation. First, it will help to rehabilitate and flesh-out the experiential dimension of art in a way which is compatible with Fried's eschewal of theatricality and Cronan's eschewal of affect (and mere facticity). This rehabilitation will be done under the banner of a "phenomenological" approach to literature and poetry, which Farrell contrasts with an undesirable "grammatical" approach. Second, Farrell's work within the literary context will provide a foundation and vocabulary for a later interrogation into the unique and somewhat strained relationship the artform of music has with language. As we have already glimpsed, one of the more glaring questions raised by the present communicative thesis is how exactly music can manage to be communicative without being linguistic or without explicitly involving language. Some of the answer to this question will involve Farrell's phenomenological view of language, but he will also describe important *prelinguistic* elements he sees operating in the literary space which will ultimately be more readily available for communicative musical actualization than the grammatical or syntactical operations of language with which musical 'languages' are often analogized. Furthermore, this notion of the prelinguistic will point us toward a later discussion of the role of *embodiment* in language and perception, which will allow us to dive more deeply into the *ostensive* character of communicative art. Finally, Farrell's analysis of John Ashbery's poetry is specifically relevant to my work *Crazy Weather*, which shares a title with one of Ashbery's poems, and which will be analyzed later on.

As previously stated, one of the central distinctions Farrell makes in his book is the difference between what he calls a *grammatical* view of or approach to language and a *phenomenological* one.

The grammatical, for Farrell, "may be taken to include not only syntactic forms but any properties that are due to pattern-generating machineries of language itself, insofar as these transcend the work of referring to or displaying the world or of expressing psychological states."[47] Farrell is thus using the term 'grammatical' to refer to any conception of language which focuses on the way linguistic particles at *any* level (words, sentences, quotations, allusions, etc.) relate to or bounce off one another, in ways that are detached from "any links to truth or reference or to the subjective life of experiencing selves."[48] This includes traditional notions of syntax as the rules that govern which words can follow which in a sentence, but also includes deconstructive notions which fixate on how "words may keep generating novel connections beyond what a speaker or writer intended."[49] Again, the common denominator in all of these grammatical approaches is that they describe connections or patterns—whether arbitrary or autonomous—within or beyond language on which neither the world nor the subject have any bearing. The phenomenological approach to language, on the other hand, must consistently maintain a robust self-world relation.

Given that Farrell describes a 'grammatical' poem as one in which meaning is "deferred along a chain of words that present themselves as admittedly cultural fragments… almost [as] clichés or near-quotations,"[50] it is perhaps somewhat surprising that he uses John Ashbery—whose work is littered with cliché, quotation, and fragmentation—as exemplary of the 'phenomenological' approach. But just as the superficial theatricality of Jeff Wall's staged 'cinematographic' approach to photography did not keep it from being anti-theatrical in a

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[47] Farrell, 90.

[48] Farrell, 100.

[49] Farrell, 4.

[50] Farrell, 101.

Friedian sense, Ashbery's superficially grammatical operations are also not incompatible with Farrell's phenomenological. Indeed, the same will be true of the extensive use of quotation and allusion in the music of Kurtág, myself, and, to a lesser extent, Lachenmann. What is common in each of these cases is that seemingly grammatical operations are embedded in and connected to a humanistic notion of the everyday capable of rendering them meaningful. As an example, let us consider a poem which Farrell does not analyze specifically in his book, but from which I draw the title of my work, "Crazy Weather." It comes from John Ashbery's 1977 collection *Houseboat Days*, and it begins with a cliché:

> It's this crazy weather we've been having:
> Falling forward one minute, lying down the next
> Among the loose grasses and soft, white, nameless flowers.
> People have been making a garment out of it,
> Stitching the white of lilacs together with lightning
> At some anonymous crossroads. The sky calls
> To the deaf earth. The proverbial disarray
> Of morning corrects itself as you stand up.
> You are wearing a text. The lines
> Droop to your shoelaces and I shall never want or need
> Any other literature than this poetry of mud
> And ambitious reminiscences of times when it came easily
> Through the then woods and ploughed fields and had
> A simple unconscious dignity we can never hope to
> Approximate now except in narrow ravines nobody
> Will inspect where some late sample of the rare,
> Uninteresting specimen might still be putting out shoots, for all we know.[51]

Evidence for a deflated 'grammatical' interpretation can be found everywhere in this work: clichéd bookends—"crazy weather we've been having," "for all we know"—act as quotation marks around the poem itself, threatening to flatten it into a mere textuality, while 'deafness,' 'anonymity' and 'namelessness' contribute to a sense of epistemic futility, a skepticism which pervades not just the written verse and its presumably doomed expressive task, but the

[51] John Ashbery, *Houseboat Days: Poems* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), 38.

world—the "lilacs," the "sky," even the "you"—of the poem itself. The reader seems to be encouraged in the first half of this poem to lose themselves in the narrator's flattening gaze, to nod along as the cracks and contrivances of the landscape are observed. Indeed, Ashbery is famous for these skeptical formulations which seem to cast doubt on the realness of reality: referring to one's situation "As in a stage-set or dollhouse,"[52] or looking out on "rainbow tissue-paper wadded / Clouds."[53] However, to take this skepticism seriously as the lesson of the poem is to fool yourself, or forget yourself, twice: once in relation to the imagined landscape being described and again in your relation to the poem itself. No matter how fractured, juxtaposed or artificial that landscape—or that bit of language—may seem, it *seems*, to the narrator, to the poet, and to us.

To forget this 'seeming' is to overlook the phenomenological character of Ashbery's poetry. In Farrell's words, "to understand language as Ashbery does is to see how the synthesizing activity of the individual consciousness in relation to the world is not simply deconstructed, even if we are more aware of energies of fragmentation."[54] When the phenomenological is kept in view, those clichéd bookends transform into mumbled everyday breaches above an ocean of "simple unconscious," the linguistic edges of an ordinary human perspective attempting to make sense of, holistically, the biblically wide-angled vision of a "deaf earth," the painfully present and external "you," "shoelaces," and "mud," and finally the opaque and inner—and ultimately hopeful—memorial to the possibility of meaningful growth. Crucially, the focal shifts across these different registers of experience occur in one's reading of the poem with the same strange and disorienting vertigo described *within* the poem, of the "morning correct[ing] itself" around you, of your self

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[52] Ashbery, 38.

[53] Ashbery, 38.

[54] Farrell, 107.

and your surroundings—in this case, the poem itself—becoming sensible and meaningfully connected. In this poem, and in many of Ashbery's poems, a phenomenological connective tissue binds that feeling of our active achievement of sense-making—manifest in the "background space," as Farrell puts it, orienting itself around a person—with aesthetic appreciation itself.

It is important to mention how this richly interconnected aesthetic space of sense-making creates a common ground on which the "synthesizing activity" of the reader of the poem is merged or elided with that of its author and/or narrator. This characteristic, which I will later term 'elision' and describe in more detail, is a hallmark of the communicative in art. Ashbery's use of elision in "Crazy Weather" allows him to present both the achievement of and the complex incompleteness of the communicative challenge, the challenge of making sense to and of one another.

If "Crazy Weather" seems at first glance in danger of dissolving into grammatical cliché, Ashbery's "Clepsydra" threatens a somewhat different collapse: into materiality rather than empty sociality. The small-talk clichés of "Crazy Weather" present communication at its most culturally contingent and least expressive. Such phrases are cheap, thoughtless tokens passed around as niceties. But far from speaking to Ashbery's view of communication or language or art, these vapid, asocial phrases create a kind of outer shell in his poem, one he proceeds to break through and excavate for deeper, humanistically rich meanings. In such a view, humans are not empty, unreflective vessels through which language moves in some endless linguistic chain-reaction, but instead are phenomenological subjects with an active and synthesizing relationship to the world. The materialist threat evident in "Clepsydra" operates in much the same way as the asocial does in "Crazy Weather." In the latter, a skepticism about the depth of our external, communicative lives points to a flattened picture of language and of the world, one that Ashbery

subsequently complicates. In “Clepsydra,” a similar skepticism is directed at what lies ‘beneath’ or ‘within’ objects in the world, and again this implicates both language and the poem itself. Isn’t it, this skeptical narrator suggests, just *matter* all the way down? All of it—cells, atoms, words, letters, musical notes—subject to the same inflexible, inevitable causality. Again, Ashbery undermines this reductionist, skeptical view in “Clepsydra,” even as he feels its fragmenting force. “Clepsydra” is a very long poem, but this is a short excerpt relevant to the current discussion:

> But there was no statement
> At the beginning.
> There was only a breathless waste,
> A dumb cry shaping everything in projected
> After-effects orphaned by playing the part intended for them,
> Though one must not forget that the nature of this
> Emptiness, these previsions,
> Was that it could only happen here, on this page held
> Too close to be legible, sprouting erasures, except that they
> Ended everything in the transparent sphere of what was
> Intended only a moment ago, spiraling further out, its
> Gesture finally dissolving in the weather.
> It was the long way back out of sadness
> Of that first meeting: a half-triumph, an imaginary feeling
> Which still protected its events and pauses, the way
> A telescope protects its view of distant mountains
> And all they include, the coming and going,
> Moving correctly up to other levels, preparing to spend the night
> There where the tiny figures halt as darkness comes on,
> Beside some loud torrent in an empty yet personal landscape.[55]

There is a curious ambiguity in this poem between the landscape and the page. Both seem to have some kind of hierarchical order: “levels,” things which “happen first,” their “after-effects,” and their “dissolving” ends. A skeptical materialism also pervades: foundations are “breathless” and primordial, texts are “too close to be legible,” and “weather” is no longer a clichéd conversation-starter, but a blindly destructive force. Ashbery resists this mechanistic view. The landscape and the page are not just connected in their materiality, but in how indelibly tinged

[55] John Ashbery, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 63.

with humanity—our "view", our "coming and going," our "sadness"—they are. A rather opaque poem, "Clepsydra" is saturated with the potential of legibility: the possibility of being understood or of making sense. Such an interpretive project won't be easy, as we have observed, and the poem sags under the weight of this task. Nonetheless, as Farrell puts it, Ashbery persists in "want[ing] to make us aware of the space of possible meaningfulness."[56] Or as the poet himself put it in an interview to NPR in 2005, when asked whether or not his poems are accessible: "Well, I'm told that they're not. I wish they were accessible to as many people as possible. They are not, I wouldn't say, private. What they are is about the privacy of all of us and the difficulty of our own thinking and coming to conclusions. And in that way they are accessible if anybody cares to access them."[57]

There is a subtle difference between these two poems—reminiscent to the difference found in the Matisse pairings—in how they each focus on and confront communicative difficulty. As described before, "Crazy Weather," in fleshing out the phenomenal richness which grows from an everyday, small-talking germ, elides the authorial or narrative perspective with that of the reader. That is to say that the reader of this poem is encouraged to take on the challenge of making sense *as the narrator or author does* within the poem. "Clepsydra," on the other hand, is somewhat more preoccupied with the more general difficulty of making linguistic sense out of mere materiality. In drawing the reader's attention to the materiality of the poem—that of language, or of the physical page—"Clepsydra" resists the reader more than "Crazy Weather" does. Instead of encouraging the reader to *enter into* or *take on* the particular phenomenal perspective *within* the poem, "Clepsydra" encourages the reader *as a reader* to reflect on their own capacity to

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[56] Farrell, 111.

[57] A Conversation with Poet John Ashbery, *A Conversation with Poet John Ashbery* (NPR, March 19, 2005), https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4542617.

make sense out of seemingly raw and meaningless materials like ink and paper. It is in this sense that "Clepsydra" displays a more traditionally Friedian anti-theatrical strategy, that of a work which keeps the beholder at arm's length in order to maintain its aesthetic autonomy. The strategy of *elision* in "Crazy Weather," however—that is, the way in which the roles of reader and author/narrator are merged—relaxes the Friedian anti-theatrical resistance of the beholder somewhat, balancing it with a more welcoming presence of a creative process of meaning-making happening within the poem itself. In an archetypal theatrical painting, the subject of the painting seems so clearly aware of the beholder that the beholder's quest for understanding what the painting means is short-circuited. The painting of a subject fully absorbed in some task, on the other hand, leads the beholder to wonder what that subject is thinking, and thus draws her into an interrogative, active, and communicative orientation towards the painting. It is not therefore the resistance or welcoming nature of the work which matters for a work to be communicatively oriented, but whether or not the beholder of the work is encouraged to be static—in an affective state, or having grasped a fact—or active and oriented communicatively—probing the work for its meaning. It is not surprising, then, that this artistic strategy I am calling 'elision' will also prove useful to communicative-minded composers of music, and will be especially present in the work of György Kurtág and myself. The approach of Helmut Lachenmann's work, on the other hand, will be seen to employ communicative strategies more analogous with the ways "Clepsydra" reveals the material underpinning of the work.

The subtle distinction we find between these two Ashbery poems points us in two directions, both of which were implicit in Wall's anti-theatrical strategy of cinematographic photography and Mattise's oscillation between the realist and phenomenological modes, but are more explicitly appreciated by Farrell in his understanding of Ashbery. First, there is the necessity of

communicative works of art to grapple with the primitive ways we grasp or make sense of the world. In the context of literature, this involves *embodied* or *prelinguistic* capacities which "may be in play in the way that certain novel meanings first assume a scarcely articulate shape for us."[58] Second, and not unrelatedly, if art of the communicative kind involves not just our basic sense-making capacities, but our ability to express this meaningfully to each other, it can be considered genuinely *philosophical*. As Farrell puts it, poetry and literature can meaningfully combine,

> "a casual remark, the mood of an afternoon, a scene observed by chance through the window of a store, a quotation memorized long ago in school… There may be no apparent logic that joins these, but the writer finds a barely appearing field in which somehow they belong together. Such an emergent belonging-together, in its faint and inchoate form, may become possible only through a kind of attention, as in literature, that employs resources across several registers of the psyche. Literature can then satisfy a certain definition of philosophy: a study of how things, in the widest sense of the term, hang together, in the widest sense of the term."[59]

Ostensive

The "kind of attention" Farrell describes in this passage is perspectival. The meanings which literature and poetry can afford us achieve their phenomenological holism—their hanging together across multiple registers of human experience—in how they capture the synthesized perspective of a human *embedded* in the world, making use of all their perceptual, epistemic, and rational capacities. To say that such an artistic perspective is embedded is also to say it is *embodied*, a dimension which becomes especially salient in artforms, such as music or dance or theatre, which often involve choreographed human movement in their final realization. One expressive possibility which arrises naturally in an embodied artform is that of *gesture*, and it is one which the philosopher Andrew Bowie, who is primarily concerned with the idea that our understanding of

[58] Farrell, 19.

[59] Farrell, 11.

music can not be exhausted purely in articulated linguistic terms, sees as essential to both language *and* to music.

In the same way that a sentence uttered in conversation contains elements of inflection, form, and physical accompaniments which may be central to its being understood, so too can a tonal musical melody, for example, contain in its expression a timbral, dynamic, gestural shape which is crucial to its meaning. In both cases this gestural component keeps the phrase from being understandable exhaustively under grammatical rules, either of language or of tonality. In foregrounding this gestural component, music "offers an 'unsayable' experience of meaning which connects to what it is to 'inhabit' a language."[60] Music, for Bowie, connects us to the proto-linguistic and embodied perspective from which we gesture and grope, a perspective which mature language users retain long after their pre-linguistic infancy when they entered into language for the first time. The gestural component of music or language overflows the strictly articulable or rule-bound, and forces us to inhabit that infantile perspective once again, groping at meanings still inchoate and undefined.

As Wittgenstein notes, "The child… learns verbal language via the language of gestures. But adults must presuppose or wait for the understanding of the latter. Nobody thinks of teaching the child the language of gestures."[61] But even after entering into language, the gestural and the rule-governed remain irreducibly operative both in language and in music. As such, when we attempt to understand either communicative utterances or communicative artworks, or indeed when we attempt to express ourselves communicatively through language or through art, we must find a way to grapple with both elements together. Again, Wittgenstein expresses this dialectical tension

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[60] Bowie, 270.

[61] Quoted in Bowie, 280.

in the communicative well: "How curious: we should like to explain our understanding of a gesture by means of a translation into words, and the understanding of words by translating them into a gesture. (Thus we are tossed to and fro when we try to find out where understanding properly resides.)"[62] This metaphor of being "tossed to and fro" is exactly the kind of 'oscillating' approach we have already seen in Matisse's pairings and which we observed in the different communicative emphases of Ashbery's poems. It will continue be a central characteristic of the communicative musical works analyzed later as well.

Bowie thus helps us to see how the gestural in music connects us to an embodied, unstable, infantile perspective of communicative groping which often gets overshadowed by more inert rule-bound conceptions which equate communication too narrowly with the grammatical aspects of language. Alva Noë, author of *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*, adds to this picture by describing how our engagement with artworks as beholders is not passive, but "enactive," that not only are works of art embodied in their actualization, but that *perceiving* or *understanding* a work of art is also a kind of active, bodily achievement. For Noë, our perceptual capacities like vision or hearing are "way[s] of exploring the world making use of implicit practical understanding of the ways our own movements produce and control sensory events."[63] When we see an object we aren't simply copying its image into our minds the way that a video camera reproduces an image on its memory card. We are also experiencing what is, paradoxically, not visible: "we have a sense of the visual presence of the back of a tomato when we look at one sitting before us… and we experience the circularity of a plate, its actual shape, even when, seen from an angle, the

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[62] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Anscombe G E M., and Wright G H von, *Zettel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 41E.

[63] Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2016), 10.

circularity itself can't be seen."[64] Furthermore, artworks are not, for Noë, ordinary objects like tomatoes or plates which are passively available for our enactive achievement of perception. Nor are artworks objects which merely present us with some static sensory display or message. For Noë, artworks are much more disruptive than that, they are 'strange tools' which reconfigure our ways of understanding, and thus afford us an opportunity to engage with "the ways our practices, techniques, and technologies organize us," and allow us to "understand our organization and, inevitably, to reorganize ourselves."[65] To put it more simply, artworks have the ability to change the way we see the world, to shift our perspective. And, like an everyday conversation, they require reciprocal, dialogical activity. Indeed, Noë believes that just like artistic production and reception, "life itself is a meaning-making activity," and that "in making the painting, [an artist] recapitulates the very circular process of experience making and life itself."[66] It is in the same spirit that Noë, regarding music, remarks that "Listening is not the same as hearing."[67] 'Hearing' a work of music is a passive, affective, and thoughtless state, but *listening* involves an active groping towards understanding *how* a work of music "is being used to communicate."[68] As Lachenmann puts it: "Listening is ultimately something other than the mere act of hearing… It means the capacity to hear differently, to discover in oneself new antennae, new sensors, new sensibilities; to discover one's own alterability and use it to resist the unfreedom which it uncovers. Listening means discovering oneself anew; it means changing oneself."[69]

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[64] Alva Noë, "Précis of Action In Perception," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76, no. 3 (2008): pp. 660-665, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2008.00161.x, 660.

[65] Noë, *Strange Tools*, xiii.

[66] Noë, 205.

[67] Noë, 58.

[68] Noë, 160.

[69] Helmut Lachenmann, "Hearing [Hören] Is Defenseless—without Listening [Hören]," *Circuit* 13, no. 2 (2010): pp. 27-50, https://doi.org/10.7202/902272ar, 29.

The terms used in the previous few paragraphs—"strange tools" and "gestures"—are useful in demarcating and describing the embodied, perspectival, prelinguistic space which is so essential to the musical communicative. However, I worry that both of these terms still might carry the suggestion of something overly objectified or instrumental. When we think of a gesture, we might be led to imagine a self-contained, lilting musical motive or a discreet wag of the finger. When we think of tools, however strange, an instrument of narrow and exhaustible use comes to mind. Chad Engelland, in his book *Ostension: Word Learning and the Embodied Mind*, provides an even better vocabulary for encompassing the nuanced entirety of the embodied, prelinguistic-yet-meaningful space which is so important to a communicative approach to music. And while the example of pointing a finger is indeed the paradigm example of ostension, Engelland uses the word ostension more broadly to cover all manner of physical movements—deliberate or not—through which intentions are shared. This can include physical movements like a skeptical eyebrow-raise, an attention-directing glance, or simply the way someone physically navigates around an environment.

A central characteristic of ostension which Engelland highlights is what he calls its "reversibility" or "reciprocity."[70] Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty, Engelland notes that, "Speaking involves a basic reversibility of roles. To understand another I must understand his point of view for myself and in seeking to be understood I offer my point of view for another to consider."[71] Ostending, communicating gesturally or physically, even without an explicit intention to communicate, involves the same reversibility: "In perceiving an organism which addresses its surroundings with gestures, I begin to perceive its perceiving."[72] This socially empathetic

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[70] Engelland, 80.

[71] Engelland, 80.

[72] Quoted in Engelland, *Ostension*, 80.

dimension of ostension connects back to Michael Fried's notion of absorption, which he sees as a strategy for encouraging the beholder to consider not just the consciousness of the depicted lost-in-thought subject, but the consciousness *behind* the artwork itself, the artwork as an activity of expressed human meaning. And in Robert Pippin's Fried-influenced discussion of Manet in *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism*, Pippin—following Hegel—describes the beholder's confrontation with the strange, unfocused gaze of the woman depicted in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* as akin to confronting a "thousand-eyed creature."[73] That is to say, to quote Hegel in a beautiful passage, that within an artwork:

> "the inner soul and spirit is seen at every point. And it is not only the bodily form, the look of the eyes, the countenance and posture, but also actions and events, speech and tones of voice, and the series of their course through all conditions of appearance that art has everywhere to make into an eye, in which the free soul is revealed in its inner infinity."[74]

Hegel captures both the incredible richness of the space of possible ostensive meaning in art as well as the daunting communicative challenge which that poses. Confrontations with a work of art are thus not unlike confrontations with other people: sources of communicative meaning—"victims of expression—readable in every sound and gesture," as Stanley Cavell put it—which might be understood or potentially misunderstood.[75]

The reversibility or reciprocity of ostension also resonates with the 'oscillating' or dialogical form we have observed in the works of both Ashbery and Matisse. Indeed, "joint presence," a situation of pre-linguistically sharing the world with another which ostension affords, "involves turn-taking" of the sort exemplified in ordinary conversation but also presaged in the play of

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[73] Robert B. Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 49.

[74] Quoted in Pippin, 49.

[75] Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press, 2008), 186.

young children.[76] And as Gadamer has remarked, the oscillating character of children's play speaks to the open-endedness of hermeneutic quality of the communicative: "what characterizes this movement back and forth is that neither pole of the movement represents the goal in which it would come to rest."[77] Further, children's play, on Gadamer's account, also entails that "the act of playing always requires a 'playing along with.' Even the onlooker watching the child at play cannot possibly do otherwise."[78] This brings into starker relief something which was at play in our comparison of Ashbery's two poems, namely that a strategy of 'elision' which seems so promising for communicatively-minded artists could potentially manifest in a variety of different forms including more explicitly interactive artworks which bring the beholder *into* the play of the work, as well as less radically-interactive artworks which allow and encourage the beholder to 'play-along.' Indeed, different possible potencies of elision be observed later on in our analysis of Kurtág's, Lachenmann's, and my own work.

Hopefully a number of characteristics which make ostension relevant to communicative music have become clear: First, that ostension—the broad realm of meaningful physical movement—is an indispensable element of human language acquisition and communication generally. Second, that because of its central importance to pre- or proto-linguistic activities, ostension will have particular relevance to non-linguistic artforms, like music. Third, that as ostension is deeply involved in our general activities of sense-making and perception, it has an 'everyday' relevance to all of us, eliding the activities of art-making, art-interpreting, and art-enacting. Fourth, that ostensive communicative activities are inherently reciprocal and dialogical,

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[76] Engelland, 164.

[77] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Nicholas Walker, and Robert Bernasconi, *The Relevance of the Beautiful: and Other Essays*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 22.

[78] Gadamer, 24.

involving active participation on both sides of the communicative situation which often have an oscillating or turn-taking form. And finally, that children's play, a theme of both the Kurtág and Lachenmann works analyzed later in this dissertation, is exemplary of ostensive interaction.

Chapter III: Problems for a Musical Communicative

Like the various artforms discussed previously, the musical artform offers its own idiosyncratic hurdles to being construed communicatively. Though there are doubtless more, I will focus on what I see as the three primary musical idiosyncrasies which make a communicative approach to music difficult. All three are problems which can be related to and directly contrasted with the previous discussions of theatricality, absorption, affect, linguistic flatness or 'grammatical' language, ostension, elision, oscillation, etc. It is also important to stress that these problems are not merely theoretical, but involve relatable and salient practical issues composers, particularly young composers, run up against as they confront the blank page, the first rehearsal, or the new audience. In other words, these are everyday compositional concerns, in much the same way that the problem of indexicality (despite the jargony label) in the form of the shutter-action of the camera genuinely looms large in the practice of the photographer, whether or not they make it an explicit part of their practice.

As will become abundantly clear in our analyses, these three problems of *multiplicity*, *linguistic failure,* and *the passive listener*, though they have different emphases, are never totally distinct from one another, and will overlap and interconnect in many ways. In introducing each of these problems, I will first introduce each problem, describing the ways it can stand in the way of or complicate a communicative artistic project, and will then give representative examples of composers, theorists, or philosophers of music grappling with that particular complication. Finally, I will describe what sorts of strategies a communicatively minded composer might employ in order to deal with each problem, and thus the sorts of things we should be expecting in our analyses of musical works by Kurtág, Lachenmann, and myself.

The Multiplicity Problem[79]

The multiplicity problem is a result of the unique way in which some musical works are instantiated in a multiplicity of diverse media. Or, as the philosopher Julian Dodd has put it, that "there exists no concrete particular with which a piece of music can be plausibly identified."[80] While other artforms often *involve* a variety of media in their actualization—a film may have a script, a bronze sculpture may have an original clay positive—there is nonetheless a clearer sense that these media are subservient to some final, graspable thing we might call the work. We do not need to behold the clay original in order to appreciate the bronze sculpture. It is not so clear, on the other hand, that we can fully appreciate and understand, for example, Beethoven's *Third Symphony* in isolation from its score, as a purely performative or sonic work[81]. This is at least in part because there is a tremendous multiplicity of quite different sounding performances and recordings, all of which have the same score in common, and all of which are all derivative of the same work. On the other hand, to identify a symphony as *nothing but* the score excludes the performances and sounds which the artform of music, and the score itself, is so clearly pointed toward realizing.

In the niche philosophical genre of musical work ontology, many solutions to this problem have been put forward and debated in recent years, including Platonism (the view that musical works are abstract and eternal types) and Perdurantism (the view that musical works are four-

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[79] Many of the ideas discussed in this chapter specifically and throughout the paper in general assume the prevalence of musical scores, and therefore are primarily concerned with the relatively narrow and recent tradition of Western Classical music. The relevance of the communicative to oral traditions of music-making is not an idea I take up in this paper, but is a compelling question for future research.

[80] Julian Dodd, "Musical Works as Eternal Types," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 40, no. 4 (January 2000): pp. 424-440, https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/40.4.424, 424.

[81] This 'problem' is not exclusive to music, but is nonetheless one of the defining attributes in the literature surrounding musical work ontology.

dimensional "fusions of performances").[82] Each of these proposals raise a whole new set of potential concerns: Platonists like Julian Dodd, for example, eschew notions of creativity entirely, in favor of a 'discovery model,'[83] while perdurantists have to concede that it is often impossible to ever confront the *entire* work, as parts of it may exist in the distant past or the distant future. Indeed, the relative liveliness and persistence of the debates surrounding musical work ontology is a testament to the challenge posed by the multiplicity problem. And while it is likely the case that most composers do not lose sleep over the explicit problems posed in these esoteric debates, they do have to make, implicitly at least, decisions which bear on these discussions about what their musical practice is aiming at and what their compositional efforts are geared towards. Some composers may have an inchoate sense of wanting to 'say something' with their music, while others may want to create novel sonic experiences, or may focus on the affects produced by their music, or be more concerned with the process of music-making itself, or with the clarity and aesthetic quality of the score. Indeed, I would guess that most of us composers have some complex and ever-changing combination of many such concerns. And whatever that complex set of concerns may be, the composer must still articulate them within the mereological unwieldiness of the musical artform.

Furthermore, it is not simply the presence of multiplicity but the relationship *between* the multiple media involved in the musical artform which adds a distinctively communicative wrinkle. The multiplicity problem presents an enormous challenge to the communicative conception, as musical works in the western tradition are often not just instantiated in but *interpreted* and *reiterated*

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[82] B. Caplan and C. Matheson, "Defending 'Defending Musical Perdurantism'," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 48, no. 1 (January 2008): pp. 59-69, https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/aym037, 60.

[83] The discovery model seems to be, strangely enough, John Cage's view, who sometimes described his compositional process as 'picking up seashells on the beach.' Cage is clearly not a Platonist or an *Abstract Anti-Creationist*, then, but instead a *Concrete Anti-Creationist*. As far as I can tell this is just about the only view in the recent analytic philosophy literature surrounding musical work ontology that nobody holds!

multiple times in their realization: from composer to score, from score to performer, from one performer to another, and from performers to an audience. As these transformations across media take place—in thought, on paper, in sound, and through interpretation—the loss of any original expressed meaning seems all but inevitable. It would seem, then, that an enormous translational gulf between the artist and beholder—one built into the very structure of western classical musical practice—severely threatens the possibility of a communicative music, one requirement of which is a secure interpretive interface between the intentions of the composer and their beholding audience. Without some satisfactory strategy of bridging these *communicative junctures*, the meaning of a work of music is doomed, it seems, to be lost in translation. This is the crux of what makes multiplicity a problem for the present thesis: it is the *eschewal* of a communicative commitment which makes the musical artform easier to navigate as a composer.

Let us now survey the different possible responses a composer might have to the multiplicity problem and see the extent to which they are compatible with a communicative orientation. One understandable reaction to the anxiety-producing clutter of multiplicity is to attempt to pin down the musical work as something stable or fixed or singular, and thus to make the musical work more solid and objective. This category, which might be referred to generally as an *objectifying* approach, can take many different forms, most notably John Cage's conception of music as 'just sounds.' Interestingly, this objectifying reaction can be seen as something like the mirror image of how photographers like Jeff Wall or Thomas Demand deal with the indexical dilemma idiosyncratic to their artform. The problem photographers have is that they know a little *too well* exactly what kind of object their photographs are, and can even tell a relatively complete causal story describing the chain of events connecting their photographs to the worldly objects their camera was once pointed at. As we have seen, photographers like Jeff Wall have thus felt the

need to pry their photographs *away* from this objectifying center of gravity. Conversely, composers of musical works taking an objectifying approach find themselves grasping *toward* worldliness, toward objecthood, and attempting to secure for their works some modicum of ontological solidity.

Pierre Schaefer, as the father of *musique concrète* and coiner of the term '*object sonore*' or 'sound object', took a very different objectifying approach to his compositional work. His approach to composition is worth discussing in more detail to both show the potential limits of an objectifying approach to the multiplicity problem, and additionally to anticipate a comparison with Helmut Lachenmann's compositional work using the compositional methodology he termed *musique concrète instrumentale.*

Schaefer developed a theory of music composition modeled after the phenomenological methods of Edmund Husserl and heavily influenced by the way in which then-new recording and amplifying technologies afforded an opportunity to separate or bracket-off, in the listener's experience, musical sounds from their physical causes. Pre-recorded sounds heard through a speaker, for example, are presented to the listener as decoupled from their worldly source in a way that is not true of sounds heard and seen emanating from a performing cellist. As Brian Kane puts it, Schaefer's goal was to create a listening situation in which "the spatiotemporal causes of sounds are bracketed in order to distinguish them from the sound itself, grasped as a transcendent object."[84] The transcendent or "ideal objectivity"[85] of the sound object for Schaefer is thus totally opposite the *concrete* objectivity of sound espoused by John Cage, who often compared sounds to ordinary worldly objects like seashells. However, despite this difference both

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[84] Brian Kane, "Pierre Schaeffer, the Sound Object, and the Acousmatic Reduction," *Sound Unseen*, January 2014, pp. 15-42, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199347841.003.0002, 24.

[85] Kane, 21.

objectivist views share an incompatibility with the communicative approach as a result of their commitment to an asocial conception of 'sounds-in-themselves'. As Brian Kane describes, the Schaefferian or Cageian objectifying ideology persists in recent acousmatic theory and practice: "It is as if attention to a sound can only occur when one reduces out its social, semiotic, institutional or historical aspects." Furthermore, Kane bemoans that reactions against such an objectifying approach often needlessly affirm its opposite, imagining that "one can either hear sounds as 'sounds-in-themselves' or as part of a social code. But one can never *hear in* sounds their sociality."[86] Indeed, Lachenmann's *musique concrete instrumentale* compositional approach can be seen as geared toward fixing exactly this issue with Schaefer's original *musique concrete*, embracing and exploring the simultaneity of materiality, sociality, and historicity in sounding musical performance.

Objectifying approaches like Schaefer's or Cage's may indeed provide satisfying solutions to the ontological muddle of music, but they often do so at the expense of the communicative. In pinning down the musical work to some stable object, questions about the communicated meaning of the work become, at best, secondary. For this reason it is important to disentangle objectifying approaches, which entail identifying the work with some sort of object—a score, a sound-object, a performance, etc—from the *collapse* of certain parts of the musical-work complex, perhaps with the goal of mitigating translational loss. There are many examples of musical practices which do just this kind of *collapse*—improvised music without scores, electronic music without performers—which do not necessarily involve an objectification of the work of art or an incompatibility with the communicative. The notion of *collapsing* the communicative junctures involved in the musical artform brings a slightly different connotation than simply removing, for

[86] Brian Kane, "Musicophobia, or Sound Art and the Demands of Art Theory," *Nonsite.org*, August 4, 2020, https://nonsite.org/musicophobia-or-sound-art-and-the-demands-of-art-theory/.

example, the need for a score. Dieter Schnebel's work *Mo-No: Music to Read* is an example of a work of music whose score is meant only to be read to oneself silently, never performed. But Schenbel's intention is not, as it may first appear, to *remove* the interpretive act of listening—an act which ordinarily happens in the context of a performance—but instead to *elide* the listening aspect of musical appreciation with the score-reading aspect, *collapsing* the role of the audience-interpreter into what is ordinarily the role of the performer-interpreter. If an explicitly objectifying approach is a sign that settling ontological uncertainties may be coming at the expense of appreciating the communicative importance of the interpretive junctures *between* elements of the work, an approach of *elision* or *collapse* can conversely suggest that the composer in question is taking seriously the communicative challenges posed by the musical artform.

A related approach to the problem of multiplicity does not involve removal or collapse but instead a *skewing* or *weighting* of the musical situation incurred by the work, intended to have the effect of privileging or highlighting certain communicative junctures and diminishing others. In other words, a composer might attempt to 'fix' the musical situation such that it is *primarily* the audience's interaction with the sound—or *primarily* the performer's interaction of the score, or *primarily* the composer's interaction with the score—which matters for a complete understanding of the work, and hope that any residual multiplicity-issues, reduced in significance, do not threaten that possibility. We will find this strategy in the works of music analyzed later, none of which eliminate or *entirely* collapse the full conventional set of traditional western musical materials: scores, performers, audiences, etc. The communicative approach to those works will thus be found in part in the way those various conventions are skewed or weighted.

A final way of dealing with the multiplicity problem is to bite the bullet and attempt to find a way to bridge these many interpretive divides, perhaps by securing a *common substrate* of secure

and reliable translation across the multiplicity of media which sometimes constitute a musical artwork.[87] While this is the kind of approach a composer of communicative music might take in solving the problem of multiplicity, it also creates new pitfalls. We have already seen through Cronan and Farrell that genuinely communicative artworks cannot be vessels for some static code or fixed information. We cannot simply translate what we wish to communicate into dots and dashes and have it plucked out in concert by a cellist, for example. But neither can we simply task a vocalist or actor with expressing in plain language what we wish to communicate as part of the performance. This latter solution captures something like what Bowie was worried about in Brandom's conception of discursive practices: that the communicative meaning of an artwork would simply be *equivalent* with something utterable in language. Having ruled out the use of purely linguistic or purely coded means of translation, it is unclear if there exists any *single* substrate which can carry a communicative meaning all that way from composer to audience. Even more worryingly, if there *is* such a single substrate that could carry across these junctures, it seems unlikely that it is either *sonic*, as musical scores typically do not in themselves produce or involve sounds, or *textual*, as audiences are not typically aware of the musical score. Indeed, the most promising candidate for a mode of communicative transmission in music might be ostensive physical movement, as physical movement can, as we have seen, function expressively, interpretively, performatively, and even perceptually.

[87] This third 'common substrate' approach can coexist with either 'collapse' or 'skewing', as we will see in the coming analyses.

For this reason we might expect to see the explicit manipulation of physical movement in works by communicatively-oriented composers.[88] It is important to point out again that it is *not* the case that music is *only* properly communicative if some meaning is conveyed linearly, as it were, from composer to score to performer to audience. Linear communication of this sort is certainly *compatible* with the communicative, but is also the way of thinking about communication in music most at risk of devolving into a coded or message-conveying view. Communicative music can also take—and I believe more often *does* take—a more holistic form, wherein each of the communicative junctures in the musical artform is handled in such a way as to encourage and embrace the challenge of communication, and in a way that hangs together meaningfully. The balancing, forming, and organizing of each of those communicative interfaces within the context of the whole musical work is the central task of the communicatively-minded composer, whether or not it has a linearly progressive shape. Indeed, this distinction clarifies the persistence of communicative strategies of *elision*—and its cousin-strategies of *skewing*, *collapsing*, or *weighting*—that we have already described in examples of communicatively-oriented art. The virtue of eliding approaches is not *only* as a way of simplifying the multiplicitous morass of the musical artform, but is also a way of ensuring that individual communicative junctures—the relationship between score and performer, for example—are retaining their phenomenological 'thickness.' In other words, the interactions in a non-communicative work might be describable as *thin* relationships between *specialists*: the composer as a notation specialist, the performer as a score-

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[88] It is worth distinguishing here between two separate ideas I hope to defend in this paper: First, the idea that an explicitly 'communicatively-oriented' or 'communicatively-minded' composer (like myself) might valuably orient their compositional process around the issue of communication, and second, the idea that 'the communicative' may have value as an analytical lens on any number of disparate musics. The composers I reference most often in this paper (Lachenmann, Kurtág, Cage, Schaeffer) are all fairly low-hanging fruit in this second regard, as they have been more or less explicitly engaging with communicative issues. It remains for me an open question what value this communicative lens might bring to analysis of earlier composers in the same Western tradition, let alone in other musical traditions.

reading specialist, the audience member as a listening specialist. A communicative approach using the strategy of elision, on the other hand, attempts to maintain the thick, holistic, and reciprocal communicative orientation of each of the human beings involved in actualizing the work at hand.

In summary, the multiplicity problem makes the compositional task especially difficult for the communicatively-minded composer. Such composers are unlikely to 'solve' multiplicity by privileging any single fixed objective instantiation of the musical work, or by entirely identitying their work with, for example, a particular set of pitches and rhythms, a singular sonic experience, or an inert set of notational marks. Instead of simplifying the compositional task with an objectifying approach, communicatively-minded composers are instead more likely to, at the very most, remove, or at least, collapse, elide, or skew the great multiplicity of media potentially involved in the musical artform, while still retaining the thick interconnected communicative junctures between them. We might also expect communicative composers to seek a common substrate across multiple junctures. This common substrate role can potentially be played by ostension, as it is fundamentally implicated in so many of our sense-making activities: perception, expression, joint presence, etc.

The Language Problem

The thought that music might be a language, perhaps even a 'universal language,' seems to be ubiquitous in western culture.[89] Language is surely our greatest tool for communicating, and so it would make sense that a communicative music would also be a linguistic music.

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[89] For example, see: Jed Gottlieb, "New Harvard Study Says Music Is Universal Language," Harvard Gazette (Harvard Gazette, November 25, 2019), https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/11/new-harvard-study-establishes-music-is-universal, David Ludden, "Is Music a Universal Language?," Psychology Today (Sussex Publishers, 2015), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-apes/201507/is-music-universal-language, Jennifer Paterson, "Why Music Is a Universal Language (Opinion)," Education Week (Education Week, January 13, 2016), https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/opinion-why-music-is-a-universal-language/2016/01.

Unfortunately, however, attempts to understand music as a language reliably come up short, and when this happens—when music fails to live up to the tremendous communicative utility of language—the temptation is to turn away from the communicative altogether. Even worse, when the music-as-language paradigm *is* preserved, it often involves a reformulation of linguistic power in either factive or affective terms: music as a conveyor-of-information (as "sounding number"[90]) or music as a language-of-emotions (as a "language of the heart"[91]). As was the case with the multiplicity problem, the language problem is not simply something that makes composing music difficult, though that may also be true. The language problem has special relevance for the present thesis because its resolution is expedited by eschewing the communicative in music altogether. That is to say that the language problem becomes easy to solve for a composer once they have done away with the communicative bit. The communicative either gets thrown out with the linguistic bathwater after a failed or unsatisfying attempt to identify language with music, or it is defined away within a flattened and anemic reformulation of a specialized musical 'language.'

Attempts to analogize music and language can take several different forms. First, there is what has been referred to as the 'speech-likeness' of sounding music: for example, the way in which the contours of pitch, dynamic, and timbre in a musical melody might be thought of as analogous to the inflection or cadence of a spoken utterance. Indeed, in analyses of poetry the 'musical' aspects of the poem—its cadence, rhythm, meter, inflection, etc—are often discussed separately from the semantic content of the words themselves. Early in the history of Western music, as Mark Evan Bonds details in his book *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea*, this notion of speech-

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90 Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: the History of an Idea* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2017), 45.

91 Bonds, 62.

likeness can be located in treatises on oration by Quintilian and Cicero, both of whom saw a deep connection between "the voice that sings and the voice that speaks."[92] This analogy between the musical and the rhetorical—the latter of which is, as Bonds puts it, "the technical means of persuasion through speech"—already suggests the incompatibility of such a view with the communicative framework. Persuasion of this affecting rhetorical sort is the coercive opposite of genuine communication, which instead involves ongoing interpretation and aims at mutual understanding.

In the history Bonds tells, proponents of this rhetorical view of music gradually foregrounded its explicitly affective aim (at least in part to account for instrumental music lacking accompanying text), and this eventually led to an even more overtly anti-communicative notion of music as a 'language of emotions.' Around 1800, a more explicit interest in *understanding* music—as opposed to merely being moved by it—began to be more commonly articulated in the West. One example comes from a set of lectures published in 1777 by Johann Nicolaus Forkel, wherein he argues that, "anyone who listens to a speech must at the very least comprehend the meaning of the words and their syntax." This communicatively encouraging increase in emphasis on understanding is undercut, however, by his subsequent claim that, "music… has its own 'words'—notes—and its own syntax, and that anyone listening to a symphony or concerto must similarly grasp at least the basics of that syntactic structure."[93] It is of course true that understanding, for example, the syntax of Sonata form or of tonal harmony, may be necessary to fully understand a tonal Sonata. It is not, however, communicatively *sufficient*, and indeed, the notion that one can exhaustively understand the fundamental 'rules' or 'code' of the Sonata (or

[92] Bonds, 54.

[93] Quoted in Bonds, 78.

any other musical convention for that matter) quickly falls apart upon inspection. The history of the relationship between music and language which Bonds sketches is a testament to the way in which this fusion of music and language often seems to result in a conception of the former which is bereft of the core of everyday communicative language—the dialogic interpretation of meanings—and instead falls into the anti-communicative realms of either an instrumental affectivity or some sort of fixed, coded grammar.

Take, for example, Steve Reich's earliest tape pieces, *It's Gonna Rain* of 1965 and *Come Out* of 1966, combined with his seminal 1968 essay, "Music as a Gradual Process." Both of these works employ his 'phase shifting' technique, and were composed by playing a repetitive loop of a short snippet of recorded speech on two (or more) different tape machines simultaneously, and then allowing the two (or more) recordings to gradually shift out of phase with one another. The result is indeed a gradual process which, unlike his later instrumental works using a similar technique, slowly degrade their source's initial semantic clarity into a linguistically unintelligible interplay of shifting non-semantic sounds. For Reich, part of the appeal of this method of composition bears a similarity to the practical concern expressed in the previous discussion of the multiplicity problem: music which consists only of "perceptible processes" brings the listener and the composer closer together, as the former is able to exhaustively perceive the structure imposed by the latter. Reich saw this approach as a reaction against other musics, perhaps especially serial music, whose compositional structure remained utterly mysterious to the listener: "The use of hidden structural devices in music never appealed to me. Even when all the cards are on the table and everyone hears what is gradually happening in a musical process, there are still enough mysteries to satisfy all. These mysteries are the impersonal, unattended, psycho-acoustic by-

products of the intended process."[94] Reich's statement, which expresses a desire to create an exhaustively graspable musical structure culminating in an affective end-goal of "psycho-acoustic by-products," highlights the acommunciative resonance between what Frank Farrell described as a 'grammatical' conception of language (one having to do with, for example, how bits of language "may keep generating novel connections beyond what a speaker or writer intended") and Todd Cronan's critical description of an artwork as 'affect-machine.'

The extent to which music has a grammar or syntax is another major focal point in the long history of comparing music and language. It is often in this sense that we in the academy speak of distinctive musical 'languages'—the 'language of serialism' or the 'language of tonality,' for example—as systematic approaches to composition involving (relatively) consistent rules, procedures, or hierarchies. Indeed, the composer Pierre Boulez, whose name has become nearly synonymous with the highly systematic method of 'total serialism' he championed loudly but briefly in the middle of the last century, often spoke of his compositional efforts in terms of creating and fostering a "new language" or a "contemporary language."[95] It is important to note that Boulez himself, even in the midst of his fiery declarations about the necessity of the "dodecaphonic language,"[96] understood the importance of this 'new language' as both historically contextualized—the necessity of a composer understanding serialism had everything to do with the "needs of his epoch"—*and* ultimately in the service of expression: "[E]xpression is intrinsically linked to the [musical] language. … The formal means provide the only possible communication."[97] This suggests that the notion of Boulez as a dogmatic serialist is at least

[94] Christoph Cox, Daniel Warner, and Steve Reich, "Music as a Gradual Process," in *Audio Culture.: Readings in Modern Music* (London, UK: Continuum, 2005), pp. 304-306, 305.

[95] Josiah Fisk, *Composers on Music: Eight Centuries of Writings* (Boston, MA: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1997), 417.

[96] Fisk, 419.

[97] Fisk, 420.

somewhat of an oversimplification, evidenced both by his own words as well as by the relatively short amount of time he actually devoted to a 'total serial' idiom.

In any case, the mere presence of an organizational structural system or method, regardless of its complexity or rigor, does not ensure an incompatibility with the communicative. Indeed, such a requirement would exclude perhaps everything we consider music from being communicative. To write communicative music is not, after all, to compose in any single way or with any single methodology, but is to compose in *any* way which highlights or preserves or makes central the challenges of communication, of understanding and of being understood. Boulez failed the communicative test insofar as what he imagined as counting as understanding his serial works was simply a matter of decoding a rigorously constructed set of serial procedures. Reich's criticism of total serialism as providing nothing more to 'get' than these interwoven orderings is in this way well-taken. But Reich's own music is open to the same class of criticism, insofar as it provides nothing more to 'get' than an exhaustive perception of a gradual process, plus some psycho-acoustic after-effects. What is potentially lacking in both cases is any connection with understanding meaning: with Boulez the communicative worry is whether the serial procedures mean anything outside of their arbitrarily constructed self-contained logic, and with Reich the worry is about whether the gradual process or its after-effects are meaningful outside of their being affectively realized. As Adorno once remarked in his consideration of the connection between music and language, "Music without any signification, the mere phenomenological coherence of the tones, would resemble an acoustical kaleidoscope. As absolute signification, on the other hand, it would cease to be music and pass, falsely, into language."[98]

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[98] Theodor W. Adorno, "Music, Language, and Composition," *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (1993): pp. 401-414, https://doi.org/10.1093/mq/77.3.401, 402.

To this point, one additional way that music is sometimes seen as linguistic is in regards to convention. Indeed, it might be that Boulez's goal in creating a new musical language was not to impose a new set of dogmatic rules for writing music, but was instead to institute a new set of shared musical *conventions*, analogous to the tonal conventions which previously saturated a good chunk of western musical history. Thinking of communication in terms of convention has the great benefit of appreciating the social dimension of meaning, but just as with grammatical or affective conceptions, the communicatively minded artist must take pains to protect the conventions she uses from stasis or calcification. Musical conventions like Sonata form or dodadecaphony are not meaningful by nature or on their own accord, but only within the social and historical context of their use by meaning practitioners.

Indeed, as the philosopher Donald Davidson has noticed, we are often able to understand what an interlocutor means even when they are using a vocabulary or grammar or syntax which we are unfamiliar with. We are able in conversation to converge with our interlocutor on what he calls a "passing theory," a conjectural and fleeting adaptation of our interpretive and expressive expectations tuned to the constraints of the particular communicative situation. This means that "what interpreter and speaker share, to the extent that communication succeeds, is not learned [in advance] and so is not a language governed by rules or conventions known to speaker and interpreter in advance."[99] Davidson's conclusion is that, "We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And… should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions." Davidson is not suggesting that conventions and grammatical structures play no important role in communication, but is instead claiming that the fundamental activity of communication cannot

[99] Donald Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," *Truth, Language, and History*, 2005, pp. 89-108, https://doi.org/10.1093/019823757x.003.0007, 107.

be the fixed application of set and stable conventions. On the contrary, and in the spirit of the communicative approach described thus far, communication has no set end-point, no code to be ultimately deciphered, but is characterized by an ongoing conjectural activity of interpretation. Further, in casting off a convention-based view of language, Davidson believes we do away with "the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world generally." Seeing language as one articulation of a broader set of meaning-making and meaning-interpreting activities which include, of course, ostension, serves as a kind of antidote to the dissonance so often felt regarding music's relationship to language. No longer a pale imitation of language, but a unique fellow articulation within the diverse spectrum of human communicative activity.

In regards to the language problem, then, what we would expect to see in communicatively-oriented musics are *flexible* and *dynamic* structural systems—whether they be musical notes, signs, or conventions being organized—which are kept in a process of ongoing formation, critique, and revision. Furthermore, this revisory process must contain some kind of world- or self-relation, and not merely be a demonstration of frictionless, self-generating grammatical patterns operating apart from any connection to the meaning-makers themselves. As stated at the beginning of this paper, a confrontation with a communicative artwork is more analogous to the broaching of a first alien language than the mere translation from one language to another. Ostension, again, is central to this activity of first-language acquisition, and is for yet another reason likely to play a role in communicatively-minded musics. Indeed, pedagogical or educational processes in general are further hallmarks of the communicative.

The Passive Listener Problem

If the problem of a passive beholder is what keeps Todd Cronan up at night as it applies to the visual arts, it's a good thing he doesn't write about the musical artform, where the problem of passivity in the beholder is often even more acute. When we read a piece of literature, or even when we confront a painting at a museum, we generally feel actively engaged in the interpretation of that work at least in part because we have so much control over our experience of it: we can look at a painting or a sculpture from different distances or angles, and for as long as we wish, we can put a novel down when we're tired of reading, or reread previous sections at our discretion. When we listen to music in a concert setting, however, it is much more likely to feel that the music is happening *to us*, that we are its passive recipient with little or no control over how the experience will play out. As we have seen, this kind of passivity is inimical to the communicative. Indeed, in the context of the modern western musical tradition, the passive listener problem puts us in a similar situation as with the other two problems, where a preservation of the communicative possibilities of music requires from the composer some specialized approach that can resist the pull of the normative center of gravity of the musical artform, while simply going with the flow and embracing musical passivity precludes a genuinely communicative approach.

While many of the ancient ideas regarding the medicinal possibilities of music—from Plato's modal prescriptions, to Marsilio Ficino's use of music as a part of a practice of 'natural magic'—are today easily dismissed as pre-scientific, modern science and technology has provided new ways of taking these possibilities seriously once again. One current strand of this thought takes form in the intellectual genre of 'neuro-aesthetics,' which involves marrying the tools and

methodologies of modern neuroscience and cognitive science with the aesthetic goals of artists and composers.

In the *Routledge Companion to Music Cognition*, Professor of Music Theory and Cognition Richard Ashley tackles the issue of music and communication, and defines communication as "action intended to bring about alignment or coordination of states between individuals."[100] His use of the term *states* raises the most flags for our purposes, as it suggests an exhaustively achievable coordination of fixed mental states, as opposed to the kind of ongoing, revisionary process of meaning-interpretation we have defined as the central aim of communication, artistic or otherwise. Ashley's subsequent examples of communicative convergence do nothing to assuage these fears as they all include converging specifically on "the same set of facts," whether those facts be about the date of someone's birthday, or about his current mood.[101] It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Ashley elaborates on the latter affective example as when "[one's] view of my emotions, if not [one's] own feeling state, is becoming aligned with my mood."[102] Further, when Ashley assures us that "*understanding the intentions of a communicating partner* is the essential element of human communication," the intention he is referring to is not an intended *meaning* in an utterance or action, but merely the fact our interlocutor *intends* to be communicating with us, period.

Later in the same volume, Eric F. Clarke explicitly discusses *Music's Meanings*, surveying the various contributions of cognitive science and neuroscience. The two most recent, and for Clarke the most promising, approaches to musical meaning from within a cognitive science frame are the

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[100] Richard Ashley and Renee Timmers, *The Routledge Companion to Music Cognition* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 479.

[101] Ashley, 479.

[102] Ashley, 480.

"ecological approaches" and the "social process" approaches, both of which see musical meanings as roughly equivalent to Gibson's "affordances" in the environment of a human being.[103] Examples of such affordances are "rhythmic synchronization," "the mediation of emotions," "enhancing the capacity to endure physical pain," "contributing to academic discourse," "conferring… gravitas," and even possible use as "an instrument of torture."[104] Clarke also references studies that have shown that listeners can determine the genre of a piece of music in as short a time as 250 milliseconds, thus having an early sense of "what *kind* of music they're hearing—to what 'cultural world' it belongs, and what it affords."[105] If one transposes this last example out of musical meaning and considers it in the context of everyday conversational meaning—as if the *kind* of person speaking gave me a jump on what they meant—it becomes clear how conceiving of meaning strictly in terms of affordances can potentially lead to troubling, prejudicial outcomes. This is not to diminish the very important ways that musical works can and do have instrumental value to societies, groups, and individuals, but simply to point out that these instrumental values, whether they be monetary or therapeutic, are not equivalent to what the work of music means.

All of this emphasizes how, when the composer of music—who we might imagine as already having been disoriented by the morass of the multiplicity problem and made even more insecure in light of music's failure to live up to the communicative utility of language—is presented with the tremendously secure and stable possibility of affective or instrumental connection with her audience, it is tremendously difficult to refuse. As Ruth Leys has pointed out, to embrace "some kind of intentionalist interpretation of the affects"—that is, to embrace something like what

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[103] Ashley, 528.

[104] Ashley, 529.

[105] Ashley, 529.

Cronan called *feeling* as opposed to affect—"one finds oneself forced to provide thick descriptions of life experiences of the kind that are familiar to anthropologists and novelists but are widely held to be inimical to science."[106] In other words, affective or instrumental conceptions of artistic meaning transmission are seen as more scientifically robust alternatives to worryingly abstract aesthetic conceptions of meaning which are viewed as having no genuine purchase on reality. But affects, feelings, do not "occur independently of intention or meaning."[107] Indeed, the storied notion that 'facts and feelings,' 'reason and emotion,' 'concepts and intuitions', or, in this case, 'intentions and affects' are incompatible with each other is misguided. It is ostension, and thus potentially artforms like music which can showcase the ostensive dimension, which can best demonstrate their coexistence. It is in ostension that the physical and the intentional are brought together.

Resources for communicatively-minded composers hoping to 'activate' the listener should by now be familiar. The first is the strategy I have been describing as an eliding or collapsing of roles within the musical-work complex, for example eliding the roles of performer and audience member or performer and composer. If a work of music can encourage its listener to see themselves as taking part in roughly the same kind of active process as the performers on stage are taking part in, their place as an active interrogator and interpreter work might be more readily secured. This kind of empathetic interaction between listener and performer is always in danger of becoming too static, however, in the manner of a mere identification with, for example, the affective state of the performer: to use an earlier example, merely reaching a point of "rhythmic synchronization." In communicatively-oriented musics, one should instead expect

[106] Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): pp. 434-472, https://doi.org/10.1086/659353, 467.

[107] Leys, 435.

an empathetic identification with active meaning-making-or-interpreting *processes* which unfold over time, perhaps expressing capacities of active engagement which performer and beholder both share. Listening itself is one such capacity shared by performers and listeners of music alike, as are capacities like attending, remembering, and learning. It is in this sense that the explicitly pedagogical flavor of Kurtág's *Játékok*, the focus throughout Lachenmann's work on *listening* as opposed to passively *hearing*, and the mental-attention gymnastics of my *Crazy Weather* are not best understood as merely thematic or aesthetic subject-matter, but expressive of a deeply communicative approach to musical composition. Along the same lines, a heightened focus on indeterminacy in a work of music can also be a potential way of activating the listener when paired with the communicative strategy of elision. Indeterminate elements in the performer's score, for example, can ensure the unfixed character of those active performative processes—processes that can thus be described as groping into or breaching the unknown, as genuine learning processes—which the audience member can also be taking active part in.

Ostension again potentially plays a large role in activating the listener. Musical works which contain significant elements of performer-choreography are sometimes described as 'expanding the field' of the musical artform into the realms of dance, theater, or even sculpture. But the foregrounding of physicality in music in this way doesn't necessarily ensure a communicative character, as it may very well be theatrical in not just the colloquial sense but in the Friedian sense, simply layering physical movement (or lighting, costumes, props or whatever else) onto an acommunicative beholding situation. Communicatively-minded composers will instead (or additionally) be leveraging the social and reciprocal nature of ostensive physical movement, which can be both expressive (as in the case of body language) or disclosive (as in the case of pointing). As the expressive/disclosive reciprocity of ostension suggests, ostension is most at home

in interpersonal situations where we are jointly attentive with others, and such situations of joint attention are very obtainable within the traditional western musical performative situation. It is in this way that the elision strategy comes into play yet again, and ostension can be seen as yet another practice that can be shared by composer, performer and audience member alike.

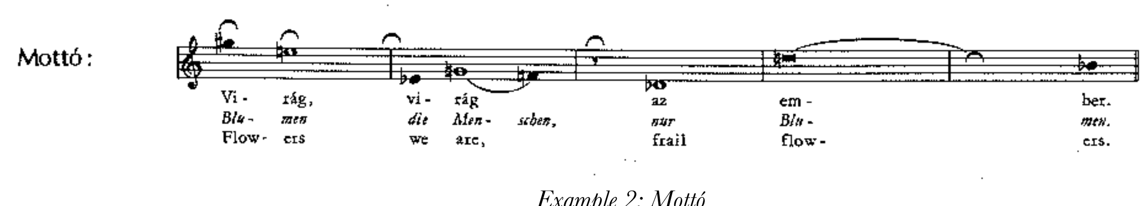
In summary, the presence of the passive listener problem—the way that affective or instrumental conceptions of musical meaning loom large in musical discourse—suggests that communicatively minded composers will have to go to great lengths to build into their works strategies of not just *activating* the listener, of keeping them from being equivalent to a torture victim, but also of keeping them from being *too* active, in the Friedian 'theatrical' sense of my experience being constitutive of the work's meaning. Though it seems slightly paradoxical, these two pitfalls are equivalent. Whether the musical work means whatever I take it to mean or it means whatever it makes me feel the result is the same, a musical work which can never be misunderstood, and thus cannot be genuinely communicative.

Three Communicative Works: *Játékok*, *Ein Kinderspiel*, and *Crazy Weather*

The three musical works I will now analyze engage with the communicative in different ways. György Kurtág's *Játékok Volume I* does so primarily by enacting a pedagogical process of communicative engagement. Through its performance, it does not just dramatize communicative elements, but actually implicates the audience and the composer in a joint communicative and creative journey. Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*, on the other hand, provides not so much a journey as a communicative confrontation. Its elision of composer and audience is in some ways subtler: what the beholder must do to get their bearings *within* Lachenmann's work is similar to what the beholder is led *through* in Kurtág's. My work *Crazy Weather* is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most explicit in its implementation of the communicative characteristics I have been describing, particularly in regards to the extra-musical artistic concerns raised in the first section of this paper as well as the broader political, ethical, and interpersonal implications of a communicative music which will be raised at the conclusion of this paper.

Chapter IV: Analysis of György Kurtág's *Játékok Vol. I* : An Open-Ended Journey

Játékok (1973) begins with a quiet musical pronouncement that, "flowers we are, frail flowers," and it is already unclear whether we are to attribute this statement of vulnerability to the pressed bouquet of short piano works before us or to the composer himself. Kurtág labels this first snippet "mottó," a word which is itself both meaningful and resisting determination. It translates roughly to "posy," which can refer to a small collection of flowers or a short verse inscribed inside a ring, with etymological roots as an antiquated contraction of 'poesy,' creativity itself. Several versions of the mottó appear by name throughout *Játékok*, creating a structural center of gravity across the fragmented collection. The tentative, buoyant, zig-zagging oscillation of pitches in the mottó is characteristic of the oscillating form of the work as a whole. This mottó has a broad significance in Kurtág's oeuvre, first appearing in *The Sayings of Peter Bornemisza* a decade earlier and recurring in various forms in several works. That this motif points away from the present work and to both the past and the future (relative to *Játékok*) of Kurtág's creative output is also significant. In fact, a liberal use of quotation—both of his own works and from other sources ranging from Nancy Sinatra to J.S. Bach—has become one of the distinguishing features of Kurtág's compositional approach.



Example 2: Mottó

In communicative terms, Kurtág's rampant use of quotation and homage can seem double-edged. On one hand, it provides an open-endedness so crucial to the communicative project in how it points us away from the quantifiable musical particularities of pitch or rhythm and toward

greater historical and social contextualization. It is implausible that Kurtág's pitch-for-pitch and rhythm-for-rhythm quotation of Anton Webern's *Cantata* in his Op. 28 *Officium Breve*, for example, stems from the composer just happening to want us to hear those specific pitches and rhythms. It must be that this particular piece of Webern *means* something to Kurtág, and that this subject-relating (or phenomenological) meaning presumably means something in the context of his work. Quotations like this, and like the mottó, are open-ended in that they suggest a broader *context* of meaning, however mysterious that may remain. That this mottó also contains the possible influence of dodecaphonic Webern—a lack of pitch repetition, a proclivity for leaps of a minor 9th—may not be a wholly provable assertion, but is indicative of how layered and recurrent the contextual connections of *Játékok's* tiny musical snippets can be. On the other hand, Kurtág's use of homage and quotation also risks dropping into the kind of flattened grammatical linguistic space Frank Farrell speaks of. Quotations and allusions, as self-contained corpuscles of language, can have deflationary and de-centering effects on a work of art, suggesting that each snippet we confront is just one more sliding textual tile, one link in a causal chain of references. Indeed, the fractured and fragmented appearance of *Játékok* seems to point us towards the possible feasibility of this kind of a-communicative and deconstructive reading. The goal of the coming analysis, however, is to show that this is not the most fruitful way to understand *Játékok*, and instead to suggest how Kurtág's work is an example *par excellence* of open-ended, dialogically oscillating, communicative music.

A few of the musical particularities of this first short iteration of the mottó are worth explicating before stepping further into *Játékok*. It is a somewhat periodic phrase structure in that the the large descending minor 9th leap of the first half of the phrase is balanced by an ascending jump of the same size in the second half. This mirroring of large leaps gives the entire

phrase its oscillating character. The pitches of the mottó make up four consecutive major thirds. Each subsequent third interlocks with the one before it, transposed down at an increasing interval —first by half-step, then whole-step, then minor third—a pattern which continues only to the point when the major third links remain intertwined. It is important to notice that this pattern is most easily detectable in its physical realization on a keyboard, that one can grasp a compositional logic intrinsic to this short phrase most clearly with one's own fingers on the keys. This relationship, another oscillation between the physical and ostensive activity of the performer and the notated particularities (pitches, rhythms, articulations, etc.), is also central to *Játékok*.

Another not unimportant detail of this mottó lies in the multiple translations of text which fall beneath it, in Hungarian, German, and English. They are not exact translations, and they differ in ways which remind us how their meanings are not reducible to some specified master-code. One difference is an extra un-stressed syllable in the German word 'Menschen.' For this an F-natural is provided, seemingly to accommodate a phonetically appropriate vocalization. Each translation repeats the word 'flowers,' but only the Hungarian text repeats it successively: 'Virág, virág.' Yet neither this difference nor the extra German syllable disrupt a consistent pairing of the 'flowers' and the major thirds which define the excerpt. This balancing of linguistic dissonance with musical consonance, of departure and return, underscores further the oscillating engine at *Játékok*'s core. For all of these reasons and more, the open-ended and oscillating *mottó* is a microcosm of the work as a whole, and as such, we will interrogate the rest of the work along these lines.

The first volume of *Játékok* is open-ended. It is, to use the terminology of James P. Carse, an "infinite game,"[108] not a game which is played to be won and thus concluded, but a game played

[108] James Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2013).

so that play might continue indefinitely. More specifically, the first volume of *Játékok* is only a single book of a nine-volume-and-counting project spanning more than forty years of the composer's life. The entirety of the project betrays no single clear direction or trend, nor do its volumes adhere to a single static norm or set of rules. If *Játékok* is indeed a series of games, it differs fundamentally from, for example, a chess tournament in this very way. Any given series of chess-games, despite containing unfathomably many possible combinations of moves, adheres to an entirely unchanging set of rules. In this way the games of *Játékok* are more like Davidsonian language-games, where 'passing theories' must constantly be renegotiated, and where norms are continually shifting, being instituted, revised, and sometimes discarded entirely.

The *Játékok* project *is* unified, in a way that does not threaten this open-endedness, by the idea of, in Kurtág's own words, "children playing spontaneously, children for whom the piano still means a toy."[109] It is, in other words, unified by something inherently open-ended: creative discovery and exploration into the unknown. Indeed, even the most transparently pedagogical or child-like pieces within *Játékok* differ from one another in a multiplicity of ways. These range from works of pure and simple sonic exploration (*playing with overtones*), to works explicitly meant to be played by "small children who cannot span the the whole keyboard… [and] may therefore play them standing or walking in a 'silly,' joking manner" (*Walking, Toddling, Bored, Let's be silly*), to an actual composition co-written by a 6 year old (*The Bunny and the Fox*), to descriptive character pieces reminiscent of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (*Gallop, Falling Asleep*). Indeed, this stylistic multiplicity foreshadows an appreciation of our own previously stated 'problem of multiplicity,' casting the child as not just an imagined performer, but an *actual* performer and an actual creator in their own right.

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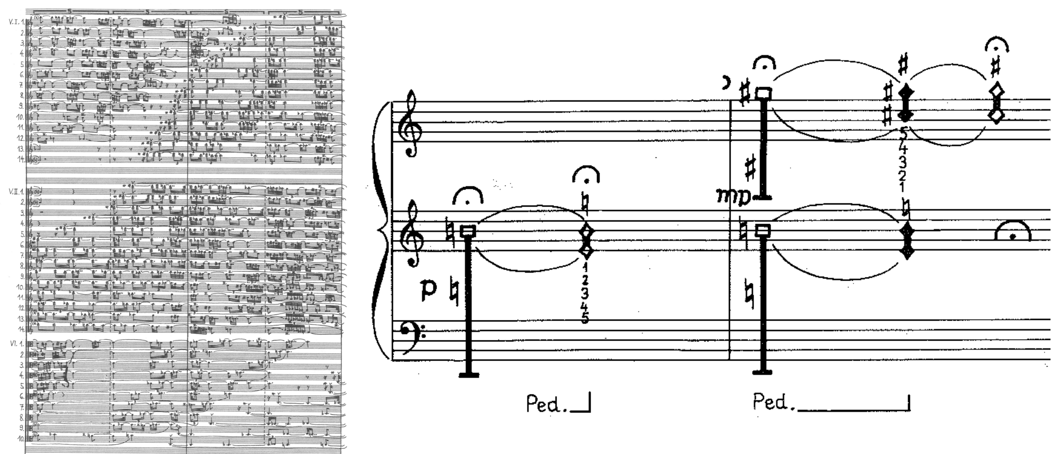
[109] György Kurtág, *Játékok Vol. I*. Budapest: Edito Musica Budapest, 1979.

As we have seen with the mottó and its connections to both past and future works, *Játékok* is temporally open-ended as well, alluding to musical figures throughout history. The movement *Hommage à Ligeti*, for example, alludes to (Kurtág's friend and countryman) György Ligeti's 'sound-mass' compositions of the early and mid 1960s, while *Homage à Tchaikovsky* humorously evokes the grand opening chords of Tchaikovsky's first *Piano Concerto*. *Boisterous Csardas* draws on a Hungarian folk-idiom the composer likely heard in his youth, while *Little Chorale (2)* makes use of a "crab-wise" technique—it can be played both forwards and backwards—which is generally associated with the clever canonical structures of Bach's contrapuntal masterpiece, *Musikalisches Opfer*.



Example 3: Ligeti's Atmospheres (l) and *Kurtág's* Hommage (r), *perhaps what a piano 'reduction' would look like*

As with the mottó, these homages and allusions resist reduction to some single fixed meaning, instead suggesting the presence of a vast contextual and historical web. There remains a question, however, about the role all that historical context plays in our understanding of it. One way of beginning to answer this question is to determine how important it is to a complete understanding of the work that a listener can *recognize* the sources of these allusions, homages, or quotations. If *Játékok* is made meaningful only in this way, then we as listeners need only to

recognize and locate these allusions, creating a factual map of a musico-historical terrain, and marking *Játékok* on it. Such a practice would not meet the communicative standards we have set.

As an example, let us look at *Hoquetus*, one of the last short pieces in this first volume of *Játékok.* The title of this movement alludes to the medieval-era musical practice of 'hocket,' wherein singers or instrumentalists would 'trade' different segments of a melody back and forth, often quickly. For example, one group would play the first two notes of a melody, another group contribute the next two, and so on. The connection between this short movement in *Játékok* and the practice of hocket is fairly obvious, as Kurtág's single diatonic melody is traded back and forth between hands, between registers, and even between the two pianists required for this particular movement. This historical connection thus seems recognizable and relevant. However, few listeners would be so aware of the further similarity shared between Kurtág's movement and Ligeti's 1965 work *Nouvelles Aventures*, including the parenthetical latinate use of *"Hoquetus"* as well as the unusual way the hocketed melody is beamed across instruments. Going even further, we can wonder about the relevance of Ligeti's un-referenced use of a similar hocket technique in 1962's *Aventures*, the clear precursor to *Nouvelles Aventures*, and even his subsequent use of hocket, this time by name, in the second movement of his *Violin Concerto* written in the 1990s, toward the end of his life. All of this is to suggest that untangling the web of historical connections implicated in any given movement, let alone work, of Kurtág's is itself an unending task.

Example 4: Hoquetus *(l) from* Játékok, *compared to similar section of Ligeti's* Nouvelles Aventures

This picture of *Játékok*, de-centered and made centrifugal through its fragmentation and use of quotation and allusion, is encouraging if we are hoping to avoid the overly fixed, quantifiable, objectified stance so incompatible with a communicative musical orientation. However, simply avoiding this kind of rigidity is not all that is required of the communicatively-minded composer, just as the open-endedness of a conversation does not ensure that it is genuinely communicative. In our original triangulation of the communicative space, open-endedness belonged to the *hermeneutic* sphere, but that open-ended journey was also paired with having a *direction*, a normative dimension, a sense of not just conversing or grasping randomly but doing so *toward* a goal of understanding, even if that goal cannot ever be reached. In *Játékok*, this sense of direction will come in the form of a guided dialogic oscillation which is foreshadowed in the mottó but pervades the entire structure of the work.

Hermeneutic Oscillation as Learning Process

The clearest formal oscillation in *Játékok* is between the **A** pages and the **B** pages. Kurtág explains in the score:

> "The layout scheme of volume I is: **A** (left) page — free movement with clusters, with notes not defined precisely; **B** (right) page — more exactly defined tasks. Pages **A** and **B** are complementary but one should also observe the order of the pieces on each individual page."

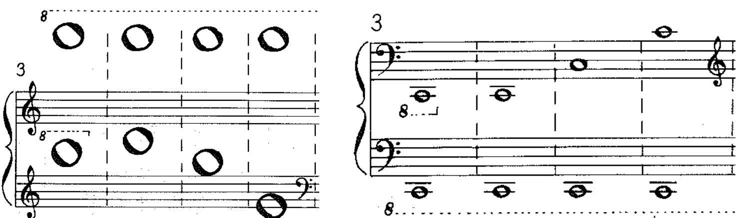
However, even before this **A**-**B** back-and-forth norm is instituted, Kurtág presents for the performer a glossary of "basic elements," as well as some preliminary "exercises," a preamble which gives the impression that one will be shortly moving on to the 'actual piece.' When the show actually begins is always somewhat ambiguous, however, and even the roman numeric page numbers — generally a convention of denoting introductory material — which accompany these instructive keys and exercises continue to mark the pages of the first 12 pairs of **A-B** movements. This sense of escaping a preliminary disordered or indeterminate space and stepping into

something more settled pervades *Játékok*. Crucially, this second step forward is repeatedly revealed to be but *another* first step, that we are always like children, always at the beginning of our journey, that our *mottó* — or posy — is as much the circular yet whole ring as it is the scattered bouquet.

In the score to *Játékok*, this oscillation between the indeterminate and the particular is implemented by using two contrasting types of notation: a predominantly physical notation which indicates different *actions* the performer should take, and a more traditional notation which indicates specific determinate musical particulars such as *pitch*. The degree of indeterminacy in either notational strategy varies, but generally speaking it is the lack of any clearly determined sonic outcome which makes the physical notation noticeably *physical*. That is, the physical notation puts the performer in a situation where they can be more certain about how to move their body than they are about which pitches to play. This can vary, however, and it is clear from the beginning of the work that Kurtág is not *simply* oscillating between two notational extremes but making gradual, directional changes to these notations along the way. In other words, we are not marching in place. So where are we heading? Let us begin to see by tracing the path in the first set of short musical snippets labelled **A** and **B**, a section which I will call 'introductory' and which is numbered with roman numerals (AI, AII, etc).

After the very preliminary 'basic elements' and a small set of unlabelled 'exercises,' the **A-B** oscillation begins with the movement labelled **AIII**, which consists entirely of oversized circular note-heads which are to be played "with the palm, perhaps with five fingers." This notation is therefore rather indeterminate, both in terms of where *exactly* on the piano the performer should play and how many keys will be depressed, but also in terms of the expected resulting sound. The accompanying **BIII** movement mirrors **AIII**, and is notated with totally determinate pitches (only C's) moving in the opposite directions as its twin movement. As this first pair of movements

are very regular in their notation and in their patterning, they mostly serve as a jumping-off point. However, it is worth underlining how the explicit physicality of **AIII** has already affected how a performer would approach **BIII**, as they would be more cognizant of the shape of the physical activity of playing it — namely, stretching one hand across the keyboard as the other hand stays still — than they might have were it presented on its own.

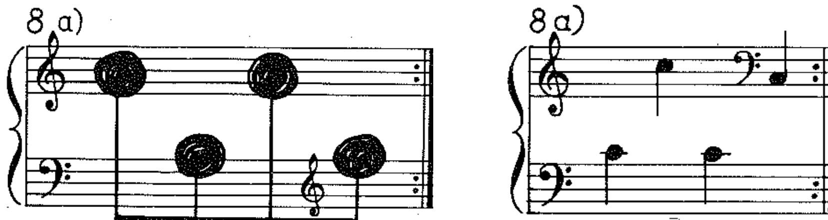


Example 5: The beginnings of ***A*** *(l) and* ***B*** *(r) mirror each other*

The second pairing of movements adds more wrinkles. This time, **AIV** is titled ("palm exercise") and given some simple dynamics, accidentals, and descriptive text. In these ways it is made somewhat more determinate, more specific, than **AIII**. Instead of sections which trail off with the indication '*etc*', as in **AIII**, the **IV** movement has a clear linear structure: several *loud* cluster-oscillations between the hands, a pause of indeterminate length, several *soft* cluster-oscillations, a second pause, and finally a punctuating series of seven two-forearmed clusters. This is the first occurrence of forearm clusters and their idiosyncratic notation in the **A-B** movements, though they are presented during the preliminary "exercises" which came before. This presents a new and important way that Kurtág simultaneously takes one step forward and one step back: he allows us to gain some familiarity with the circular palm notation, but balances that with the newness of the forearm technique. The oscillating path we are on is not only one which complicates and interrogates the relationships between the indeterminate and the determined, or between the physical and the sonic, but is also a recursive and unending path of *learning*, of gradual familiarity paired with humbling introductions of new material. It is, in this

way, akin to the first shaky steps of the toddler, or the first stuttered attempts at language by the infant. It is the beginning of a learning process, a creative process. As William Kinderman beautifully put it in the context of a different work of Kurtág's, "The movement is form stuttering toward communication. Here as elsewhere, the goal of a creative process can be to capture tensional uncertainty, avoiding predictable paths while safeguarding vitality."[110]

The **AIV** movement is also complicated by having two distinct, short snippets of music instead of just a single one. While the second of these, titled "one palm beside the other," contains only the (now old-hat) circular palm notation, it is deceivingly tricky to play. The reason for this is that the movement *looks* like the clusters oscillate between hands and between registers (a familiar pattern). However, due to a constant changing of clefs, notations which look lower on the page are often higher on the piano (and thus sonically). This reinforces the sense that this work is not simply what it looks to be superficially — an oscillating exploration of contrasting notational strategies — but has a deeper direction in mind, one in need of interpretive excavation and *bodily* ostensive showing (not just symbolic showing)[111].



Example 6: The fourth ball in **AIV** *(l)* looks *lower than the others, but* sounds *higher. Inverted version in* **BIV** *(r)*

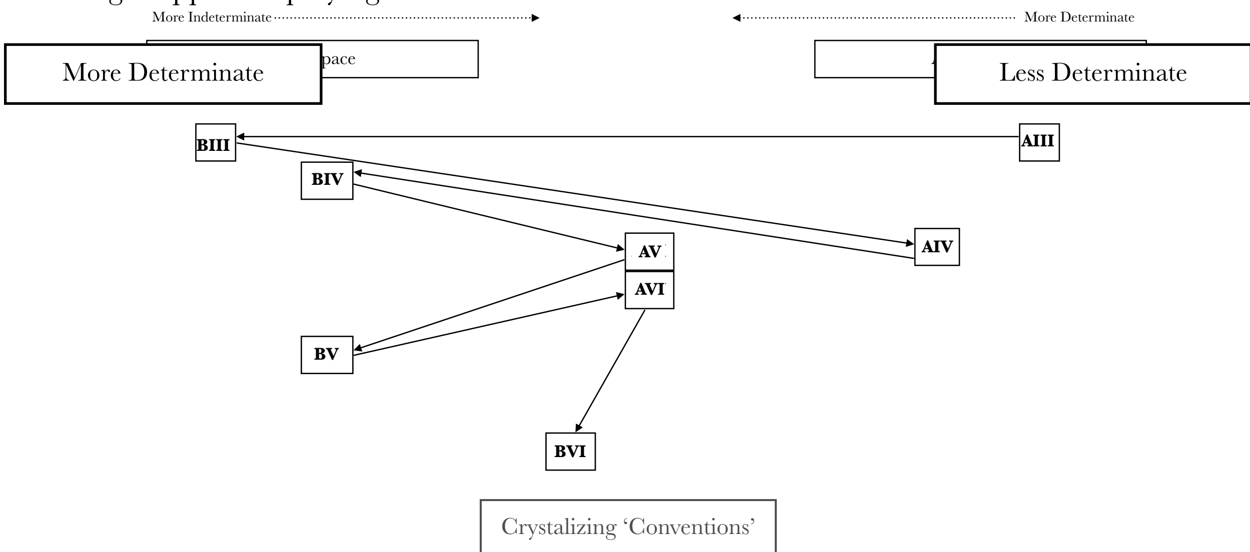
The corresponding **BIV** also looks at first much like **BIII**, encouraging the performer to practice jumping around different octaves of the pitch C. However, this is complicated by a footnote imploring the performer to "practice the same patterns on black keys, too, always with the same fingering." In the same way that the appearance on the score of the clusters in **AIV** had

[110] William Kinderman, *The Creative Process in Music from Mozart to Kurtág* (Urbana, IL: Illinois University, 2017), 190.

[111] As well as a potential reference to Webern's Op. 27 *Piano Variations*, which contain similarly changing clefs.

to be separated from the physical performance of them, the invitation to freely change the pitch used in **BIV** decouples the physical activity of playing from the resulting sonic particulars. This is reiterated again, at the end of **BIV**, with a single-pitched version — this time in inversion — of the final 'tricky' section of **AIV**.

In the fifth and sixth iterations of **A**, Kurtág continues to add more determined notational elements. Instead of the vague circular palm clusters, we are given clusters with specific range-indications, as well as clusters where each pitch is individually notated. Accidentals continue to gain specificity in the same way, at first as blanket 'key-signatures' (ie: play all sharps) in **AV** and later as specified in front of each cluster by the end of **AVI**. **BV** eschews the single-pitch fixation of the previous **B**'s for simple scalar collections, with the same gradual introduction of specified accidentals. Each of these movements also involve at times highly specified and unusual fingerings. **AV**, for example, asks the performer to play the same dyad three times with different pairs of fingers, while the beginning of the final section of **AVI** requires briefly that the performer pluck out a scalar collection us g only their pointer-fingers, the way an untrained child might approach playing the same scale.



Example 7: ***AIII-BIII*** *through* ***AVI-BVI*** *are characterized by oscillation, gradual merging, gradually 'learning.'*

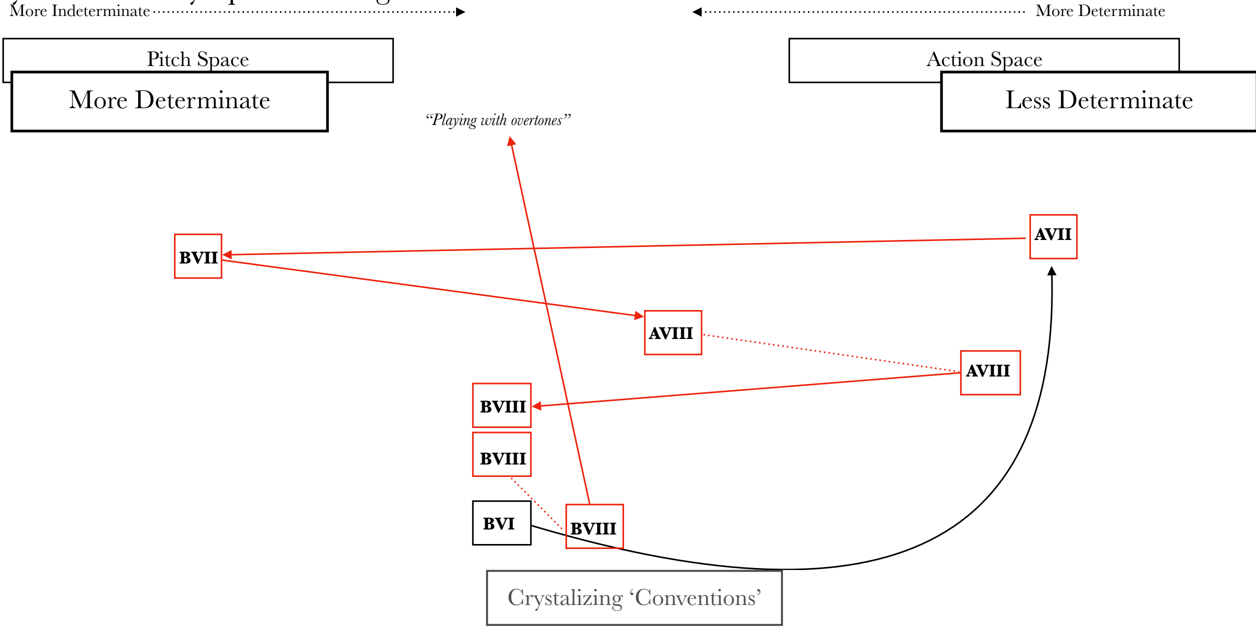
BVI marks something of an arrival point for the first four pairs of movements. Interestingly, it is not a culmination of the notational trends we have observed, nor does it unify what have been increasingly similar-looking **A** and **B** sections. Instead, it presents a Hungarian "folk-song" with the title "Látom a szép eget." This is one of many folk-songs collected by Kurtág's countryman Bartók on his musicological journeys through rural Hungary and Turkey[112]. The trajectory of our first path within *Játékok* leads us, therefore, to a conventional place, a place containing Kurtág's personal and historical and musical influences. In retrospect, the trajectory toward this folk-song was there all along, as Kurtág was teaching us, or more accurately allowing us to teach *ourselves*, the basic elements of his musical language. In enacting these elements in various ways over the first four pairs of pieces, and doing so often at our own free discretion, they become familiar tools we feel increasingly confident using. Even to the extent that eventually we, too, might be able to write our own little folk-songs using them.

The importance of **BVI** is further emphasized by the way that the subsequent **AVII** 'resets' *Játékok* with entirely new indeterminate diamond-shaped and parallelogram-shaped notations, these meant to be played not with the palms of the hand but with the side or the front of the fist. The snippet at the end of **AVII**, titled "playing with basic elements," briefly summarizes each of the indeterminate elements seen thus far in the work: forearm clusters, palm clusters, fist clusters, and "palm-glissandi." **BVII**, however, tempers the extent to which we have moved on by merely continuing the set of exercises begun in the folk-song in **BVI**. The final pair in this first 'introductory' set of oscillating movements is **AVIII**, which continues to summarize the techniques used thus far, including, crucially, specified and particular pitches, articulations, and even rhythmic values. It is now clear that the **A** movements of this introductory section are

[112] Bartók Béla et al., *Hungarian Folk Songs: Complete Collection* (Budapest: Akadémiai K., 1993).

gradually becoming more determinate, and thus more similar to the **B** sections. Similarly, **BVIII** includes the palm-glissandi and indeterminate rests usually associated only with the **A** sections.

This introductory section is concluded following **BVIII** with a pattern-breaking and un-lettered movement **IX** titled "playing with overtones." This movement is not split into two sections, but instead carries across the left and right pages, and involves the heretofore unused technique of silently depressing one piano key and then sympathetically resonating that now un-dampened string by forcibly striking another key. With this movement we reach a new level of decoupling action from sound. While in the earlier movements a performer might be asked to physically change their fingering while the pitch remained unchanged, in this movement the performer's hand moves all over the keyboard, striking different pitches in different octaves, and yet the same sympathetic ring remains constant.

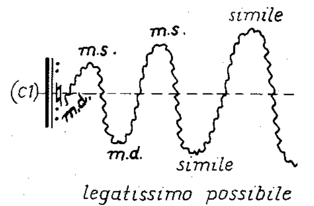


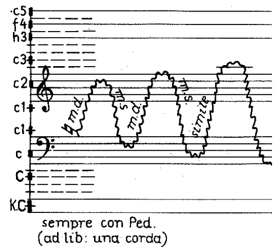
*Example 8: **BVI** through **BVIII** accelerate the oscillation. The learning process is 'reset' after **BVI** and after **BVIII**.*

As we can see in examples 7 and 8 above, this introductory section can be broken into two parts. The first four pairs of pieces make up the first part, and oscillate regularly from predominantly indeterminate physical notations in a space of actions to predominantly

determinate notations in a more traditional pitch space. As we proceed the determinacy gap between **A** and **B** closes, and both the recurrence of novel techniques *and* the introduction of more conventional techniques combine to contribute to a learning-trajectory of increasing familiarity and understanding. After **BVI**, we are once again thrust into novel indeterminacy and retrace a similar zig-zag path which culminates in **BVII**. The un-lettered movement "playing with overtones" resets us once again, just in time for page **A1**.

Page **A1** begins curiously with what will become one of many recurring motifs, the "Objet Trouvé" or "found object," which is the subtitle of the first bit of music on this first page — we remain, as ever, at the beginning. This subtitle is subordinate to the title "Perpetuum mobile," which refers to a style of musical work which can be performed in a loop, indefinitely. This movement consists almost entirely of glissandi up and down the length of the keyboard. These two terms together—'perpetuum mobile' and 'found object'—suggest something much like the poles of indeterminacy and determinacy around which we have analyzed the work thus far. a They also call to mind the balance between ineffability and objectivity necessary for a genuinely communicative music. Additionally, a footnote on **A1** directs us to the final 25th page of *Játékok*, to a *nearly identical* version of the *Perpetuum*. This elision of beginning and end underscores the ring-like circularity of the work, while the one small crystalizing detail the final *Perpetuum* does *not* share with its twin — the inclusion of a reference chart (which very much resembles the chart provided at the *very* beginning of *Játékok*) to indicate more particularly where the glissandi begin and end on the keyboard — reminds us that out of this circularity, these oscillating steps, this dialogue, emerges progress and understanding.





Example 9: Perpetuum mobile *on **A1** (l) and in a more determinate form on **p.25** (r)*

The path traced over the course of the next four pairings of movements (**A1-B4**) is similar to those we have already seen, but skewed somewhat more along the diagonal on the chart below. The reason for this is that these pieces are not only oscillating back and forth from the action-space to the pitch-space, but also from a relatively novel space to a relatively conventional or familiar space. **A1** involves very indeterminate physical motion, while **B1** counters this with not just determinate pitches, rhythms, and articulations, but inhabits the rather conventional forms of "Prelude and Waltz" — and "in C," no less. **A2** and **B2** follow a familiar pattern, the latter being a faithful determinate iteration of the former. **A3** marks the first of many reappearances of the *mottó*, this time using our most-familiar-by-now indeterminate notation of circular palm clusters. This short movement is by far the most familiar/conventional **A**-page so far in *Játékok*, but we do not dwell in this space for long, as the second half of **A3** abruptly presents a notation heretofore unused in *Játékok*. This mini-oscillation within an **A** page and between the familiar and unfamiliar underscores the centrality of that particular 'diagonal' oscillation to this section of the work.

B3 presents its own determinately-pitched version of the *mottó*, which differs from its iteration at the beginning of the work and instead constitutes a diatonic collection of all white keys. The middle of **B3** continues the thought of the *motto*'s "flowers we are, frail flowers…" with "… flowers also the stars…" This short snippet contains instead a *chromatic* collection of all twelve pitch-classes, presented in descending order from C to C. The movement from the diatonic

collection to the chromatic one is itself a movement toward further particularity. The final snippet of **B3**, "out and in," seems somewhat out of place on this page, as it consists simply of gradually widening intervals around middle C with no clear connection to the *mottó*. This simple pattern of gradually expanding intervals away from a central pitch turns out, however, to be at work in the first *mottó* on the same page. Further, this kind of technique has a considerable historical resonance with Kurtág's compositional hero Bartók, who often constructed motivic cells that displayed this same type of symmetry.[113] Most importantly, however, is the role this particular action had in the genesis of this work. Kurtág states that, "*Játékok* became for me something of a new Opus 1. Suddenly, there is no system, there is no chromaticism, only a C in the middle of the keyboard. One can try to find notes around it. That provided a path toward many things…"[114]

A4 marks another reset, and another *Objet Trouvé*—this one marked with repeated F#s, a pitch which is the symmetrical antithesis of the pitch C—and **B4** takes the diagonal trajectory which permeates this section of *Játékok* toward the conventional. In this case, the conventional comes in the form of an "Homage à Verdi" and includes a very recognizable, if somewhat garbled, quotation of Verdi's aria "Caro nome" from the opera *Rigoletto*. Much like the first *mottó* in the previous **B3**, this quotation makes use of only the C-Major diatonic collection — all white notes. Obscuring this quotation is a part written for a second pianist, yet another 'first' for this volume of *Játékok*, who simultaneously performs a musical snippet of their own which is to be played "at a tempo of the performer's choice," bringing in an even greater degree of sonic indeterminacy to

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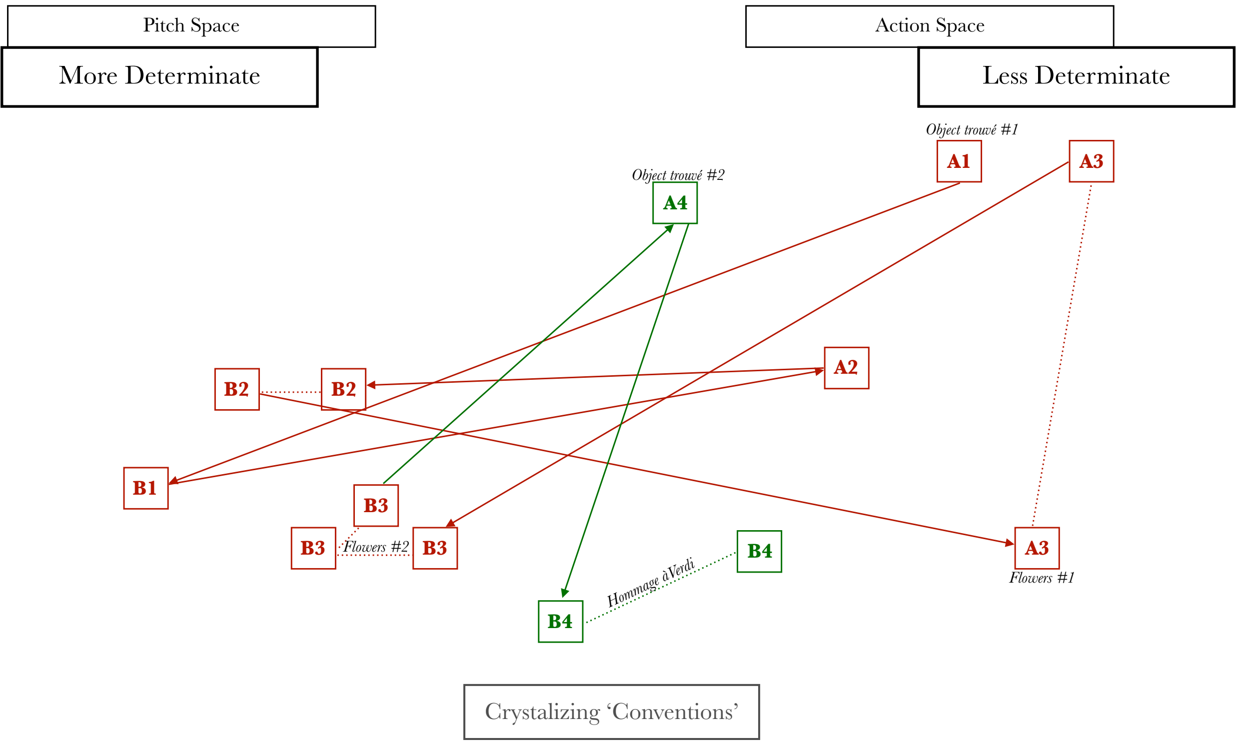
[113] See, for example, discussion of X,Y, and Z motives in Elliott Antokoletz, *The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

[114] Bálint András Varga, *György Kurtág: Three Interviews and Ligeti Homages* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 58.

any performance of **B4**. This *secondo* part uses only black keys, creating a complete chromatic pitch-set between the two halves of this movement.



*Example 10: **A1-B4** is characterized by a 'diagonal' oscillation*

At this point in the piece the structure of the directed oscillation between **A** and **B** pages, having now been through three iterations, has taken on a kind of stability on its own. From this open-but-stable foundation, the larger structure of the rest of *Játékok* thus unsurprisingly begins to take on a more whimsical and less determinate form. The **A** sides of pages 5-8 form their own unified grouping of pieces, which the composer tells us on the score were "composed for small children" and may be played "standing or walking—in a 'silly,' joking manner. (…adults may also play them in this way…)" The titles of these pieces—particularly the pairing of "Walking" and "Toddling"—suggest yet another connection between the physical activity of the small performer, having to run from one end of the keyboard to the other, with stages of development or learning. The final piece on **A7**, titled "Silent Palms," is an unsurprising culmination as it is a

more child-like and less determinate take on the “Playing with Overtones” which previously closed the first roman-numerated section of the piece. The **B**-sides of these three pages are less uniform, but do make use of more ‘mature’ conventions in contrast, for example: “little chorale,” “staggering,” and even an explicit new version of “playing with overtones”.

Example 11: Playing with Overtones *on **IX** (t) and in a more childlike, less determinate form on* **8A** *(b)*

The presence of the mini-cycle in pages 5-8 suggests a kind of speeding-up of the progressive and dialogical process which pervades the piece, made possible by the firmer grip the performer has, by this point, on both the various pianistic techniques as well as the slowly crystalizing conventions they surround. This sense of a gradual formation is further reiterated on pages **A12** and **A13**, which are titled and numbered rather conventionally: “Five Little Piano Pieces.” Each ‘little piece’ makes use of both determinate and indeterminate techniques within itself, often separated between hands. This crystallization of convention takes yet another next step on page **21**, when the distinction between **A** and **B** pages ends with the presentation of three 2-page-long “hommages,” to Tchaikovsky, Eötvös, and Paganini, all of which use purely indeterminate notation, and which are then in turn followed by two pages of the determinately notated “Hoquetus.”Following that, *Játékok* ends as it began, first with a final presentation of the “Perpetuum Mobile” or ‘found object’ and then a culminating version of the *mottó*. The circularity indicated by such an ending is appropriately communicative, as it suggests a process of

coming-to-know which balances the genuine potential of understanding meanings—in how musical conventions slowly but surely crystalize throughout the piece—while recognizing the absence of any final, stable resting point of total understanding.

Having now seen how *Játékok* embodies the communicative qualities of open-endedness and directional oscillation, let us turn to the three idiosyncratic problems of the musical artform—multiplicity, language, and passivity—and see how Kurtág's *Játékok* deals with each of them.

Performer-Composer Elision

First, regarding the problem of multiplicity, I would like to begin with a quote by the composer:

> [D]uring my year in Paris (and again at the end of the period of paralysis, which preceded *Játékok*, roughly a year before hand), for months on end I only drew, set down signs… In my 1973 period I used notebooks, putting only a sign on each page by pressing the pencil or pen against the paper and shaking my hand. There wasn't much difference between the signs, but it's as if a bit of them passed over into *Játékok*.[115]

This description of Kurtág, in the midst of a struggle to express himself musically, finding himself only able to make scribbles on a piece of paper, expresses in a profound way, I think, a desire for *juncture-collapse*. That is, a desire for the work to exist as some self-contained whole, bodily expressed and presumably bodily interpreted, free of the loss of translation which musical scores inevitably threaten. Indeed, *Játékok* does involve remnants of that scribble, for example in its use of simple wavy lines to convey the performers' physical motion over the keys or in the child-like giant noteheads which direct the blunt-force object of the performer's hand into indeterminate clusters.

But in other important ways, *Játékok* is incredibly *unlike* that ideal of the scribble, with its clarity of structure, its use of conventions and quotations, and the general diversity of techniques

[115] Vargas, 7-8.

it brings to bear. In this diversity and structure one finds a composer not merely *giving in* to the objectivity of the scribble, eschewing the communicative in favor of tactile security, but ultimately *overcoming* it, using it as a starting point from which a few timid creative steps can be taken. Through Kurtág's example, one can see the difference between a *skeptical* composer and an *insecure* one. The skeptical composer doubts if artistic meaning, or communication, or progress is possible at all. The insecure composer only doubts that any of these can be easily or totally achieved. Only insecurity, therefore, is consistent with the communicative view, and much more than that, is a central tenet of it. As Albrecht Wellmer has put it, "That human beings are never quite transparent to each other and in this sense can never 'fully' understand each other is *not* a problem but an opportunity, namely, the precondition for our not being fully 'objectified' by each other."[116]

I believe the best way to understand how Kurtág deals with multiplicity in *Játékok* is as a process of elision which has at its center of gravity the creative activities of the composer. Put more simply, and adding a second wrinkle: in *Játékok*, Kurtág makes composers of us all by making *children* of us all. Further, the principal way that we are made childlike in the context of *Játékok* is largely through ostension, through shared pre-linguistic abilities to communicate using basic expressive and disclosive physical actions.

The physical notation used in *Játékok* can be seen as eliding the performative and sonic elements of the performance, as eliding sound and action. That these physical notations are also often quite indeterminate is also important. Indeterminate notations in the score result in indeterminate sounds in performance, and this puts the composer, performer, and audience on, if not *exactly* the same playing-field, a much more similar one in terms of how they relate to the

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[116] Albrecht Wellmer, "Skepticism in Interpretation," *Varieties of Skepticism*, 2014, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110336795.183, 210.

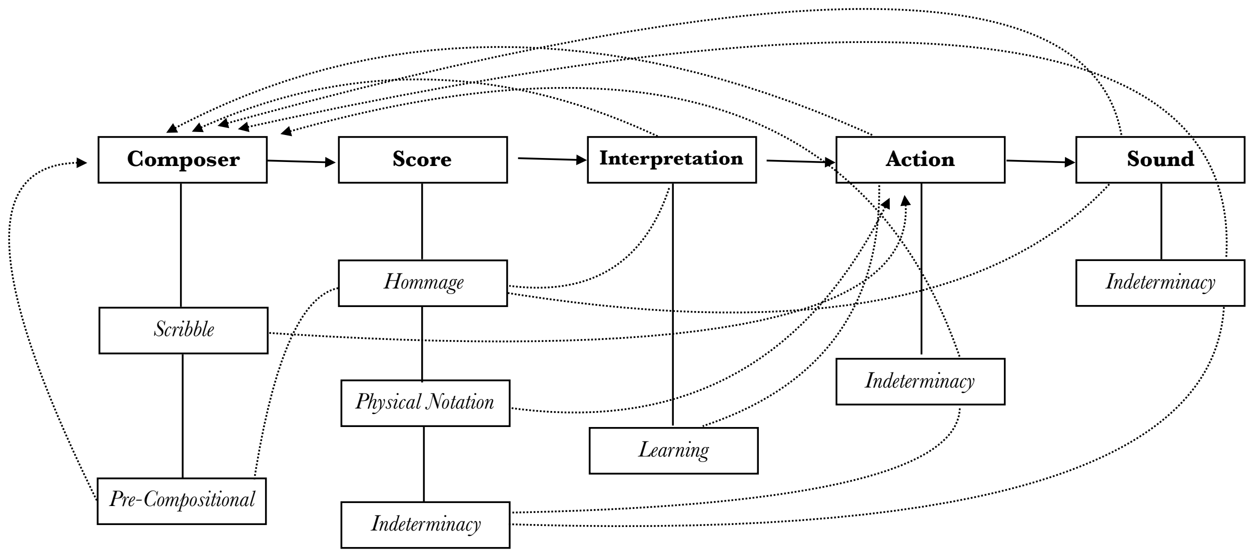
work. This is to say that the extent to which the composer, performer, and audience are privy to very different information in a performance of *Játékok* is greatly reduced. As is the sense in which they are inhabiting thinned-out and non-overlapping instrumental roles as creators, players, and listeners. Further, and as we have seen, the activities the performer is engaged in during a performance of this work are take a very particular oscillating form, one which enacts a learning experience of, or a coming-to-grips with, the possibilities of musical expression on the instrument both physically and within a historical context. This serves to further elide the already somewhat smushed-together interpretive roles of the listener and performer with the compositional process itself.

In the context of a work unified by shared creative (compositional) capacities, the numerous quotations, self-quotations, allusions, and hommages of *Játékok* take on a distinctively *pre-compositional* meaning.[117] By blurring the lines between versions of his own works, including short snippets of things that would become future works, alluding to his influences and his friends and fellow countrymen, Kurtág makes the ordinarily private pre-compositional process of writing public. Indeed, the personal nature of these meanings *and* the eliding character of the work is attested to by Kurtág himself when he says: "I think the idea of exploring and traveling in this work (Játékok) is very important: perhaps an autobiographical journey, or the biographical journey of each of us."[118] As public meanings they further implicate the performer *and* the listener (at least potentially) in the creative or compositional act, not just as a set of potentially-shared recognizable tokens, but as potentially-shared *meanings* which are phenomenologically thick in the sense described by Farrell. These various processes of elision are visualized in

[117] The relevance of the pre-compositional to understanding Kurtág's work has been nowhere better defended than in William Kinderman's *The Creative Process in Music: from Mozart to Kurtág*.

[118] Kinderman, 165.

Example 12, which attempts to show how various important elements of *Játékok* are folded in on one another, with an emphasis or center of gravity on the compositional process.



Example 12: Elision in Játékok

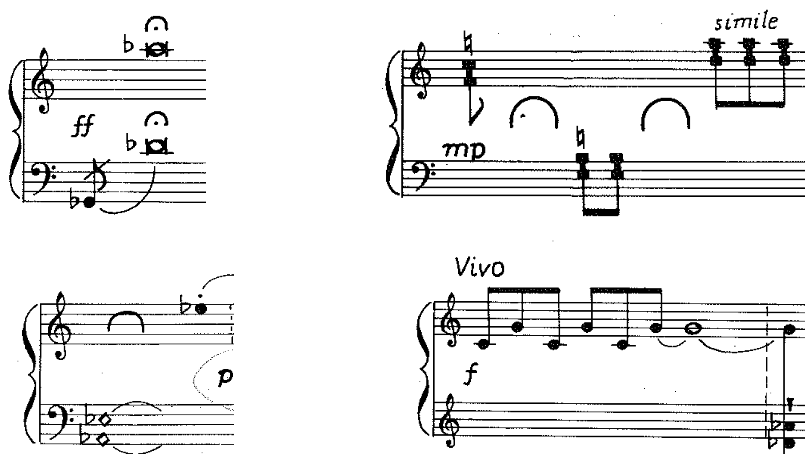
It is important to note that, compared to the audience-member, the performer is significantly more strongly implicated in the creative process, sharing in Kurtág's compositional insecurity, as it were, and slowly bootstrapping herself into an unknown and ever-shifting musical language. The listener's involvement, on the other hand, is somewhat more vicarious, except perhaps for the fact that the simplicity and elasticity of much of the work makes it able to be genuinely performed to *some* extent by almost anyone. Regardless, the focus on the creative process at the slight expense of the listener is an important fact about the communicative topography of this work, and will be one of the things that differentiates it from the other two works we will analyze.

Ostensively Grounded Languages & The Vicarious Listener

Looking at *Játékok* from the perspective of the language problem, one immediately notices the great diversity of different musical languages Kurtág touches on throughout the work. Both dodadecaphonic and diatonic conventions are present, for example, the final iteration of the *mottó* consists of exactly 12 unrepeated pitches, a 12-tone row, while the *Hoquetus* which comes before it

uses only white keys, a C-diatonic collection. However, even the clearest suggestions of conventional musical structures are cut with contrasting impurities. That final *mottó*, for example, is not only a 12-tone row, but is also constructed as a series of stacked perfect 5ths, the 'height' and direction of each stack corresponding roughly to the pacing and contour of the original mottó phrase. Further, while the interval of a perfect fifth is not somehow inimical to dodadecaphony, it *has* taken on distinctive meanings of its own in the course of the piece.

For one, the perfect fifth is the interval formed by the closed hand, and as such it is a staple in pedagogical piano method books for beginning pianists. Unsurprisingly, the perfect fifth recurs in many movements of this physically- and pedagogically-minded work, particularly in movements which call for hand-clusters—**AV**, for example—and explicitly in "fifths" on pages **BVIII** and **B10**, and "little chorale" on page **B5**. Additionally, the perfect fifth—or really, the perfect twelfth —is the interval formed between the fundamental and the third partial in the harmonic series, and as a relatively low partial, it is easy to sympathetically resonate on a piano string. For this reason, it figures heavily in each of the "playing with overtones" movements which dot the work.



Example 13: (clockwise from top left) Fifths in final Mottó *,* 'Scale from one to eight', 'Fifths (2)', *and* 'Playing with Overtones'

In the context of all of this perfect fifth baggage, the 12-tones of the final *mottó* of *Játékok* take on a different character: less as a dutiful contribution to a century-old musical language and more as an inchoate expression of simplistic organization just *barely* taking form away from the hands and the tools of the artist. It is in precisely this sense that makes the 'found object' such an apt formal marker in *Játékok*, embodying the tension involved in communicating some meaning which is objective, tethered to the world, and yet transcends it in its genuine creativity. What exactly *is* the found object of *Játékok*? It is the piano itself, simply being touched by the hands of the young performer or composer, as they take their tentative first steps toward creative exploration and potential expression.

In considering the question of 'activating' the listener, we may begin by reflecting again on the way that the listener of *Játékok* can be said to have only a vicarious relationship with the communicative fabric of the work. This is most clearly demonstrated, in my experience, in how a performance of *Játékok* is perhaps more interesting from the *performer's* point of view than as a listener, or, along the same lines, in how relatively unsatisfying it is to listen to a recording of this particular work, without being able to witness the physicality of a live performance. In a certain sense, this makes *Játékok* a particularly apt comparison with Mattise's paintings, which Todd Cronan found as exemplary of an 'activating' artwork. If you recall, these pairs of paintings share with *Játékok* an oscillating form, one which shifted between a "phenomenological" mode which attempted to implicate the beholder in the depiction and a "realist" mode which attempted to capture the subject 'in itself.' What the oscillation between these modes created was a 'push-and-pull' relationship between the paintings and their beholder, one which was never exactly settled, and which, by moving between two imperfect beholding-ideals, ultimately resulted

in a communicative-compatible cultivation of the tense coexistence of the possibilities of understanding and misunderstanding the work of art.

It is in this way that we might appreciate the incomplete feeling of listening to *Játékok* without witnessing its performance. Or indeed, how even in witnessing a performance of *Játékok* an audience member might feel a little left out of the 'real' action, not just because it might seem fun to be the pianist but because there is a process of gradual understanding taking place on stage which one wishes to take part in. It is important to emphasize how unusual such a feeling is in the context of a concert hall. One might often find themselves entirely transfixed by a musical performance, or indeed entirely bored and disconnected, but cultivating such an uneasy state of 'push-and-pull' requires special considerations. It is because of this uneasy quality that I would describe *Játékok* as a thoroughly anti-theatrical work, in the Friedian sense.

We have already seen, in the case of Jeff Wall's photographs, how the constraints of a particular medium can require anti-theatrical strategies which involve superficially theatrical elements. Often times, when beholding one of Wall's photographs, it is not at all clear how much of the photograph is staged and how much of it 'real.' The result is that the beholder is encouraged to see it as both, simultaneously: a meaningful artistic depiction of something genuinely real. In *Játékok*, in the movement "Wrong notes allowed" for example, a listener might get the impression that the performer is feigning her uncertainty. Ultimately, however, this uncertainty is indistinguishable from that which results from the work's pervading indeterminacy, just as Wall's sets are often indistinguishable from the 'real thing.' In presenting this tension we are drawn as listeners of *Játékok*, in the manner of classic Friedian absorption, to communicatively engage with the consciousness of the performer—to ask what is meant by the choices they are making, and ultimately to see the trajectory of those choices as a learning

process, a coming-to-understand what is meant. By extension, we are drawn with similar communicative comportment towards the consciousness of the composer: as the pianist learns how to play the work *through* the performance of the work, so too is the composer coming-to-understand how to compose the work through the composition of the work. The listener's communicative engagement with *Játékok*, therefore, is somewhat vicarious: an empathetic observation of a communicative process focused on the elision of performer and composer. In Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*, we will observe a work which presents different different communicative balance, one even more intent on the active communicative potential of the listener.

Chapter V: Analysis of Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*: Confronting An 'Emergent Belonging Together'

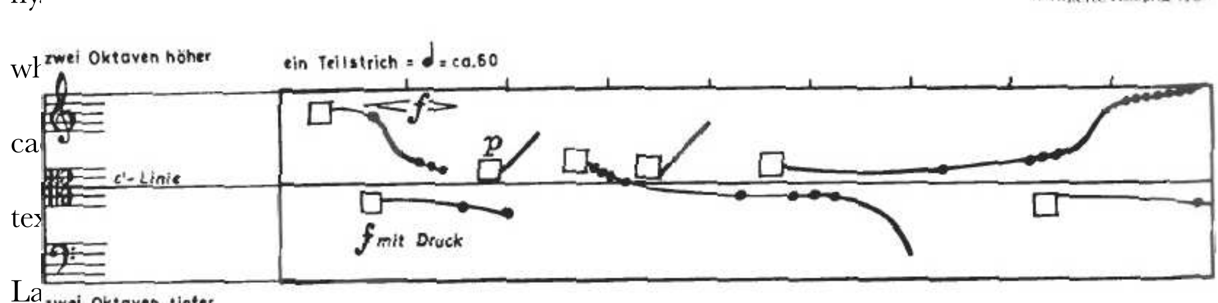
Music theorists sometimes contrast 'horizontal' elements of music — melody, for example — with 'vertical' ones, like harmony. To make a similar analogy, we might describe *Játékok's* communicative character, which prods tentatively through indeterminate paths, oscillating back and forth, gaining a firmer footing as it progresses, as *horizontally irreducible*. Each short snippet of music in *Játékok* occupies one unique step on an open-ended and recursive temporally-rendered musical pathway. For this reason, it was instructive to trace those paths, as if contrapuntally, and to see how their contextual importance to the work preserves its communicative nature. Lachenmann's 1980 *Ein Kinderspiel*, a solo piano work in seven movements, is different. Where Kurtág gently led us by the hand down these paths as creative composer-children, Lachenmann demands instead that we confront a 'vertical' compositional totality as the capable listeners we are.

Ein Kinderspiel is somewhat unusual in Lachenmann's catalog in how narrow and consistent its musical techniques and schema appear: the form and content of *Ein Kinderspiel* is atypically transparent from movement to movement, the notation relatively traditional and accessible, and the repetition which saturates the work provides ample time for a listener to get her moorings. As a result, *Ein Kinderspiel* is an unusually explicit example of Lachenmann's communicative proclivities, or at least a work which wears its communicative efforts more comfortably on its sleeve. As Lachenmann is almost always interested in disrupting the social and historical preconceptions a listener might bring to a work, his music often has a confrontational opacity to it. One is instantly aware when listening to or looking at the score for his earlier piano work *Guero*, for example, of the absence of any conventional footholds: it is a work for piano wherein the keys of the piano are not once struck in any conventional way. In this work and many others, one is

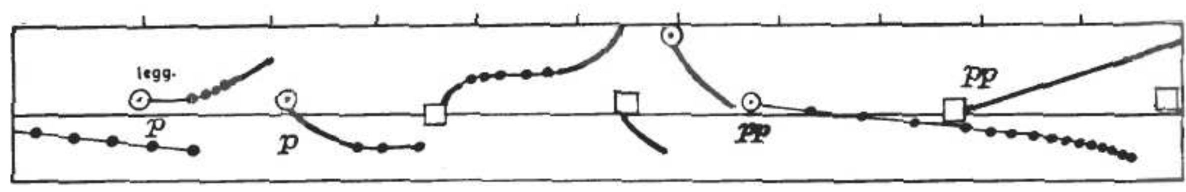
thrust suddenly from one alien sonic exper[…] next (or, as a performer from one alien notational experience to the next), presenting a difficult task of making sense of the work on the fly. […]o,

Guero
für Klavier

Helmut Lachenmann (1969)
revidierte Fassung 1988

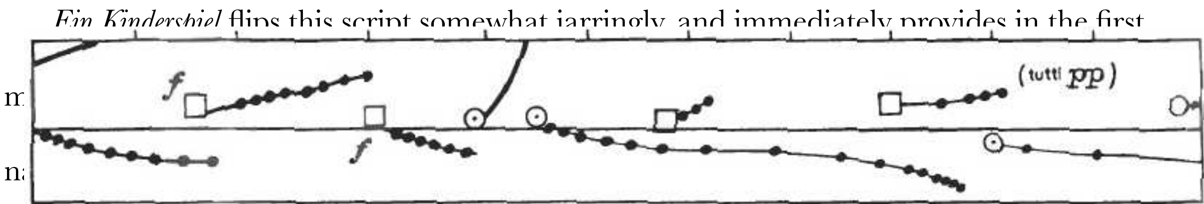


largely keep them there.

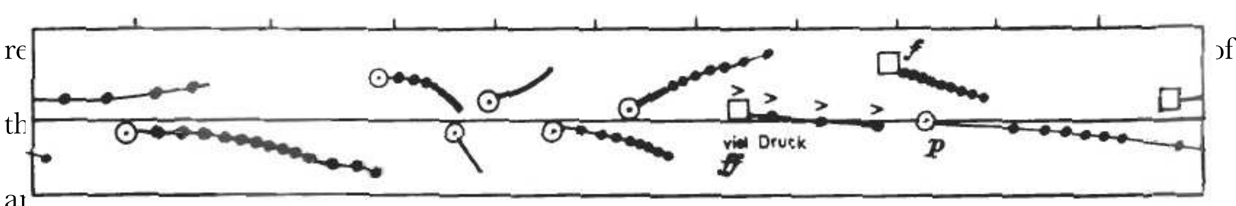


Example 14: The alien notation of Guero *for solo piano (1969)*

Ein Kinderspiel flips this script somewhat jarringly, and immediately provides in the first



present, just its characteristic rhythmic character), its predictability and logical chromatic descent makes for an easy-to-digest piece of music. Make no mistake, however, this 'flipped' approach



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Printed in Germany

surface image is itself only a kind of scaffolding for a deeper and broader musical meaning. I use

the term 'scaffolding', because this surface image is not merely a distraction, but simply one register of interconnected contextual web, an 'emergent hanging together,' as Frank Farrell earlier put it, where each element—the chromatic "scanning" of all 88 keys of the keyboard, the allusions to musical-cultural baggage, the evocation of childhood—is relevant to a full understanding of the work. The first movement of *Ein Kinderspiel* thus provides something like a preliminary holistic sketch or blueprint of the conceptual, physical, technical, and historical territory into which the rest of the work will probe. It is in this sense that we might call Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel* a *vertically irreducible* work. Its multiple movements aren't so much leading the listener down a quasi-pedagogical compositional path as they were in *Játékok*, but are instead presenting different accumulating perspectives from which different gestures and different formal distinctions are ostended, all taking place in reference to a relatively stable and unified phenomenological field.[119] And because the different registers of this field of potential meanings overlap, relate to, and contextualize one another, we might also say that *Ein Kinderspiel* presents *emergent*, or as Lachenmann himself more often describes it, "transcendent," structures and musical meanings.

Example 15: The first four bars of Ein Kinderspiel: *a descending chromatic scale, among other things.*

[119] Indeed, in *Játékok* the archetype of cultural musical currency, a nationalistic folk-tune, arrived a few steps into our horizontal journey, while *Ein Kinderspiel* confronts the listener with such a tune from the jump. Despite the superficially quite different styles of the two composers, I think their use of this kind of quotation or allusion shares a communicative purpose.

Following this thread of emergence or transcendence, let us turn briefly to the philosopher Daniel Dennett, who has conceived of three "stances" for explaining phenomena, each of which are tuned to be applicable to distinct levels of emergence. While Dennett employs his 'stances' to propose theories of consciousness and argue for the existence of free will, his vocabulary is well suited to articulating similarly emergent or transcendent architectures in music. Dennett's stances consist of three different perspectives aimed at phenomena of increasing complexity: the "physical stance," the "design stance," and the "intentional stance." When attempting to explain a human being, for example, we may ask questions about the conditions of cellular breakdown (at the level of the physical stance), or of the proper functioning of organs (at the level of the design stance), or indeed of the presence or absence of certain beliefs and desires (at the level of the intentional stance). These levels are not exclusive, but telescopic and overlapping. For example, a single cell may be approached both from the physical stance—for example, an explanation hinging on the physical permeability of the cell wall—or from the design stance—for example, an explanation hinging on the teleological functioning of chromosomes leading to mitosis. One important characteristic about this picture is that taking a stance allows for the transcendence of certain properties. If you want to know why a calculator displays "4" after you press "2+2", it is of no use to use the physical stance, for example to examine the physical properties of the metals and plastics within it. It is the design or the architecture of the calculator which makes this relationship knowable, which is to say that the architecture has transcended its physical properties. Likewise, if you want to to know "why she blushed when she knew he knew her secret," it is of no use to appeal *only* to her neurology. A good explanation will instead involve the intentional stance, taking into account her beliefs and desires in a way that cannot be appreciated via 'lower' stances.

More recently, Rebecca Kukla has added to this picture of emergence by claiming that "we ought to take stances not as merely intellectual attitudes, but rather as collections of concrete strategies for coping with objects and coordinating with others. These strategies will be embodied; we should take seriously the idea that a stance is, first and foremost, a way of holding your body and readying it for action and worldly engagement."[120] Kukla's recognizing the embodied character of any 'stance' is important in dispelling two related anti-communicative confusions which can often occur when thinking of our interface with the worldly phenomena in terms of emergent layers. The first confusion is that those things which require us to take the intentional stance, abstract and socially and historically mediated things like beliefs and desires, are somehow 'less real' than other more concrete things like tables and chairs. Indeed, the previous example of blushing makes clear how seemingly abstract things like beliefs and desires can affect our bodies in obvious concrete ways even though they can only be fully explained by taking the intentional stance. Second, and relatedly, is the confusion that the physical stance is somehow a primary, neutral, or background state, foundational to the other two stances. As Kukla says, "When we take seriously the embodied character of stances it becomes clear that one always has to be in some stance or other, to the extent that one is functioning as an agent at all… If we think of stances as intellectualized sets of explanatory goals and heuristics, we might think it is possible to be in a state free of any such set. But once we think of a stance as an embodied posture, it becomes manifest that one must always be in one or another."[121]

A third upshot of Kukla's more literal description of a 'stance' as a physical way of holding oneself is that it becomes clearer how certain features of whatever is being observed may come in

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[120] Rebecca Kukla, "Embodied Stances: Realism without Literalism," *Oxford Scholarship Online*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199367511.003.0001, 1.

[121] Kukla, 11.

or fall out of focus from one stance to another. Thus, to return to the 'magic-eye' metaphor, the folksong melody of *Hänschen klein* is neither a diversion or a mere surface feature which covers the 'real' musical nuts and bolts of pitch and rhythm, nor does the folk tune detach from or render insignificant its 'underlying' means of material production. It is the way that these aspects—the historical tune, the pitches and rhythms which allude to it, the physicality of the keyboard itself which those chromatic notes articulate so baldly, and likely more—are presented together, as part of a unified expressive gesture into a broader possible space of meanings, which demonstrates the distinctive 'emergent' or 'transcendent' communicative character of Lachenmann's work.

Kukla's embodied articulation of Dennett's stances thus also begins to resemble the 'thick,' holistic, phenomenological literary space described previously by Frank Farrell: "a casual remark, the mood of an afternoon, a scene observed by chance through the window of a store, a quotation memorized long ago in school… There may be no apparent logic that joins these, but the writer finds a barely appearing field in which somehow they belong together. Such an emergent belonging-together, in its faint and inchoate form, may become possible only through a kind of attention… that employs resources across several registers of the psyche." The goal of the communicative artist is therefore to create a situation of joint attention (to use Chad Engelland's phrase) which allows for a convergence on an expressed organization of features and meanings within such an emergent space, to carve out that space and 'point out' or ostend towards elements within it in such a way that the beholder (or indeed the performer, perhaps through a process of elision) comes to occupy something like the same stance or comportment of the artist. This is what it is to come to understand what someone means, communicatively: not that you are able to correctly regurgitate their words, but that you 'understand where they're coming from' in such a way that might allow you to articulate it in your own words.

In that spirit, I believe that distinguishing this kind of genuine communicative understanding from mere message-relaying is what Lachenmann is trying to say, despite what may seem like somewhat anti-communicative language, when he says things like the following:

> "There is a subtle and very small difference between the music that 'expresses something', which therefore starts from a previously intact language, and the work, which is 'expression', that speaks to us as silently as the folds on a face marked by life. I only believe in the latter form of expression… composing does not mean saying something, but rather: doing something, perhaps also: experiencing something, the work, the result of which is an expression that has become a sound structure or structural sound, which says more unequivocally about the situation in which it arises, in which the composer acts and in which way he reacts."[122]

As described in our previous discussion of the 'language problem,' it is always tempting to think of communication as totally synonymous with language, and doing so often leaves music out of the communicative equation, but appreciating the distinctness of language and communication becomes easier the more one appreciates the communicative role ostension plays. Indeed, elsewhere in the same section, Lachenmann seems to very much appreciate this when he says, "Language in music is body language of the mind in compositional activity."[123] This is highly reminiscent of Hegel's analogy of an artwork as a 'thousand-eyed argus' and our broader discussion of the reciprocal and dialogical character of ostension. It is too much of a stretch to say that in confronting *Ein Kinderspiel* we simply confront its composer and thus arrive at a site of communicative potential. But the ostended marks and shapes and sounds Lachenmann presents us with in the form of this work, because they have prodded and organized and articulated such a multifaceted and contextually integrated physical, formal, and cultural emergent space, afford us as listeners an opportunity to inhabit his point of view, to understand where he is coming from. As Lachenmann put it, composing for him is not only a one-sided expressing of something

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[122] Helmut Lachenmann and Josef Häusler, *Musik Als Existentielle Erfahrung Schriften* 1966-1995 (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2015), 78.

[123] Lachenmann, 78.

("doing something") but also simultaneously an "experiencing something," making it a reciprocal and reflexive process which places no opaque boundary between the compositional act and the interpretive act, just as the outstretched gesturing hand contains no boundary between what it expresses and what it gropes.

The first movement of *Ein Kinderspiel* can thus be considered analogous to the 'Table' which begins *Játékok* in that it lays out the conceptual and physical architecture relative to which the rest of the work will play out. In both cases that space is tethered to the instrument of the piano. For *Játékok*, the piano is the vehicle in which we take an oscillating journey of creative genesis, for *Ein Kinderspiel* the piano confronts us as a historically conditioned sounding object—an object with what Lachenmann (following Adorno) calls an "Aura," a "realm of associations, memories, archetypal, magical predeterminations," which can facilitate in the listener an "experience of horizon expansion and of one's own mutability." Indeed, the allusion to childhood in the title of *Ein Kinderspiel* is not present because it is a piece written especially for young pianists, but because "such an experience [of horizon expansion], especially in the arts, is uncomfortable for us adults, because it reminds us of our own solidity and our own responsibility to overcome such solidification, to pull our heads out of the sand and to hold our gaze on the mirror of our reality."[124] In simpler terms, Lachenmann wants us to learn and to change, and to simultaneously become aware of our capacity for growth and change, through his works. In some ways, the only contribution I hope to make to Lachenmann's own, and very deep, characterization of his work is to point out that communication is the way this interpersonal project of self and world awareness and criticism takes place.

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[124] Lachenmann, 163

The original technique for creating this kind of learning-situation, a technique Lachenmann termed *musique concrete instrumentale*, was born out of the composer's discontent with the common compositional methods he came in contact with in his formative years. These problematic methods fit into familiar categories. As Lachenmann puts it, "In order to escape from the mannerism of tone-color heroes on the one hand, and the neo-surrealism inherent in orgies of defamiliarisation on the other, as well as the prison of pointillist thought—not least also to avoid degrading sound to mere objective information, as it were to a formal building-block, instead allowing it to become a genuine event—I have developed… *musique concrète instrumentale*."[125] In other words, Lachenmann was dissatisfied with compositional approaches which were governed by inflexible systematic rules (ie: the "pointillist thought" of total serialism), or by socially-habituated conventional languages (ie: composers comfortable staying within a neo-romantic tonal idiom), or processes of inexpressive transgression (ie: the "neo-surrealist" 'happenings' of the fluxus movement).

As we have already touched on, in its earlier form in Lachenmann's works this compositional technique bore a great resemblance to Schaefer's original approach, and involved an eschewing of any and all traditional ways of approaching an instrument, stripping away any connotations, pre-conceptions, or historical baggage which a listener might bring to bear on a work. The desired result was a direct, unmitigated confrontation with the work, not entirely foreign to the listening situation John Cage or Pierre Schaefer attempted to foster. A major departure from Schaefer's approach, however, is that Lachenmann embraces and centers in his work, quite enthusiastically, the means by which sound is produced, the material conditions which undergird the sound. Indeed, the earlier *concrète* works might be said to fuse the physical production of

[125] Lachenmann, 211.

sound and the sound itself into a single "palpable" experience. As he continued using the *musique concrète instrumentale* approach, however, Lachenmann found the need to "go beyond the immediate experience of 'palpability,' however it may have been developed… [A]t the edges of this compositional approach there appeared such previously excluded, old… categories of sensation as rhythm, consonance, melody, pathos, which must be uprooted from their bourgeois commodification and invoked in all their 'dangerousness.'"[126] That is to say that Lachenmann came to understand that cultivating a rich phenomenological relationship to his works could not be meaningfully relegated to an ahistorical, asocial notion of 'sounds in themselves.' *Musique concrète instrumentale*, unlike *musique concrète*, allows sounds to exist simultaneously as palpable material, as well as historically and socially mediated.

Example 16: Scalar and Tonal allusions in movements 3, 5, and 4: Pentatonic scale, triad, both elements together.

As stated before, we see this triune simultaneity of emergent layers of physicality, design (form) and intention in the very first movement of *Ein Kinderspiel* with the blunt physical articulation of the keyboard, the formal pattern we know as the chromatic scale, and the allusion to the cultural-historical artifact of the folk-song. Indeed, even the details of the work which seem to fall outside of that central context are themselves similarly evocative of multiple stances. The

[126] Jonathan Cross, Jonathan Harvey, and Helmut Lachenmann, "Philosophy of Composition -- Is There Such a Thing?," in *Identity and Difference: Essays on Music, Language and Time* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University P., 2004), pp. 55-70, 65.

grace notes which adorn the descending chromatic scale, for example, are following another pattern which recurs throughout the work: the whole-tone scale. If the chromatic scale is the grounding for pitch-material in the western tonal system, the whole-tone scale might be thought of as one of its most basic iterations or abstractions, retaining its symmetry and simplicity of rule. The major thirds which appear on the second page of the movement similarly adhere to both the formal rigor of the work (they, too, are symmetrical in that they will neatly map onto the space of an octave) and also especially testify to the way in which even the simplest musical patterns are saturated with cultural-conventional possibility, as arrangements of major and minor thirds undergird the entire historical system of tonality in whose wake Lachenmann composes his works. As a communicative composer, Lachenmann can no more escape or avoid the force of this particular history than he can ignore the physical constraints of the instruments he writes on. Indeed, perhaps the most overt reference to cultural-historical tonal musical structure in this first movement is the presence of two similar grace note triads: a first inversion F# major triad, and a second inversion Eb minor triad. The coexistence of the physical, formal, and cultural is again highlighted in these chords by the fact that their (rather arbitrarily conventional) spellings betray their sonic and especially physical similarity. In tonal music theory, these two chords would have incredibly different implications, but in the physical hand of the performer they barely differ. Furthermore, it is important that these two chords are entirely on 'black keys,' and, together with the final Ab of the work, make up yet another musical abstraction which will be used throughout the larger work: the pentatonic scale. All of this this speaks to the ways in which the physicality of the instrument (in this case, the black keys) is simultaneous with its cultural-historical content (a whole tone scale).

Aside from these scalar and tonal allusions, there is another important element being manipulated in this first movement which will continue to play a role in the rest of the work: the reverberating resonance of the piano. Lachenmann refers in his writings[127] to creating seven categories of reverberation to use in *Ein Kinderspiel*, all of which can be found, more or less one at a time, in the first movement:

1) No pedal with high, already undamped notes (m. 30)
2) Depressed low cluster, also with high notes (mm. 5-8)
3) Holding previously struck keys over the following struck tones (mm. 13-18)
4) Holding the keys you just pressed, without a pedal (mm. 9-12)
5) Dry, without a pedal (m. 19, briefly)
6) Depressed low cluster under struck notes, which reverberate as overtones (mm. 20-22)
7) Pedal fully depressed (mm. 1-5, 23-29)

As you can see from the measures listed after type, it is only the last measure of the 31 measure movement which does not strictly display one of the seven 'steps' of this formal meta-scale. Instead, the last measure reveals the sympathetically vibrated Eb minor chord which was depressed silently two bars earlier in the wake of the climactic overlapping of resonances in mm. 25-28. It is telling that the movement ends with the resonance of a highly culturally-charged sound (a minor triad) which is itself not actively or positively *played* by the performer so much as it is negatively *revealed*. This speaks to Lachenmann's sense of the importance of creative destruction through negation. As he once put it, "Inventing music therefore means: acting negatively… uncovering the implicit in advance by suppressing and thus exposing the suppressed beforehand. Nothing is more constructive than such destruction." In *Ein Kinderspiel*, the reverberation of the piano serves as a kind of twice-true metaphor[128] for the 'aura' of the work. It is, all at once, the negative shadow which surrounds the articulated playing of the keys, the

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[127] Lachenmann, 166-167.

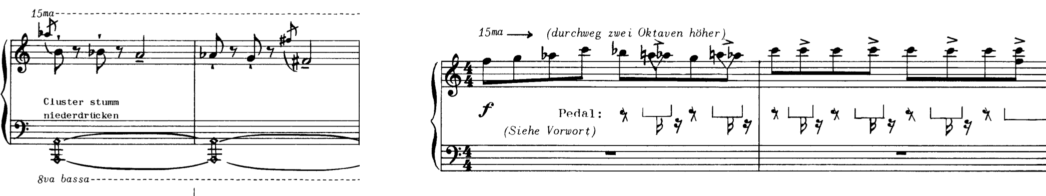
[128] A twice-true metaphor is one which is both literally and metaphorically true. The classic example is the phrase 'no man is an island.'

positive form in which seemingly unplayed (silently depressed) notes can sound, the metaphor for the cultural and personal baggage, that "realm of associations, memories" which surrounds the instrument and its musical oeuvre, *and*, as evidenced by those seven stepped categories, the central musical 'scale' from which Lachenmann will craft the music of *Ein Kinderspiel*.

'Scanning' as Absorptive Elision

With the first movement serving as a holistic blueprint for the conceptual and physical landscape of the rest of the work, subsequent movements set up different points of perspective or different foci on that larger musical terrain. Lachenmann sometimes refers in his writings to hearing as a "scanning process," and the construction of *Ein Kinderspiel* is very much an explicit example of this mode of composition. Crucially to our communicative concerns, Lachenammn's notion of scanning *elides* the roles of composer and listener, creating a situation where the listener takes up the comportment of the composer as they gradually understand how the work was constructed. As Lachenmann himself puts it, this process of scanning "enables conclusions to be drawn about the building principles at work in the work and beyond that to the underlying expressive and aesthetic posture." In the second movement, "Clouds in Icy Moonlight," for example, Lachenmann draws us to focus our gaze on just one area of the sonic landscape that has already been introduced when he constrains the pitch material entirely to the upper octave of the piano, and allows for a more fine-grained interaction between two extremes of his resonance categorization: categories 1 and 2, which both involve those highest piano notes, as well as category 7, which he describes as "the maximum of the reverberation scale." Unlike the first movement where the reverberation can be taken as a background layer, the pedaling in this movement creates a reverberation which corresponds rhythmically with the pitched material, adding to the holistic sense that such an 'aura' is never fully peripheral, and just as 'real' to the

music as any struck pitch or recognizable tune. This has the effect, one that continues through the entire work, of gradually drawing our attention away from those surface elements — the chromaticism or the folk-tune itself, for example — and towards the increasingly opaque contextual web of meaning, which exists both as a kind of contextual negative scaffolding (the means of sonic production) and as a kind of positive shadow (the resonance which persists despite its being un-struck).



Example 17: Pedaling 'Aura' as background layer in Mvt 1 (l), as rhythmically foregrounded in Mvt 2 (r)

As you can see in the above example, the second movement also introduces a new "f-minorish" (as Lachenmann refers to it in his essay on the work) scalar collection. This is yet another example of the way the layers of emergence in *Ein Kinderspiel* are gradually excavated: first the brute fact of the chromatic keyboard, then the whole tone scale, the pentatonic 'black key' scale, and now an even further step into conventional space with this quasi-f minor scale. The other pattern which can be seen in the above coming to light in this second movement is one which is drawn not so much from the physicality of the keys, but the physicality of the performer: the space of a perfect fifth. This interval pervades *Ein Kinderspiel* for the same kinds of communicative-ostensive reasons as it was present in Kurtág's *Játékok*, namely its simple connection to the five-fingers of the hand. Crucially, Lachenmann maintains a friction between the pianistic physicalities and the creeping cultural conventions which emerge out of them. These separate emergent layers are not presented as distinctly striated but instead are tethered to each other in a state of balanced dialectical tension: the f-minorish scale with which the piece begins

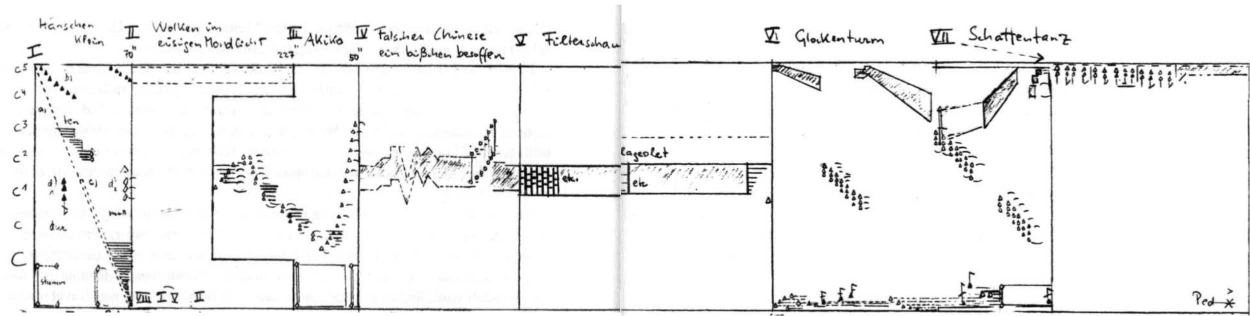
becomes gradually more entangled in its chromatic surroundings, while the space of the perfect fifth horizontally implicit in the first bars of the movement ultimately asserts itself as a verticality in the last four measures of the work. In the third movement, "Akiko," the now 'built-up' five-finger pattern is itself now iterated in the same way the scalar collections were, and the right hand spends the entire third movement moving down the keyboard in sustained five-finger patterns, now evocative of a Phrygian scale. The entire movement, that is, except for the third iteration, in measure 9, which serves in classic Lachenmannian negating terms, as the exception which proves the rule. Again, the coexistence of the rule and its breaking preserves the contextual tension in a way that is crucial to the communicative character of the work. It shows us that the application of this particular rule is a compositional *choice* within a much broader holistic space of meanings, and not in any way fixing the bounds of how we are to understand the work, or creating a patterned code which might be successfully broken. Along the same lines of preserving that tension, this right hand five-finger white-key pitch game is not the only one in town for this movement, but is played simultaneously with a secondary pattern, one which was foreshadowed in the very first movement, of black-key ascending pentatonic pitches. In a true communicative fashion, none of these patterns or allusions are allowed to calcify or to become inert musical objects or fixed musical codes. Instead, Lachenmann communicatively maintains, as I put it at the very start of this dissertation, "the tension of the simultaneous possibility of understanding and misunderstanding" by presenting these patterns in contexts where there meaning remains tethered to a thick, holistic, emergent whole. Wondering what is meant by, for example, the faulty five-fingered pattern placed in measure 9 of *Akiko*, takes one down a path of inferences which touches on everything from the physicality of the keyboard to the history of piano repertoire to political concerns about commodification and more. This path is crucially *not* a mere chain of

free-associating significations, but points of triangulation in a constellation of human meanings and concerns which afford the possibility of orienting a listener into a genuinely new perspective, of genuinely communicating something to them.

Example 18: The five-finger RH pattern in Akiko, *only one (bottom left) breaks the rule*

In the same vein, the fourth movement and most of the fifth persist with the doubly physical (keyboard and body) distinction introduced in the third between black and white keys, with white keys only played by the right hand, black keys by the left. In the same way that the reverberating resonance takes on increasing meaning throughout the work, the performer's own physicality, her hands — there all along but easy to ignore — now also become increasingly central to the work's form. The holistic meaning of the work thus expands, both microscopically as we more granularly dwell on narrower patches of sonic terrain and macroscopically as the work seems to expand off the page, into the instrument, and onto and through the performer's body. Interestingly, these middle movements of the work are also unified in the pitch register they engage with: they all take place in the middle of the keyboard, whereas the outer movements dwell more on the extreme high or low edges of the keyboard. Movement 4, "Fake Chinese," the central movement of the work, is also by far the movement least preoccupied with contrasting varieties of resonance, making very little use of the pedal or of silently depressed sympathetic resonating. Indeed, the broad trajectory of the entire work consists of the pianist's activity moving from the periphery of the keyboard — extreme high and low registers — to the center of

the keyboard, and then back again. The work thus consists of a macroscopic ‘formal scanning’ from movement to movement (as can be observed in Lachenmann’s own formal sketch of the movement in example 17), analogous to the 88-key ‘scan’ presented in the first movement. What is notable about this from the communicative perspective, is that it even more strongly *elides* the listener’s role with that of the composer’s. Our understanding of the work as we listen deepens and spreads out through the physical, formal, and intentional registers, and we come to understand more and more where the composer is ‘coming from’. At the same time, the path of that journey is quite plainly choreographed *through the form* of the work by the composer. This is what makes *Ein Kinderspiel* an unusually clear communicative work for Lachenmann, as it not only contains a thoroughly holistic, multi-registered landscape which resists affective or code-breaking strategies of meaning-making, but it also involves the composer using the form of the work itself to guide us through various parts of that landscape. The composer’s task of expression thus becomes contemporaneous with the listener’s task of interpretation, creating a genuinely communicative and dialogical experience.



Example 19a: Lachenmann’s own formal sketch of the seven movements of Ein Kinderspiel[129]

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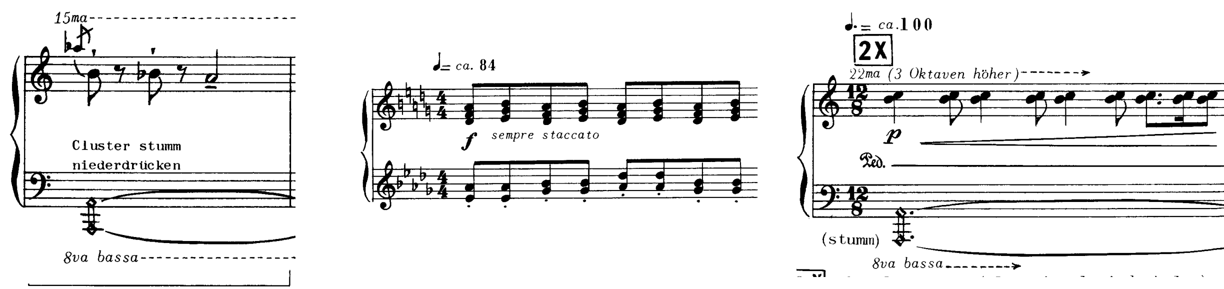
[129] Lachenmann, 166-167.



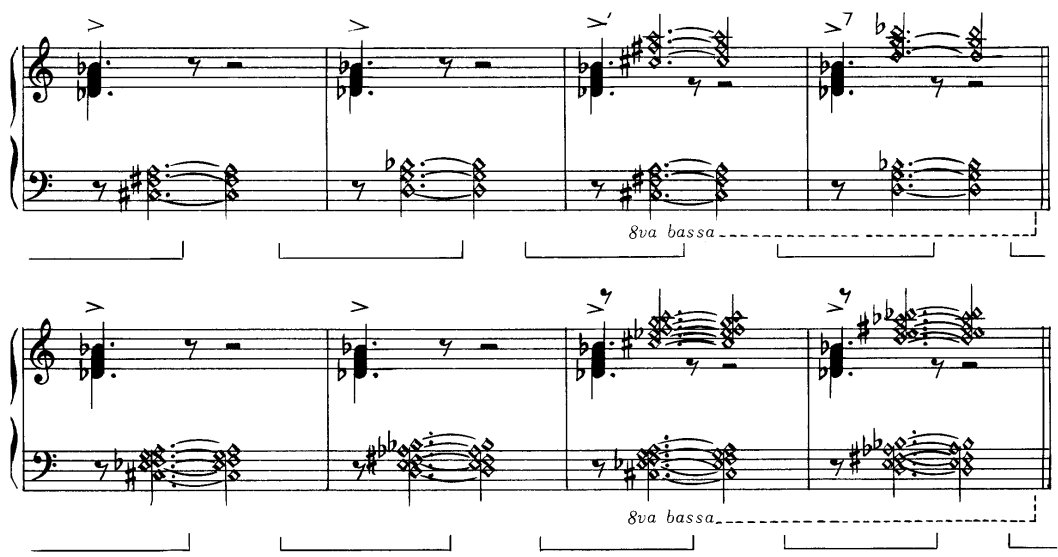
Example 19b: Excerpts from first, middle, and last movements showing movement from extremes to the center and back.

It is important to emphasize how this empathetic connection between Lachenmann and the listener of his work, one brought about by a process which I call *elision*, is of a particular communicative character, and not, for example, an affective or unmediated connection. As David Michael McCarthy points out in his article *Lachenmann's Complex Musical Aspects: Timbre as Interiority or Utopia of Communication?*, modern musics which trade heavily in the timbral dimension, as Lachenmann's work does, are often thought of as offering the listener an unmediated sonic encounter which, because it "cannot be defined along a single dimension[130]" (unlike pitch material, for example) cannot be publicly articulated, and thus must exist as a purely interior experience. This reading of Lachenmann is undercut, however, by how rigorously he organizes the timbral materials of the work into scale-like categories and degrees, most notably the seven categories of piano resonance. By placing these varieties of resonance into categories, and ordering them in ways that play such clear formal roles within the work, Lachenmann issues a demand to his listener which *is* publicly transmissible. It is not the affective experience of novel sounds which Lachenmann aims to transmit to his listener, but, as he reiterates over and over, a new way of *hearing*, a new way of making sense of the world. McCarthy connects this communicative ideal to Habermas's "utopia of communication" which "takes as its point of

[130] David Michael McCarthy, "Lachenmann's Complex Musical Aspects: Timbre as Interiority or Utopia of Communication?," *Contemporary Music Review* 36, no. 6 (February 2017): pp. 580-589, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2018.1427196, 581.

reference a situation where the way forward to an undetermined yet preferable future lies in establishing and perpetually renewing conditions for communication."[131]

The fifth movement, "Filter Swing," provides a transition from the dry middle-of-the-keyboard mid-point of the previous movement, back towards the ethereal resonance which will ultimately end the work. The black and white key dichotomy persists in this movement, but it too has been complicated and seemingly overrun by the materiality of the keyboard as the simultaneous expression of both hands produces a chromatic cluster. From this cluster, in now familiar iterative fashion, various elements are 'filtered,' revealing a constantly shifting sculpture of this single chromatic block of marble. First these clusters are carved by removing sustained notes, but gradually the loudly articulated clusters provide sympathetic resonance for silently depressed chords which spread out through the keyboard. These resonant chords also go through their own iterative transformation, gradually revealing triadic harmonies in the manner suggested at the very end of the first movement, but ultimately themselves buried in chromaticism.



Example 20: In Filter Swing *chromaticism ultimately overtakes not just the cluster, but the silently depressed resonance as well*

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[131] McCarthy, 587

The penultimate sixth movement which follows, “Bell Tower,” presages the end of the work in two ways. First, Lachenmann finds one last area of the vast resonant pianistic landscape which has not yet been excavated and negated: the very lowest octave of the piano, which up until this point has only been used as one mode of resonance, when silently depressed. In this movement however, this octave finally gets articulated ‘positively’ with pitches which are struck loudly, quickly released, and then quickly ‘caught’ again. This unusual way of striking these keys creates a somewhat paradoxical situation wherein the ultimate held resonance is caused *sympathetically* by the striking of the key, but is not itself an extension of that initial attack. The result is a micro-musical shape which beautifully reverses the macro- or formal shape: an attack followed by resonance on the one hand, a structurally ‘late’ articulation of a previously only resonant field on the other, with the strange causality of the former mirroring the backwards causality of the latter. This movement also signals the end in that it is the most complexly contrapuntal movement of the seven. Previous movements juxtaposed at most two articulated elements: white keys and black keys, five-note patterns and pentatonic scales, etc. Here, however, three strands coexist: the strange resonance of the lowest octave, the highest-octave articulation following a strict a whole-step and minor-third pattern, and the more chromatically inflected staccato mid-range articulations of prime form (015) in various transpositions and inversions.

Example 21: Bell Tower*'s three-part polyphony*

The final movement of *Ein Kinderspiel*, “Shadow Dance,” brings to the fore another unusual way that the work maintains its communicative character: through repetition. Musical repetition is, of course, ubiquitous, but repetition of the intensity found in the final movement of Lachenmann’s work is perhaps most associated with a-communicative and affectively minded music, such as Reich’s “gradual process” music. We can thus distinguish, stealing the terms from Michael Fried, between *theatrical* and *absorptive* repetition, the latter being a strategy which serves to resist the listener as a means of orienting them communicatively. Theatrical repetition, on the other hand, might serve any of several a-communicative possibilities, such as to induce an affective state of some kind or, as in the case of Reich’s gradual process pieces, simply make the listener aware of a sonic process. It is this latter example which is hardest to distinguish from Lachenmann’s use of repetition in the last movement of *Ein Kinderspiel* — why isn’t it right to say that this movement is simply an exercise in conveying to the listener certain timbral combinations, letting the sound wash over the listener as they gain a finer and finer grained appreciation of purely sonic experience? Part of the answer comes from the fact that these particular timbral combinations are *not* simply sonic phenomena, but have been articulated through the course of the work as part of an entire complex of physical, formal, sonic, and cultural meanings — that is to say that they are vertically irreducible. These timbres are not meant for an isolated experience by the listener, but are highly contextual, ‘zoomed-in’ explorations of a broader set of meanings presented and elaborated upon throughout the work. The extreme narrowness of this movement, it consists of only two pitches and only a couple rhythmic patterns repeated over and over and over again, better ensures that the listener find their attention directed *away* from those repetitive surfaces and instead towards the shifting aura of resonances which surround them. This is quite literally expressed at the end of the movement

when the pitch content of the work disappears entirely and only the repetitive pedaling remains, contrasting, for the first time explicitly, the sound of 'pure' piano resonance with silence. Indeed, the final bar of the work, which has no notated sounds whatsoever, not pitches nor any resonant pedaling, brings to mind the mild rebuke of Cage with which I began this paper. Here silence is included into the work *not* because it exemplifies 'sound in itself,' but because it exemplifies the full breadth of context involved in the meaning of the work, one which includes not just sound, and not just the piano, or the pianist, but the entire physical and cultural space in which the performance takes place, and the historically mediated and communicative listening situation which occurs therein.

Example 22: The last six bars of Ein Kinderspiel — *draining into silence.*

Chapter VI: Analysis of William Pearson's *Crazy Weather* : Small-talk and the Possibility of Misunderstanding

My 2017 work *Crazy Weather* for Chamber Orchestra is in five distinct sections, and the fifteen-person ensemble is split into the following seven distinct chamber groupings: 1) Pianist and assistant; 2) Brass Trio of Trumpet, Trombone, and Tuba; 3) Solo horn; 4) String Trio of Viola, Cello and Bass; 5) Solo Violin; 6) Wind Quartet of Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon; and 7) Solo Percussionist. These groupings apply both to how they are arranged on stage (as physically separated chamber groups) as well as to the scores they read from. The similarity in number of these seven formal groupings and Lachenmann's seven categories of reverberation is certainly coincidental, but the rationale is very much coming from the same communicative place. Unlike the two works for solo piano, which came prepackaged with the unified physicality of a single instrument which can then be integrated formally, my much larger orchestration required that I impose such a unified physical constraint on the ensemble. As we will see, some sections of the work make use of these categories as individual chamber groups, while other sections treat the ensemble as a whole. It is also worth mentioning from the start that while I had not firmly articulated to myself the communicative vocabulary I use in this paper at the time of its composition, *Crazy Weather* does differ from the previous two works in how self-consciously 'communicative' it is. It also differs from the previous works in its communicative center of gravity. While *Játékok*, with its emphasis on creativity and the 'horizontal' acquisition of new communicative norms can be poetically described as making *composers* of us all, and *Ein Kinderspiel*, with its emphasis on understanding the irreducible emergent musical field of meaning it confronts us with can be described as making communicative *listeners* of us all, *Crazy Weather* attempts more generally to make communicative *interpreters* of us all. This step towards the broader category of interpretation in general, as opposed to the more musical specificity of the

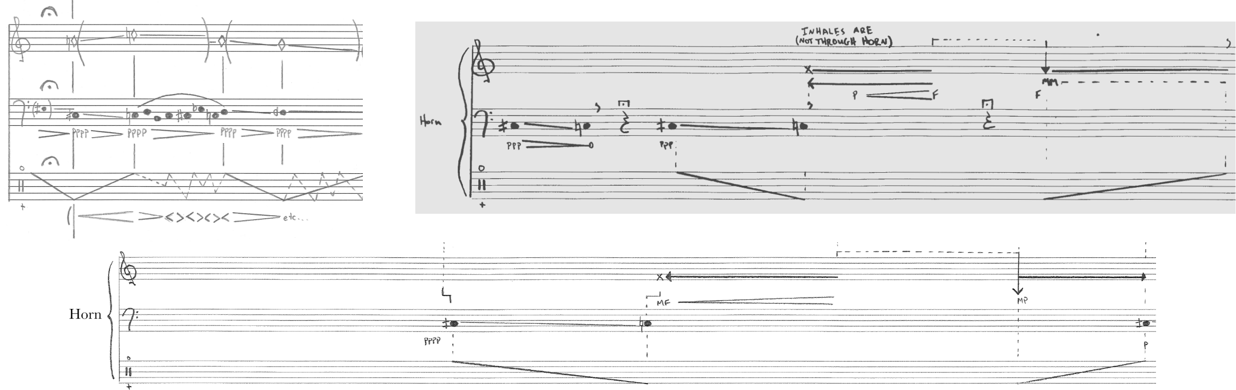
other two works, speaks to how self-consciously primary these concerns are for me as a composer. Indeed, just about any communicative characteristic described in our previous two analyses can be found in much more explicit form in *Crazy Weather*. In addition, my more extreme focus on 'the communicative' in general points towards what will be the concluding thought of this paper, that part of the communicative approach's value as an orienting compositional philosophy comes from its general applicability to parts of life outside of art-making.

Within the communicative umbrella the primary focus of *Crazy Weather* is that of the communicatively-necessary *possibility of misunderstanding* and contrasting it with the absence of any such possibility. The title, taken from the John Ashbery poem of the same name, suggests two related meanings which bear on this communicative necessity. First, the title describes an archetypal example of a contingent, causal force which acts on us, violently. As such, if we wish to combat 'crazy weather,' force is our only viable option. We don't waste time trying to convince hurricanes to change course, we build dams and shelters which provide a sufficient force in the opposite direction. 'Crazy Weather' is also a cliché, a bit of small talk you might use when you've nothing meaningful to say. Important to our present concerns, small talk isn't genuine conversation or communication. Phrases like 'crazy weather we've been having' are uttered in an attempt to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding, to speed an interpersonal interaction along smoothly, while genuine communication demands the presence of exactly this possibility with all the risk and potentially uncomfortable vulnerability that goes along with it. When we small-talk we aren't looking to begin a dynamic engagement with another, gradually working toward some shared understanding, we simply want a social interaction to work—like a dam or an umbrella works—without the possibility of understanding or misunderstanding coming into play.

As we have already seen, John Ashbery's poetry is sometimes interpreted as presenting language in this non-communicative way, as analogous to *weather* or *small-talk*. The many clichés and quotations in his poems are taken as suggesting that texts and utterances can only have meaning in how they relate to other texts or utterances, while his use of fragments and uncanny juxtapositions are seen as highlighting the ways these meanings shift and bump up against each other in a de-centered and fractured linguistic space. Under such an interpretation, the meanings of Ashbery's poems are not so much his, but are supported solely by their placement within a vast intertextual web, which is itself but a small whirling fractal deep within the enormous hurricane of culture-at-large. As stated before, I think Ashbery's actual view of language is much more complex than this, and agree with the philosopher Frank Farrell that, "to understand language as Ashbery does is to see how the synthesizing activity of the individual consciousness in relation to the world is not simply deconstructed, even if we are more aware of energies of fragmentation." A view of language as 'crazy weather' precludes poets or readers from achieving any genuine grip on the meanings of poems; language instead moves through us or acts on us under such a view, the way a storm might move across a landscape.

Like in the two previous works, *Crazy Weather* contains a number of references and quotations, both to my own previous works and to musical works by other composers. The solo horn in the first section of the work is indicative of the former, as much of its musical material can be traced back to my 2013 work *FiveFiveFiveFive* for three horns, and is a nearly exact quotation of my 2016 work *Mark J. Ralph, 16, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ralph of Preble* for Horn and wind quartet. Both of these previous works reference my late maternal grandfather Kenneth Ralph, who played the horn, and who suffered from a stroke late in life which rendered him unable to speak any word other than 'five.' The horn has thus become something of a 'recurring character' in my work, a

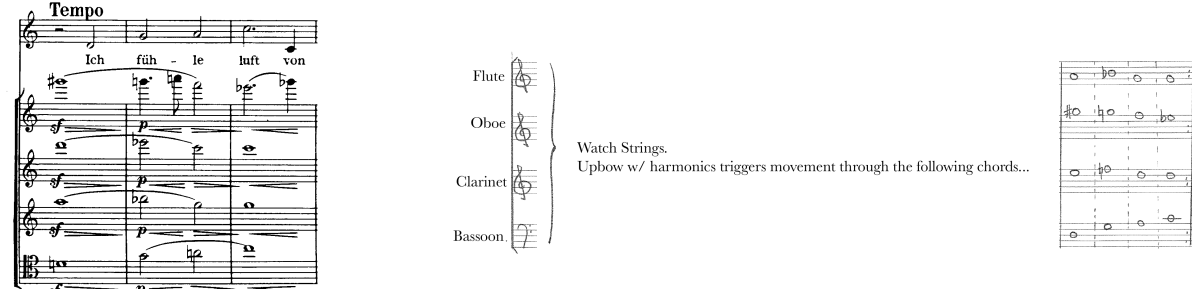
theatrical representation of the universal difficulty of expression, exemplified by my grandfather's frustrating aphasic state.



Example 23: FiveFiveFiveFive *(l),* Mark J. Ralph *(r)*, Crazy Weather *(c)*.

Another more recognizable quotation in the first section of the work comes from the striking moment in the fourth movement Arnold Schoenberg's 1908 *String Quartet*, when a soprano's voice emerges from the dense texture of strings with the words, "*Ich fühle Luft von anderem planeten*. (*I feel air from another planet),*" from the poem *Entrückung* by Stefan George. This particular quartet has rightfully become emblematic of Schoenberg's transition from using the musical materials of post-Wagnerian extended tonal harmony (the first three movements of the quartet can be placed within such an idiom) to a genuine departure from the harmonic concerns of tonal music. The George quote, occurring as it does just as Schoenberg breaches 'genuine' atonality for the first time, is thus taken as reflective of that breach into a new musical language. Crucially, this period of atonality from 1908-1925 in Schoenberg's oeuvre is defined by its being bookended by compositions created within relatively well-defined musical norms: the extended tonality one can observe dissipating throughout the second quartet and the strict '12-tone' system of composition which Schoenberg would begin to espouse in 1925. This quotation thus serves as a good example of not only how the work is constructed as a site of potential misunderstanding, but a particular potential misunderstanding which bears on the nature of communication itself. On the one hand,

the recognizable quotations in the work might lead a listener down the same un-communicative interpretive pathway as some readers of Ashbery. At the same time, however, what this particular Schoenberg quotation points to is exactly the kind of unsettled and mutable musical-linguistic norms which characterize a genuinely communicative musical relationship to language.

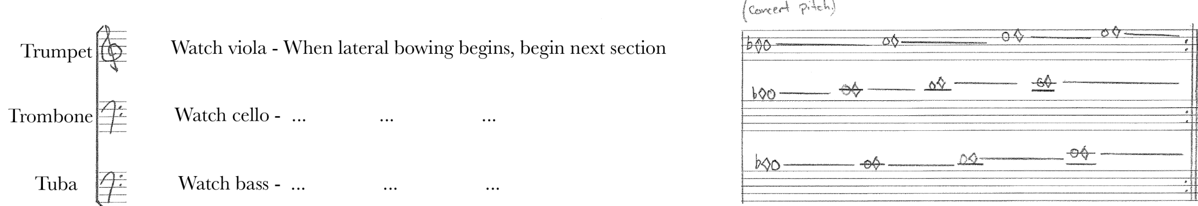


Example 24: Chord progression from Mvt. IV of Schoenberg's String Quartet #2 *(l) appearing in winds in* Crazy Weather *(r)*

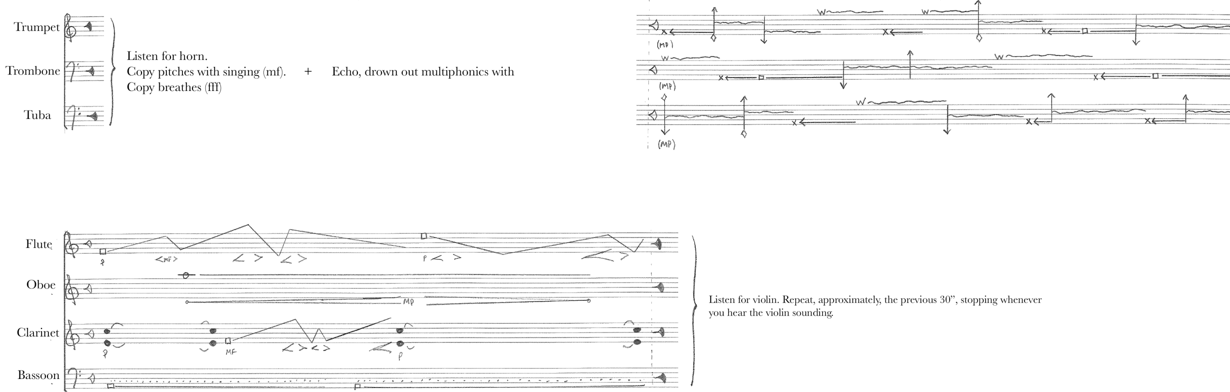
Something similar is at play with the most theatrical elements of the work, such as the interactions between the horn and the violin soloists.

Another recurrent allusion in the first section of *Crazy Weather*, which we saw in use both in Kurtág and in Lachenmann, is the use of bare scalar collections, meant to simultaneously call to mind the determinate, systematic qualities of diatonic music as well as to allude to the indeterminate creative flux of the beginning music student practicing her major and minor scales. Indeed, these scales are presented in *Crazy Weather* in two distinct ways so as to emphasize this inherent dichotomy. The first presentation is a slow ascending scale played in the low register of the piano with each pitch played every thirty seconds during the first section of the work (the first six pages), precisely, marking the beginnings and midpoints of each stave of music. The temporal precision of this scale, especially in a section of the work without any other clear tempi, time signatures or conductor, makes it a crucial source of structural information, indicating to performers how they should proceed with their parts, whether they should hurry up, or slow down. The second presentation of a scalar collection occurs in the brass trio, and is instead

wrought with indeterminacy, as the pitches in these latter scalar iterations are simultaneously played and *sung* through the instrument by the brass players, making the pitches themselves very difficult to produce with any stable pitch or timbre. Further, the timing of each pitch is notated in an rhythmically indeterminate way, without specific rhythmic values, and determining the starting-point of each scale relies on the brass players observing actions of the string players which are themselves indeterminate and likely to differ from one performance to another. This oscillation, reminiscent of the one we observed first in Matisse and later in Kurtág's *Játékok*, between the abstract and the concrete or the particular and the indeterminate, characterizes much of the first six-page section of my work. In a much more overt way than in the Kurtág, however, these oscillations emphasize the expressive and interpretive *vulnerability* of the performers, often prompting musical undertakings that are impossible to produce stably or reliably. The oversized ball noteheads of *Játékok* open up a world of childlike possibility and discovery for the performer: there is some sense (perhaps best exemplified by the title "Wrong Notes Allowed") in which you cannot fail as a performer to interpret them and express them correctly. The similarly communicatively-minded methods of indeterminacy in *Crazy Weather*, however, have a different polarity, one in which the performers in some sense cannot *succeed*, where the very idea that there might be some stable or fixed expressive state to be aiming at is entirely absent, thus further foregrounding the possibility of communicative misunderstanding as the life-blood of the work. We will later discuss in more detail the role that the presence of failure throughout the work plays in a process of *elision*, in bringing together the communicative nodes of composer, performer, and audience under the broader umbrella of risky and vulnerable interpretive activity.



Example 25a: An indeterminate scalar passage in Crazy Weather



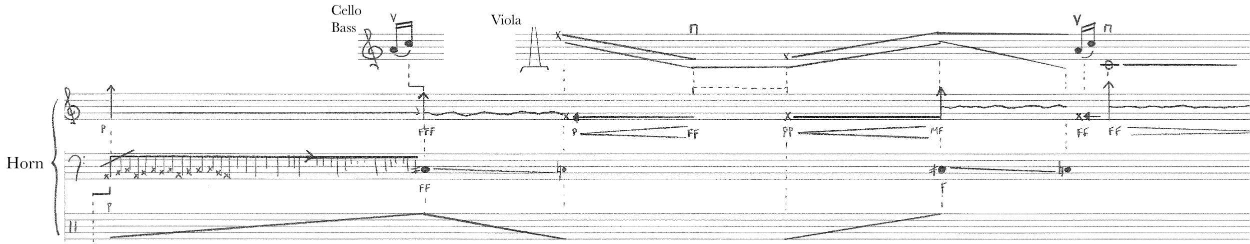
Example 25b: The oscillation of more indeterminate and more concrete material in the brass and wind groupings

Subsequent sections in the work, all of which will be discussed in more detail as we continue, also contain quite large quotations: spectralist composer Gerard Grisey's *Partiels*, the Gregorian *Requiem* chant, Josquin des Prez's *Deploration sur la mort de Johannes Ockeghem*, as well as a prolonged set of speech-based quotations from a 2005 NPR interview with John Ashbery. All of this adds up to a work fairly saturated with quotation and allusion, intentionally creating a situation where my own work is at risk of being misunderstood in exactly the same way that I argue Ashbery's work often is. In all of these ways, *Crazy Weather* is not only a work *about* the importance of the possibility of misunderstanding, but is also itself intended to be a site available for potential misunderstanding.

Elision and Absorption

One way we can see how the interpretive dimension is sustained in *Crazy Weather* through a process of *elision* is by looking at the interpretability of staged activity. During the first section of the work, for example, the horn soloist is asked to perform their part in reaction to non-sounding

physical gestures being mimed by the string trio (non-sounding gestures are notated in boxes). To make this possible, the hornist must face *away* from the audience — in the same direction, actually, *as* the audience — and toward the string trio to be able to observe their silent movements. During the same section, the violin soloist demonstrates the other side of this coin by reacting only to *sounding* gestures produced by the string trio. The violinist is faced outward, toward the audience, but does not have a score in front of her for the entire first section of the work and performs this part of the work with her eyes closed. The 'blindness' of the violinist and the 'deafness' of the hornist in this first section of *Crazy Weather* decouple elements of interpretation for the performers which are typically only relevant to listeners. There is a real sense in which this first part of the work consists of several separate chamber works being performed simultaneously, allowing for performers of one 'piece' to be genuinely positioned as listeners of another.[132] This is a very direct attempt at elision: a combining of the different communicative nodes of the work in order to facilitate a holistic communicative experience in the work.



Example 26: The three-staved horn part, along with cues for reacting to non-sounding actions in the strings

The staging of the ensemble as a whole is also relevant to this interpretive-centric elision. The instrumental groupings in *Crazy Weather* are spaced on the stage in such a way as to highlight various communicative junctures between groups and individuals. As we have already

[132] Another work of mine, *a shadow is reading, In the corner over there*, takes this idea of simultaneous performances to an even more literal level, and involves a full performance of an earlier work of mine taking place 'within' a second work.

mentioned, the Horn and Violin soloists are both being cued by the silent activities and sounds of the central string trio in the first section. But this relationship is just one part of a broader web of interpretation, as the soloists' actions and sounds are in turn used as cues for the Brass and Wind groupings. These interactions amongst the groupings on stage are not merely practical ways of keeping everyone 'on the same page' of a central score. In fact, there is no such central score for the entire chamber orchestra but instead separate scores for each instrumental node which contain enough interconnected indeterminate notational techniques to make each iteration of the work —whether during rehearsals or in a final performance—substantially different and unpredictable.[133] Most of the bowed pitches played by the violinist in this section, for example, are echoes of pitches chosen at random by different members of the string trio. The violinist not only has to echo these pitches entirely by ear amidst the cacophony of the rest of the ensemble—already a difficult failure-prone task—but also may be confronted with pitches they cannot physically echo due to their being out of the range of the instrument. The wind quartet, subsequently, is reacting to these violin echoes to determine how to perform their own part, creating a swirling hurricane of increasingly complex indeterminate activity over the course of the first section.[134] It is important to note that this type of indeterminate interpretive situation changes the performer's relationship with individual practice. There is no strong sense in which a single performer can practice her part absent the larger context of the work. Instead, individual practice of *Crazy Weather* consists of a much more holistic and multi-registered process of

[133] The score attached here as Appendix C and used for musical examples is a study score made after the fact of the performance, and is not used in performance.

[134] This means that in some sense rehearsals cannot be meaningfully differentiated from performances in *Crazy Weather* and is indicative of how the work deals with the problem of multiplicity through an embrace of that indeterminacy. This elision of rehearsal and performance was first introduced in my work *tristis,senex,puerum*, which serves as a kind of companion piece to *Crazy Weather*. The two works bookend my time at Illinois and my incredibly positive experiences with the *Illinois Modern Ensemble*.

understanding the various complex notational symbols and formal structures of the work, and crucially to understand them not as triggers of fixed response or as renderings of fixed results, but as highly mutable affordances placed into meaningfully-arranged conceptual structures. The process of pre-practice for this work is thus fairly indistinguishable from the process of post-analysis, again creating a situation of elision between performers and beholders of the work.

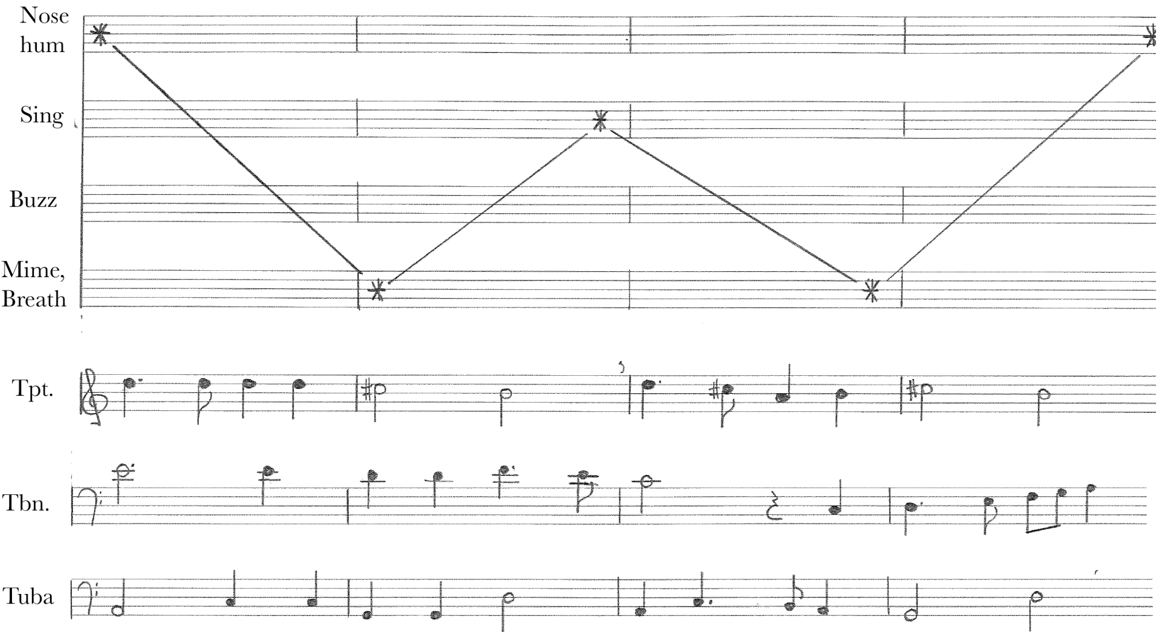
Example 27: Stage setup of instrumental grouping in Crazy Weather

Crazy Weather takes the concept of elision even further by quite literally including the composer (myself) as both a performer and (at one point) a conductor in the work. Part of the reasoning for this is ethical: in this work I ask performers to do many things that they are not used to doing, to play their instruments in ways they are not necessarily accustomed to, and to do all of this in front of a live audience and on recording. Indeed, expressing oneself as a musician on stage, like all communication, requires an incredible amount of risk and vulnerability. For these reasons I think it is important to 'walk the walk' and take on those same communicative risks alongside the performers. Along the same lines, my inclusion as a performer and conductor in the work, despite not being particularly well-trained in either, speaks to the broadly interpretive and

child-like engagement I am hoping for with my music. This is not primarily music written for highly trained virtuosi to show off their hard-won skills, but is instead music written for people willing to take that vulnerable communicative risk, to try to understand what a work of art means, or to try to express something meaningful, and to potentially fail. And this is true not just for the performers of the work, but for the listeners as well. As in Lachenmann's work, the fixed preconceptions and skillsets a performer or listener might bring to the work — the sort of skill that might allow for the recognition of a particularly obscure musical quotation, for example — are subordinate to the openness of the performer or listener to shifting and changing those preconceptions.

In the fourth section of the work (page 9 in the study score), after sitting at the piano, the composer (myself) walks to the middle of the stage to conduct, an imposition of traditional musical hierarchy which might seem at first to cut against the eliding and inclusive nature of the first section. Indeed, the threat such a musical hierarchy poses is similar to the constant threat of theatricality which Fried earlier described. In contrast with the indeterminate and interpretively-saturated first section, this conducted fourth section seems to suggest the primacy of scored and organized musical particulars, the integrity of which are being carefully attended to by the composer/conductor. What transpires during this conducted fourth section, however, is an unusual sounding looped performance of four bars of Josquin des Prez's *La Déploration de Johannes Ockeghem*. The performers in my work play these four bars over and over, repeating them a total of eight times. Crucially, however, the attention of each performer is largely *not* being occupied by Josquin's lovely counterpoint. Instead, as seen in the below example, the performers in this section are absorbed in a strenuous and dynamic application of a specified set of memorized modifications to how those four bars of counterpoint are to be performed at each moment. In

the below example, you can see the modifications for the brass grouping which consist of four ways-of-expressing the snippets of musical material below them: humming through the nose (over the mouthpiece), singing (through the instrument), buzzing through the instrument in traditional fashion, and a pitchless breathing/miming of the music. The 'W' zig-zag pattern provides a map for the performers of which way-of-expressing they should be using at each moment of the four bar repetition.



Example 28: Intensified musical absorption in the fourth conducted section of Crazy Weather

This technique is my musical way of producing Fried's technique for "defeating theatricality" — absorption. Fried's term most often refers to the depiction of painted or photographed subjects as so deeply absorbed in thought, or in some task, that they seem unaware of the beholder. The result is a heightened awareness by the beholder of the consciousness of the absorbed subject, in essence raising the question: What is that subject thinking? From there, the beholder is further encouraged to engage with the work in the same way one might engage another person or interlocutor. The reason I felt the need to create such an unusual performative

situation with the Josquin quote in the third section of *Crazy Weather* is that a state of absorption is so commonplace in musical performance already. Going to a concert hall and observing a pianist deeply absorbed in her performance of a Beethoven *Sonata*, for example, isn't likely to drastically reorient the listener's intuitions about the nature of musical meaning. In this fourth section of my work, however, the absorption one observes in the uneasy, ever-shifting performances of the musicians on stage is more heightened than in ordinary performative absorption. The musical particulars of the Josquin quote loop inertly on the surface while the inward absorption of the performers — on that 'strenuous and dynamic application of a specified set of memorized modifications to how those four bars of counterpoint are performed at each moment' — point listeners beneath the music, as it were, and toward the minds (and bodies) of the performers. The subjective orientation encouraged by this absorptive presentation of a Josquin quote — one which points beholders in the direction of the performer's subjectivity, and by extension in the direction of the composer's — demands from the listener an attempt to understand what is being communicated—what is meant—by the work.[135]

This technique of musical absorption has two other characteristics which are crucially important to the communicative orientation of the work. First, it is significant that the pathway being inwardly and subjectively traced by the performers in this section is mapped onto explicitly physical dimensions of their body and instrument. Indeed, this kind of physically-mapped notation saturates much of the first part of the work as well, as can be seen in the examples of the three-staved horn solo part. But it is only in this uniquely absorptive section of the work where that physical outward dimension is so intensely simultaneous with the subjective internal

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[135] This section of the work is also an example of what we dubbed 'absorptive repetition' in the last movement of Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel.* In this case, the Josquin quote is looped over and over again so that the listener has the opportunity to 'look past' that surface image.

dimension. In this way, this section of the work and its connection of inner and outer subjective space satisfies Frank Farrell's description of a 'thick' phenomenological artistic expression, one which captures the "synthesizing activity of the individual consciousness in relation to the world." We saw this 'thickness' in *Ein Kinderspiel*, for example in the simultaneous emergent layers of the physical keyboard, the chromatic scale, and the folk-song allusion. My version of this in *Crazy Weather* is less presentational or confrontational than in the Lachenmann, but instead dwells more, perhaps in a Kurtág-influenced way, on the inchoate and child-like process of attempted expression and interpretation: not just a Lachenmannian revealing of the means of expressive production, but also a Kurtágian demonstration of an ostensive, failure-prone, and highly reciprocal process of groping at the world in a simultaneous attempt at interpretation and expression. This connects us to the second characteristic of this section worth drawing out, which is the way that the performer's following of the zig-zag pattern relates to what Lachenmann calls 'scanning'. In *Ein Kinderspiel,* that scanning process help to elide the composer and the listener, exemplified by the way a listener's understanding of the work might come to resemble Lachenmann's own pre-compositional diagram of it. There is a sense in which *Ein Kinderspiel*'s performer, however, is only a means to producing these ends, just as there is a sense in *Játékok* that the listener has only a vicarious relationship with the performer-composer elision they observe on stage. In this section of *Crazy Weather*, however, the scanning process is not just made-available through the performance, but *is what is being performed*. My most important contribution to this part of the work comes not just from my conducting this section on stage (again, intentionally a situation where I am facing the same direction as the audience), but from my impromptu humming and singing along with this section as the ensemble plays. Any snippet of music could be used in this section as a demonstration of this special musical absorption, but the four-bar

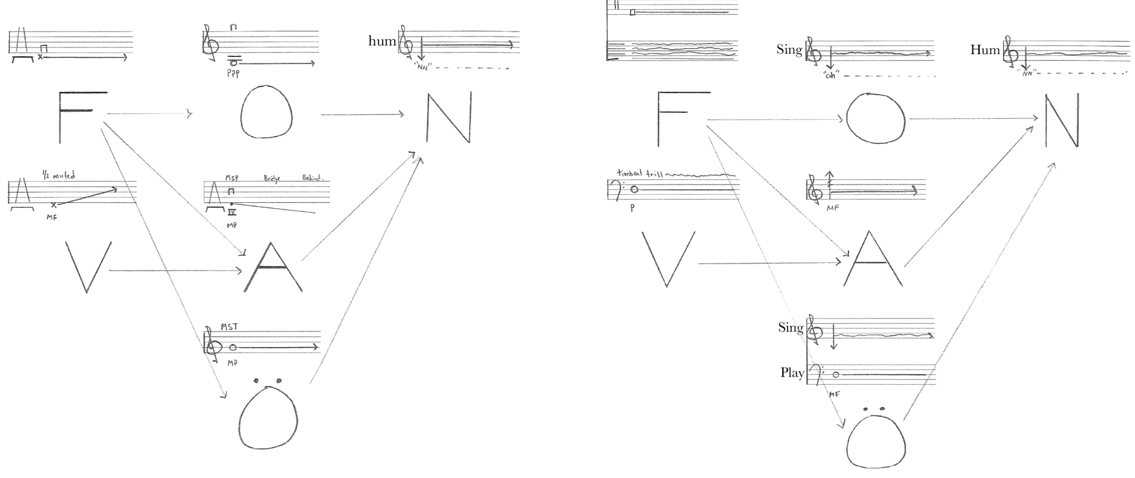
Josquin quote isn't just a random choice, but a work which I sang many times and with much delight as a child, one of my fondest musical memories, a slice of my own inward subjective life. I thus attempt in this section of the work what I think is a more thorough elision of the roles of composer, performer and listener than the examples we have seen thus far: a shared reflexive experience of meaning-making and attempted understanding.

Dialogue, Not Affect or Fact

Compared to the other two works we've looked at, *Crazy Weather* takes the importance of a dialogic element to the communicative project much more seriously and much more literally. Two sections of the work feature material which is explicitly conversational in form. In the first section a 'dialogue' takes place between the the horn soloist and the violin soloist, and in the final section of *Crazy Weather* — pages 10-12, and a section which takes up nearly a third of the work temporally — this two person 'conversation' between the violin and horn reemerges and then gradually enlarges to take place first between each half of the entire chamber orchestra, and finally, it is suggested, between the entire ensemble and the audience. The bluntness of the dialogic form of these sections is balanced by the considerable opacity of the conversational material therein: these are not instances of small-talk where what matters is hearing some particular string of words. Instead, what is present for the beholder in these moments is the attempt at expression and interpretation of meaning itself. This evokes Lachenmann's distinction between "music that 'expresses something', which therefore starts from a previously intact language, and the work, which is 'expression', that *speaks to us as silently* as the folds on a face marked by life" *(my italics)*.

The dialogic elements in the first section are found on pages 3 and 6 and can be described as a game of 'telephone' between the horn and the violin soloists, evoking both the childlike nature

of the game, as well as helping to foreground the importance of the possibility of misunderstanding. This particular telephone game involves each participant having on their score a selection of six phonemes, each of which are symbolized with a letter (somewhat in the manner of the International Phonetic Alphabet). Each of the six phonemes are paired with six small snippets of music with which they share varying degrees of sonic resemblance. Groups of three phonemes can be strung together using four possible paths, indicated by arrows, which suggest four possible words: Phone, Feign, Vain (or Vein) and Foehn.[136] These words are difficult to differentiate phonetically when spoken, and even harder in this strange musical context, making for a telephone game with an unusually high degree of potential failure. It is in fact nearly impossible in performance to tell what the other person is 'saying,' making it, like communication itself, an instance of what James Carse calls an "infinite game," one played such that play might continue, as opposed to a game played to be won.



Example 29: Telephone Game for Violin (l) and Horn (r)

[136] The reason for this particular selection of terms stems from a remark made by John Ashbery to the Paris Review about his novel, co-authored with James Schuyler, *A Nest of Ninnies*. The final word of the final sentence of that novel is the intentionally obscure 'foehn,' and was jokingly placed so as to lead readers to have to consult their dictionaries, "closing one book and opening another." Its phonetic similarity to "phone," its connection to Ashbery, and its actual weather-related meaning made it too hard to resist using in my game of telephone.

The large final section of *Crazy Weather*, pages 10-12, which follow the Josquin absorption section and lasts nearly seven minutes, is another sustained exercise in a dialogical form. In this section the dialogue between the horn and the violin gradually builds out into a dialogue between one side of the ensemble and the other, and finally expands to the entire ensemble 'addressing' the audience. The notation for this section is an iteration of that of the previous 'telephone' games, an even less fine-grained version built around a superficial resemblance to speech, but now at the resolution of the word instead of at the resolution of the phoneme. Again, the language of these 'conversations' is not intended to be decipherable by the audience, but is instead intended to convey only that there is an attempt at expression at play, the possibility of a meaning that might be understood, in order to draw the listener into a communicative relationship with the work. The text which is used in this section comes from an interview with John Ashbery by NPR in 2005, in which the poet expresses a communicative attitude toward his own work. The interviewer asks, "Do you think of your poems as being accessible?" And Ashbery answers, "What they are is about the privacy of all of us, and the difficulty of, of our own thinking and coming to, conclusions, and uh, in that way, they are I think, accessible… if anyone cares to access them."[137] In his answer, Ashbery not only corroborates a Farrellian reading of his work, as primarily invested in the "synthesizing activity" of the subject's phenomenological experience but also pithily expresses a communicative attitude towards the 'passive listener' problem, that the accessibility of an artwork requires an active engagement on the part of the beholder.

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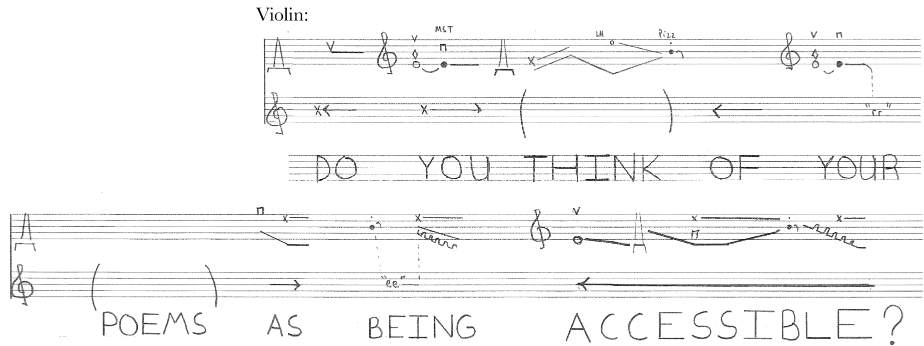
[137] A Conversation with Poet John Ashbery, *A Conversation with Poet John Ashbery* (NPR, March 19, 2005), https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4542617.



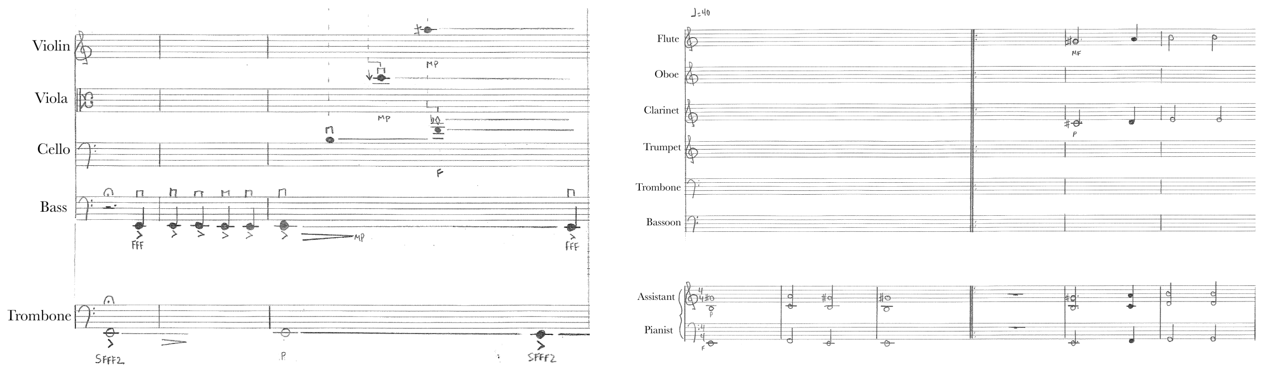
Example 30: Notation for final section formed around speech from John Ashbery's 2005 interview with NPR

The relationship *Crazy Weather* has to language is not, however, entirely in terms of speech-likeness. As has been mentioned, the first section of *Crazy Weather* displays a multiplicity of musical 'languages' and conventions in its notation and use of quotation. The second section of *Crazy Weather*, page 7, marks a profound shift in the work, however, and consists entirely of a *somewhat* faithful quotation of the very beginning of Gérard Grisey's *Partiels.*[138] This quotation, like the title *Crazy Weather* itself, contains two related meanings. For one, it functions as a bit of composer-small-talk, demanding only mere recognition, not understanding. Indeed, the most common comment to me after the performance from composers was, "Was that *Partiels*?" A second meaning comes from *Partiels*'s reputation as one of the defining works of an approach to music composition known as 'spectralism,' which, in the words of Joshua Fineberg, approaches music as consisting of "sound evolving in time.[139]" A 'spectralist' approach to musical composition is not, of course, as homogeneous in theory or in practice as its having a label suggests, but it does exemplify for me, however unfairly, a desire one can observe in composers of all stripes to objectify music. That is, a desire for music to be the sort of thing—whether it be spectralism's bands of frequencies, Schaeffer's sonic object, Cage's 'just sounds,' or Reich's

[138] In *Crazy Weather*, the veracity of the *Partiels* quote gradually degrades with the intrusion of less-determined, sung pitch elements.

[139] Joshua Fineberg, "Spectral Music," *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no. 2 (2000): pp. 1-5, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460000640221, 2.

‘gradual process’—that can work on a person, like a drug or a gust of wind or a bit of small-talk might. The large Grisey quote thus serves as a kind of ‘bad example’ in the work, a model of communicatively-incompatible musical engagement, the import of which is meant to become clearer as it is contrasted with subsequent models. In the same way that the chromatic physicality of the keyboard constantly threatened to overtake the more abstracted scalar patterns presented in *Ein Kinderspiel*, the pitch precision so important to the Spectral project gradually degrades in my semi-quotation, overtaken by the unstable, indeterminate, and body-connected technique of singing through the brass and wind instruments.



Example 31: Two ‘bad examples’: Excerpt of Grisey quotation (l) and ‘pipe organ’ rendering of Requiem *chant (r)*

The third section of *Crazy Weather*, on page 8, provides yet another ‘bad example’. It makes use of very traditional pitch and rhythmic notational conventions, with plenty of triadic harmonies and a strict 4/4 meter and quarter=40 tempo marking. The fixedness of the ensemble’s conventional material in this section is reinforced by its following strict intervalic rules in how it relates to the lowest (fundamental) pitch being played by the piano. These rules — playing octaves, major 10ths, perfect 12ths, or two octaves above the fundamental pitch — are imported from the norms of pipe organ registration. By casting the members of the ensemble as parts of a mechanical instrument like the pipe organ, I intended to provide yet another negative

descriptive example of music, here in the performative relational sense instead of the metaphysics of sound sense, objectified. The physicalized metaphor of the piano as a pipe organ is also at play earlier in the work when the pianist (myself) wedges pencils into each low, slowly ascending, piano key which is struck at the beginning of every page for the first six pages of the work. This is an allusion to how one goes about tuning an organ when you don't have any help: it is common to stick a pencil in a key so that it continues to sustain while you climb up to wherever the pipes are held to adjust their pitch. Not totally unlike the treatment of sympathetic resonance Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*, the poetic notion here is that I as the composer am fixing a structural blueprint in which the work is articulated by the rest of the ensemble. Furthermore, this is one of several ways in which this work alludes to an earlier work of mine, also written for the Illinois Modern Ensemble chamber orchestra, *tristis,senex,puerum*.[140]

Finally, my work *Crazy Weather* also directly confronts the 'passive listener' problem. Some of the ways it does so overlap with previous examples of elision and dialogism. The way in which members of the ensemble, including the composer, are at certain times attempting (often in vain) to interpret other parts of the work as they are happening, often even looking in the same direction as the audience while doing so, encourages in the audience-member that same level of active listening and engagement. The final 'dialogue' section of the work, which turns the musicalized speech towards the audience serves also as a kind of call to active interpretive participation. One final example of activating the listener which has not yet been mentioned, however, is the 'jump scare' which interrupts the end of the third 'pipe organ' section of the work. This consists of a *very* loud and indeterminately placed (even for members of the ensemble)

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[140] At the very end of *tristis,senex,puerum* the piano lid is lifted and closed to resemble an organ bellows which seems to 'power' the rest of the ensemble, and a causal relationship between the composer-performer-conductor and the rest of the ensemble is both established and ultimately disrupted. That work, which is entirely preoccupied with the vulnerability inherent in musical expression, is a good example of how much many of these compositional concerns precede my articulation of the communicative vocabulary found in this dissertation.

accented bass drum interjection which interrupts, seemingly out of nowhere, the repeating organ-registration-influenced quotation of the *Requiem* chant. This bass drum jump-scare completes the trilogy of 'bad examples' and is meant to present the audience with a negative alternative to a communicative comportment toward the work by creating an intensely *inactive* and even *automatic* physiological response to the work. This affective shock is immediately followed by a series of mysterious and interpretation-demanding 'weather events.' First, on the complete opposite side of the stage from the bass drum all of the pencils which were stuck into the keyboard are now dropped onto the floor. This is followed by the 'wind' noises of the brass players emptying their instruments, then a nearly imperceptibly quiet bass drum rumble of distant thunder, and finally, the pianist-composer walks to the middle of the stage, preparing to conduct the absorptive and subject-directed Josquin quote. The heightened theatricality of this entire sequence is analogous, I think, to the single measure of silence which ends *Ein Kinderspiel*. Both serve as a way of brushing up against the extreme boundaries of the communicative space, making that space and one's situation within it more tangible. In Lachenmann it might be said that the single measure of silence reminds us that we are in a room, perhaps even the simultaneously physical and culturally-saturated space of the concert hall, and in so doing, traces the emergent dimensions of that work, from brute the brute physicality of the keyboard to the highly-cultural convention of a folk song. In the case of *Crazy Weather*, the strange juxtaposition of three increasingly graspable forms of objectification (music as frequency, music as machine, music as raw affect), the opaque and surreal symbolic cascade (brass instrument 'water' raining onto the stage, distant thunder), and the subject-inflating Josquin-quote absorption which follows, together demarcate an enormous space of potential musical understanding in which the audience is ultimately beckoned to take a communicative stance.

Chapter VII: Conclusion: Communication in Pedagogy and Politics

The crisis of purpose in being a composer, of which I spoke in the introduction to this paper, entails not just abstract questions of historical situation or technical questions of compositional practice, but occupational, civic, and ethical questions as well: What is the role of the composer in society? Are we here to create and maintain a subversive counter-culture? Or are we to provide some sort of refuge for the alienated, the anxious, or the merely bored? Is the academy our rightful home, or a last refuge in an increasingly indifferent world? Are our artworks commodities, and should they be? What is the role of the composer within the academy? We often teach music theory: are we music theorists? As Kurtág (by way of Kafka) reminds us, there is no one true path, no single answer to these questions. But the communicative approach outlined in this dissertation is meant to provide a potential orientation which might be used, in an open-ended and mutable way, to arrive at answers to such questions. While it would not be correct to say that this picture of 'the communicative' is in any way politically neutral, I do think that, because it concerns such a fundamental and broad area of human activity, it is compatible with a particularly wide variety of aesthetic and political viewpoints. And it allows, at least potentially, a composer to align those aesthetic choices with interpersonal choices across a variety of interpersonal registers.

Not all composers teach, but many of us do, and communicative orientation offers a potential way to unify our artistic projects with our pedagogical ones. Consider, for example, the relevance these communicative concerns have to Paulo Freire's notion of a "banking" notion of education, wherein, "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat,"

and where "the outstanding characteristic… is the sonority of words, not their transforming power."[141] Freire goes on to describe a positive alternative, which he calls the "Problem-posing" approach to education, but which could just as easily be called 'Communicative,' as it echoes everything from the 'passive listener' problem, to the reflexive and reciprocal nature of communication, to the communicative necessity of what we have described as 'elision':

> "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness—intentionality—rejects communiqués and embodies communication. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being conscious of, not only as intent on objects but as turned in upon itself… consciousness as consciousness of consciousness. Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors—teacher on the one hand and students on the other. Accordingly, the practice of problem-posing education entails at the outset that the teacher-student contradiction to be resolved. Dialogical relations—indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object—are otherwise impossible."[142]

A different approach to pedagogy which is highly sympathetic to our communicative concerns can be found in John Dewey's work on the philosophy of education. Here is Dewey, quoted by Gert Biesta in his essay on "The Communicative Turn in Dewey's *Democracy and Education*," defining communication in a somewhat unwieldy way, but one which resonates strongly with our discussion of how 'scanning' in *Ein Kinderspiel* elides the listener and composer in a communicative manner:

> "[Dewey] explained communication as a process in which person A and person B coordinate their actions around a thing in such a way that "B's understanding of A's movement and sounds is that he responds to the thing from the standpoint of A," that is, perceiving the thing "as it may function in A's experience, instead of just ego-centrically" (ibid., p. 178). In this situation B responds to the meaning of A's movement and sounds, rather than to the movement and sounds itself. Similarly, "A . . . conceives the thing not

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[141] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 71-72.

[142] Freire, 79-80.

> only in its direct relationship to himself, but as a thing capable of being grasped and handled by B. He sees the thing as it may function in B's experience" (ibid.)."[143]

The educational upshot of Dewey's view of communication is, for Biesta, the following: "If learning takes place in and through participation and communication, then the role of the learner changes from being a meaning-taker to being a meaning-maker. If students are really allowed to participate in human practices… then this must imply that education can no longer simply be a reproductive process, but must acknowledge that the learner can be a source of new meanings and new insights as well."[144] To modern educators, the two educational philosophies briefly described here may not offer particularly earth-shatteringly novel perspectives, but they are putting forward communicative ways of thinking about education which, if taken up in earnest by an educator, would have tangible shaping effects on how they teach. It is likely that what a communicative pedagogy would mean for a composer-teacher would vary from person to person, and so what the communicative orientation offers is not a fixed prescription of how to teach or how to compose, but instead a way of integrating and synthesizing one's compositional and pedagogical exploration and growth.

The same kind of synthesis is also possible in the political dimension. Again, this is in no way to say that all artists should integrate the different parts of their lives in this way: that view is itself authoritarian in a way that is incompatible with the communicative. It is simply to say that the interpersonal and interpretive interrogations which can be instituted in musical form have relevance to political and ethical issues: they can help us to better understand and articulate our ethical viewpoints. Several years ago, Zack Ferriday wrote an article in VAN Magazine casting

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[143] David T. Hansen and Gert Biesta, "The Communicative Turn in Dewey's Democracy and Education," in *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: a Critical Engagement with Dewey's Democracy and Education* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 23-37, 25.

[144] Hansen & Biesta, 35.

doubt on the notion of a meaningfully political contemporary artistic practice, citing a number of supposedly do-gooding political projects in the 'classical music' world which, despite what may be noble intentions in some cases, all suffer from a "lazy, blind faith inherent in the idea that music can change the world," and mostly don't make much of a political difference whatsoever. The core of Ferriday's critique is aimed at something which is relevant to what we discussed in the 'Language Problem,' namely the flawed idea that music offers us a 'universal language.' As he puts the problem, "The fallacy of a universal language in music has a twofold effect. Not only do we further entrench Western exceptionalism (both musical and ideological), but music becomes a diversion from real political and social organizing, from activism proper. I've lost count of the number of talks and workshops I've attended that substitute action for intellectualism, and demonstration for chin-stroking."[145] This is an important critique which absolutely rings true with my own experiences in the arts, but I worry that critiques of this kind can also drive composers to ignore or discount the socially and ethically relevant parts of our artform. While there exists in 'classical music' circles the false authoritarian and totalizing universality, which claims ownership of fundamental certain truths, and espouses systems of superiority and oppression, there is also the fallibilistic and mutable universality of communication, of the *possibility* — not the certainty — of interpersonally-wrought progress. Indeed, if there is a single ethically relevant truth which this dissertation has shed partial light on again and again, it has to do with how deeply connected action and communication really are, how theory and praxis permeate each other. To eschew communication in favor of "activism proper" is just as misguided and confused as its inverse.

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[145] Zack Ferriday, "PLATÉTUDES," VAN Magazine, April 23, 2021, https://van-magazine.com/mag/platetudes/

I believe that we as interpreters and creators of music can find, in that amphibious coexistence of corporeal physicality and social-historical meaning which music affords, a profound opportunity to confront anew something we face already each day: the indispensable possibility of misunderstanding—and thus of understanding—one another. Just as the breath anticipating speech from an interlocutor draws one with it into a pregnant, triangulated commitment of mutual responsibility and understanding, so too can music situate us communicatively, and help us interrogate what it means to understand one another. This is what music can offer us politically and ethically. Not a refuge, and not a vessel for some subversive slogan, but a precious opportunity to strengthen and to make thick and beautiful the space that genuine conversation, politics, and ethics require, to flesh-out a richer normative space which so many of our political leaders deflate, and to not merely contribute to our communities, but to become leaders ourselves— unabashedly, as artists—toward an improved and more beautiful future.

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Appendix A: Score for Pearson's *Crazy Weather*

Crazy Weather

for Chamber Orchestra

William Pearson

Fall 2017

General Performance Notes:

This is the **study score**, and differs somewhat from the **performance score**.

This piece has four sections: **Pages 1-6**, **Pages 7-8**, **Page 9**, and **Pages 10-12**

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The **first section** is six minutes long, approximately, with each page lasting about a minute.

There are 7 instrumental groupings in this section, as reflected in the staging:

1) Pianist and Piano Assistant
2) Brass Trio (Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba)
3) Horn Solo
4) String Trio (Bass, Cello, Viola)
5) Violin Solo
6) Wind Quartet (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon)
7) Percussionist

These 7 groups perform as separate chamber ensembles. They are aware of their own group's score, but not the scores of other groups. Interaction between groups is always either blind (reacting to what is heard, only) or deaf (reacting to what is seen, only).

Some instrumental groupings have page turns every minute, some every 2 minutes, some every 3 minutes, and some don't have page turns. Sometimes page turns are notated with a **P** in a box.

The pace of the first section is marked by an ascending 7-note scale on the piano (heard at the beginning of each page), and a high glockenspiel pitch (heard at the 30" mark of each page.)

> This pattern is broken on page 6, when the piano is heard at both 0" + 30" and the glockenspiel is heard at 15" and 45".

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The **second section** has two distinct parts.

Page 7 involves every member of the ensemble, all playing together off the same score. It follows directly from page 6 and is cued by the Trombone, whose completion of the scale played by the piano marks the beginning of page 7. Page 7 is an allusion to Gérard Grisey's *Partiels*.

Page 8 is also a single page, involving only a subset of the ensemble, all playing off the same score, and all following the pianist. Page 8 is meant to resemble the sound of a pipe organ in various registrations.

Page 8 ends with the following un-notated sequence:

1) The percussionist will interrupt Page 8 at a point of their choosing with a loud sound
2) Directly after this, the pianist and assistant will drop several pencils on the floor
3) As the pencils fall, brass players will slowly and audibly empty their spit onto the floor.
4) The pianist will walk to the middle of the stage to conduct the next section.

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The **third section** (page 9) involves applying a set of rules to a short snippet of musical material.

Page 9 contains a set of 3 or 4 techniques for each instrument (or instrument grouping), as well as a 'constellation' chart which traces a pattern through these techniques.

It also contains a four bar phrase, part of a quotation from Josquin's *Deploration sur le mort d'Ockeghem*.

In this section, the entire ensemble will, following the conductor, perform their four-bar phrase 8x and will apply the techniques as dictated by their 'constellation' chart.

These techniques will be applied *according to the given pattern or 'constellation'*.

Changes from one technique to another should be gradual, but may also be impossible to achieve smoothly, or at all. This is OK.

The techniques themselves may be impossible to apply to the given material. This is also OK.

Keeping track of all of these changes will be difficult, and performers may find themselves unable to perform it 'perfectly'. This is absolutely intended.

The goal of this section is only to produce 8 *imperfect attempts* at applying these rules.

To emphasize this last point, the four bar phrase (which will be played a total of **8** times) will be changed in various ways every 2 repetitions (closing the eyes, slumping the body, etc.). Generally speaking, the music will become quieter and more unstable as the section progresses.

This will lead to the final two repetitions of the 4-bar phrase being more like an inaudible 'internal' performance than an audible 'external' one.

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The **fourth and final section** (p. 10-12) consists of the following 'conversation,' taken from an interview of the poet John Ashbery by an NPR correspondent in 2005:

Violin:	There was the blind man
Horn:	who never said anything
Violin:	but produced spectral sounds on a musical saw.
Horn:	Is that part of what a poet does, to speak as a child?
Violin:	I think we do, yes.
Violin:	Do you think of your poems as being accessible?
Half Ensemble:	What they are is about the privacy of all of us
Other Half:	and the, difficulty of, of our own,
First Half:	thinking and coming to, conclusions, and uh,
Tutti:	in that way, they are I think, accessible if anyone cares to, access them.

The horn and violin will begin this conversation directly after page 9 and the rest of the ensemble will enter in according to the 'script'.

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String Trio Notes.
General:

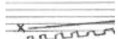
Your role in this piece, especially in the **first section**, is as a hub of control. In **p. 1-2** and **4-5**, your audible actions are triggering the movements and playing of the violinist, while your inaudible, mimed actions are triggering the playing of the horn. On **p. 3** and **p. 6**, the horn and violin detach from you, and your actions instead trigger the playing of the Wind Quartet and Brass Trio.

Notations:

The *bridge clef* : This clef indicates where on the instrument to place and move your left hand (sometimes indicated as lh in the score) and/or your bow.

The type of **lh** grip is often specified, either by an **x**, which indicates a 'muting grip' or an **o**, which indicates a 'harmonic grip.' The muting grip should produce an entirely (or *almost* entirely) pitchless tone, while the harmonic grip should produce un-specified harmonics.

Lateral bowing is either indicated with a simple line, which indicates a generally smooth motion of the bow along the strings, or '***perforated***' notation, which should be scratchy, inconsistent, but continuous.


Perforated lateral bowing, with muted lh grip

Bowing **on the bridge** is indicated by a bowing indication and a completely horizontal line roughly at 'middle c' on the bridge clef:

Downbow on the bridge with moving, muted lh

Sometimes there will be a non-lateral indicated on the bridge clef by a bowing symbol and a completely horizontal line, too.

The **range** of the bridge clef (how high up on the neck to play) is somewhat indeterminate and will vary from instrument to instrument. My only request is to use as large a space as you feel comfortable on your instrument — to go as high up the neck as you can — to produce the largest range of timbres.

Pages 1-6:

In this first section, any music enclosed in **boxes** is ***mimed, not played***. These sections are important, as they serve as cues for other performers.

Chords followed by a question mark (?) indicate that you should choose only **one** of the given pitches to play each time you perform or practice the work. (This is done to ensure that the violinist cannot entirely memorize her part.)

Singing is indicated with diamond noteheads. (There are no **natural harmonics** in this piece, so any solitary diamond notehead will be sung.)

Sung note. Squiggly line indicates pitch fluctuations/imperfections.

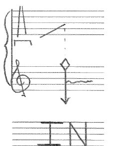
Pages 7-8:

The String Trio does not play on **page 8**. Page 9 will be cued by the conductor.

Page 9: *See general performance notes.*

Pages 10-12:

A 'highest possible' or 'lowest possible' stem with a diamond attached is a **sung** note, and needn't be consistent from player to player:



Top line indicates lateral bowing, bottom line indicates lowest possible sung note with pitch fluctuations.

During this section, **quotation marks** indicate silently mouthing the corresponding word. **Parentheses** indicate silently thinking the corresponding word. **Left-facing Arrows** indicate inwardly-saying the corresponding word. **X noteheads** indicate whispering the corresponding word (either inhaling or exhaling, as arrow indicates):

" "
WHAT

Violin Notes.
General:

Your role in this piece, along with the horn, involves something *like* playing a character.

Your character is a ***child***, maybe even an infant, who is just learning to speak.

There's no real 'acting' necessary here, but feel free to allow a general childlike character to color your performance. For instance, it may be useful to think back to what it was like to first learn how to play the violin, the way you might have held it awkwardly, the kinds of squeaky or uneven tone you might have had. All or some of that would be quite welcome throughout this piece.

Notations:
See String Trio notes, also.

Pages 1-6:

During this first section, you will not have a score. Your part alternates between reacting to the string section by prescribed rules (pages 1-2 and 4-5) and having a 'conversation' with the horn (pages 3, 6).

Prescribed rules for **pages 1-2, 4-5:**

Begin with your eyes closed, and your bow hand at your side.

Whenever you *hear lateral bowing* (scratched or muted), slowly and deliberately bring your bow to your instrument.

If the lateral bowing persists for a long enough time to get your bow to your instrument, begin pressing the bow against the strings and moving it laterally yourself, without any regard for tone.

Whenever you *hear* a *pizzicato*, drop your bow hand to your side, quickly and slackly, like a marionette whose string has been cut.

Whenever you *hear sustained harmonics*, move your lh down or up the neck of your instrument, corresponding to the changing pitch.

Whenever you *hear a clear, distinct bowed pitch*, imitate that pitch exactly on your violin (it may or may not be possible) without hesitation, and with no regard for tone.

Likewise, whenever you *hear a sung pitch*, imitate that sung pitch with your own voice.

Conversation on **page 3, 6:**

After hearing the low piano note which cues p.3 and p.6, you will open your eyes and turn to the horn to conduct a 'conversation'.

Each back-and-forth in the 'conversation' should happen in the space of 15", and no more than one back-and-forth should happen within each 15". There will thus be **8** total 'words' or actions expressed by the two performers within the minute-long page.

The horn begins the conversation by 'saying' (playing) one of the four possible words which can be made by the letters presented on the bottom of p.3, 6. (These words are, in effect: **PHONE, FEIGN, FOEHN, VAIN.**)

The violin responds by 'saying' the word she thinks was 'said'. (End of first 15")

Then, the horn will respond to the violin's guess by either nodding their head 'yes' or shaking their head 'no'.

If yes, the violin will check again to make sure, repeating the word. If no, the violin will try a different word. (End of 30")

Then, the horn will respond by either nodding 'yes' or shaking 'no'.

If yes, the violinist will repeat the correct word back. If no, the violinist will continue to guess. (End of 45"

Then, the horn will initiate the final back-and-forth by either 'saying' (playing) the correct word again (if the violinist has guessed it) *or* nodding 'yes' or shaking 'no' (if the violinist has still not guessed.)

The violinist will end the 'conversation' with either a final guess, or a final repetition of the correctly guessed word.

Pages 7-12: *See String Trio notes*

Brass Trio Notes.
General:

Your role in this piece, especially in p. 1-6, is twofold. First, you are often connected to the horn, either as an echo or as an external force drowning them out. Second, you form the 'background' of the work, along with the string trio and winds, in front of which the interaction of the horn and violin takes place.

Notations:

Pages 1-6:

During **p. 1-2** and **4-5** you alternate each 30" between 1) having eyes closed and reacting to the sound of the horn (as indicated on your score) and 2) having eyes open and performing from the trio score.

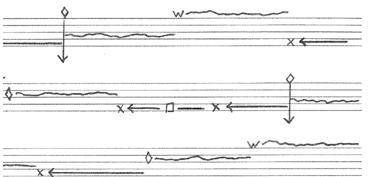
Left-facing arrows indicate inhalation, while right-facing arrows indicate exhalation.

X noteheads **and** square noteheads indicate pitchless air blown through the instrument (inhalations should be audible, but should never be *through* the instrument).

Diamond noteheads indicate singing (often attached to up or down arrows indicating lowest possible or highest possible pitch).

Singing should be done through the instrument, humming through the nose

W noteheads indicate whistling, at any pitch.



Top line: Singing lowest possible pitch, whistling, inhaling audibly

Middle line: Singing (fluctuating pitch), inhaling, air sound, inhaling, singing lowest possible pitch.

During **p. 3** and **6**, you are reacting to the movements of the string trio.

Trombone may drop out early on **p. 6** and cue the beginning of **p. 7**.

Pages 7-8:

At the end of page 8, there will be a loud interruption from the percussionist. This interruption will be followed by the pianist dropping pencils on the ground. As this begins, all brass players will empty their spit, slowly and deliberately, blowing through the instrument if possible. **Please do not empty your spit right before the performance or any time during the performance leading up to this point (clicking noises from spit in instrument before this point are OK!).**

Page 9: *See general performance notes.*

Pages 10-12:

During this section, **quotation marks** indicate silently mouthing the corresponding word. **Parentheses** indicate silently thinking the corresponding word. **Left-facing Arrows** indicate inwardly-saying the corresponding word. **X noteheads** indicate whispering the corresponding word (either inhaling or exhaling, as arrow indicates). *See string trio notes.*

The 'highest possible pitch' arrow with tremolo lines through it indicates a high-pitched (but indefinitely-pitched) squeaking or 'kissing' sound.

If pitches are out of the range of your instrument, ignore them. All pitches on 10-12 are concert pitch.

Horn Notes.
General:

Your role in this piece, along with the violin, involves something like playing a character.

That character is my ***grandfather***, who had a stroke late in life which left him unable to speak, except for a single word. He also played the horn.

There's no real 'acting' necessary here, but feel free to allow this kind of difficulty of expression to color your performance. For example, think of the kind of frustration and futility that might come along with a total inability to express oneself, and feel free to dig into that, perhaps showing your frustration, or allowing the instrument to fail you.

Notations:

Pages 1-6:

The three line stave used throughout this first section decouples singing/breathing (top stave) from playing (middle stave) from right hand motion (bottom stave).

X noteheads and square noteheads indicate pitchless air. Up or down arrows indicate highest or lowest possible pitch. Sung pitches should always be through the horn.

See brass notes for more on notation.

During **p. 1-2**, and **4-5** you are reacting to ***visual cues from the strings***. These will never be played audibly, but will be mimed by the strings as indicated on your score.

During **p. 3** and **6** you are having a 'conversation' with the violin. *See the violin part for further instructions.*

Pages 7-12: *See brass trio notes.*

Wind Quartet Notes.
General:

Your role in this piece, especially in p. 1-6, is twofold. First, you are often connected to the violin, mirroring the way the brass trio is connected to the horn. Second, you form the 'background' of the work, along with the string trio and brass trio, in front of which the interaction of the horn and violin takes place.

Notations:

Pages 1-6:

During **p. 1-2** and **4-5** you alternate every 30" between 1) having eyes open and performing off the score and, 2) having eyes closed and reacting to the sound of the violin.

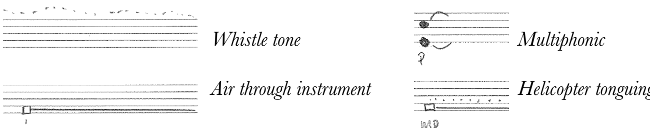
Square noteheads indicate pitchless air blown through the instrument.

Diamond noteheads indicate singing (often attached to up or down arrows indicating lowest possible or highest possible pitch).

Singing should be done through the instrument, humming through the nose.

Meandering dotted lines indicate whistle tones in the flute.

Dots over a square notehead indicate a 'helicopter' tonguing on the bassoon.



During **p. 3** and **6**, you are reacting to the movements of the string trio.

Page 9: *See general performance notes.*

Pages 10-12:

During this section, **quotation marks** indicate silently mouthing the corresponding word. **Parentheses** indicate silently thinking the corresponding word. **Left-facing Arrows** indicate inwardly-saying the corresponding word. **X noteheads** indicate whispering the corresponding word (either inhaling or exhaling, as arrow indicates). *See string notes.*

The 'highest possible pitch' arrow with tremolo lines through it indicates a high-pitched (but indefinitely-pitched) squeaking or 'kissing' sound.

If pitches are out of the range of your instrument, ignore them. All pitches on 10-12 are concert pitch.

Piano/Assistant Notes.
General:

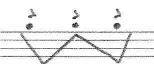
Your role in this piece, especially in p. 1-6, is to make the form of the work explicit.

During p. 1-6, each note the pianist plays in their ascending scale should be kept depressed with a pencil, gently wedged into the back of the key. After the pianist does this, the Assistant will, without looking, feel for which key that is being depressed in the lower octave, and place another pencil on the same pitch in the upper-most octave.

Notations:

Pages 10-12:

In this section, "trace" indicates tracing the attached words either on the hand of the other pianist or on the score itself.



The accents indicate a percussive attack on the highest note of the piano, while the W shape indicates percussive movement of the pedal.

Black boxes indicate clusters on the keyboard of relative size.

X noteheads indicate whispering the attached word. Parentheses indicate *thinking* the word, silently.

Right arrows indicate exhaling, left arrows indicate inhaling. An arrow by itself indicates simply saying the attached word.

The tremolo note is the highest possible key on the piano:

Percussion Notes.
General:

Your role in this piece, especially in pages 1-6, is to make the form of the work explicit in a way that echoes and mirrors the piano.

Pages 1-6:

During these pages, (apart from playing the glockenspiel at the 30" mark of pages 1-5 and the 15" and 45" marks of page 6) you will be watching the ensemble and mirroring their level of activity in your own setup. You will notice that your percussion setup is the same shape of the staging of the total ensemble (excluding yourself and piano). You will watch the activity of the ensemble (brass, horn, strings, violin, and winds) and will quietly play with them on the corresponding percussion instruments. You are not meant to try to exactly imitate the sounds they make, but you are welcome to experiment with different mallets, techniques, etc to blend better with each section. In general, you should stay at a very low dynamic level.

Pages 7-8:

At the end of Page 8, sometime after the 15th bar and before the repeat ends, you will produce the **loudest possible sound** you can on your given instruments. It should be sudden and startling to everyone on stage and to the audience. This will be followed by the pianists dropping their pencils and the brass players emptying their spit. After the pencils have all dropped, you should produce a realistic sounding *distant* rumble of thunder on the bass drum.

Pages 9-12: *See piano notes (tracing should be done on the thunder sheet or bass drum, with your finger or fingernail)*

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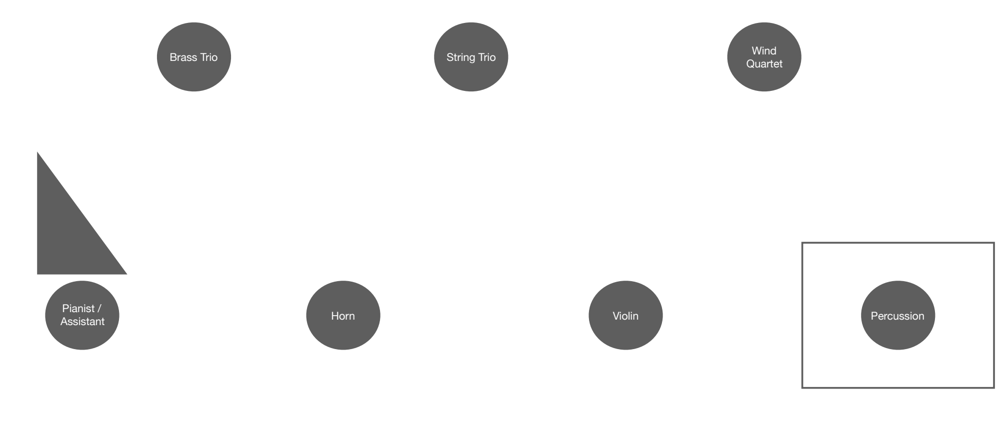
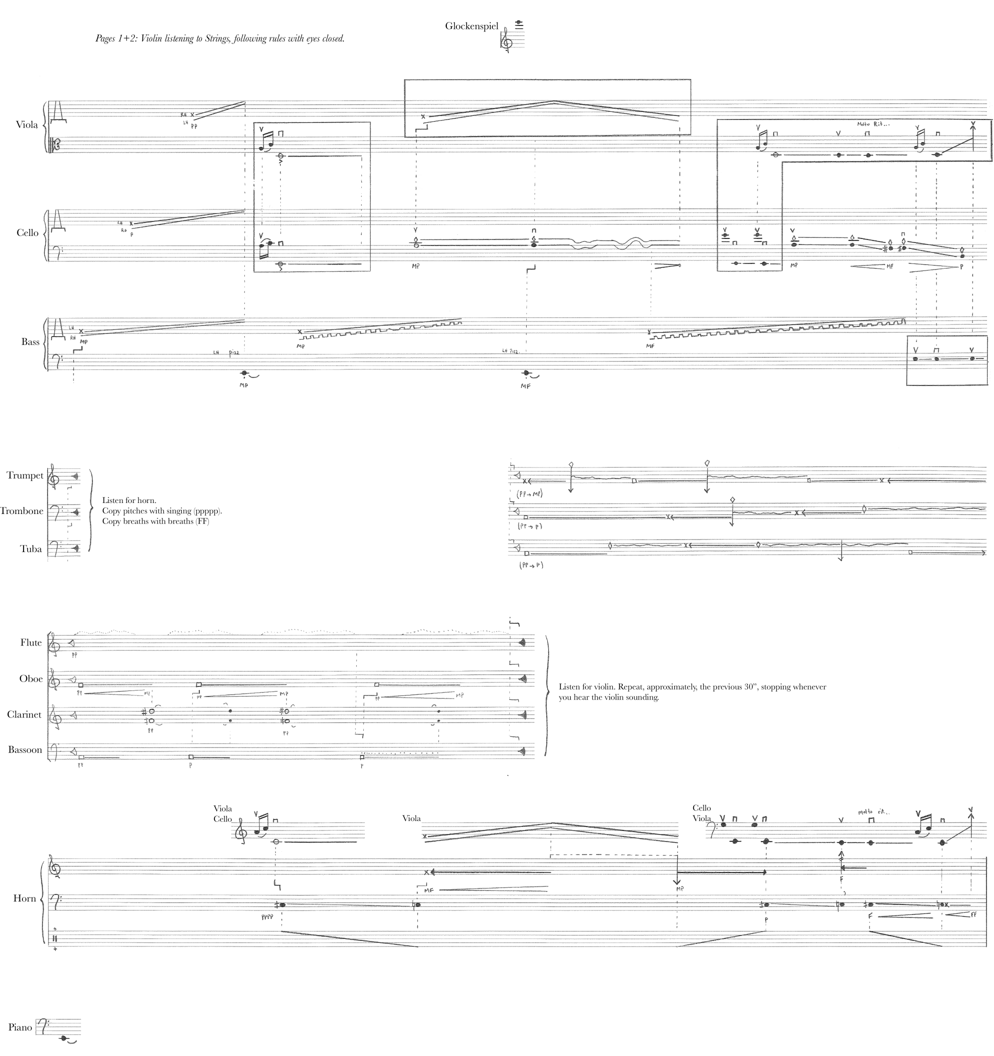
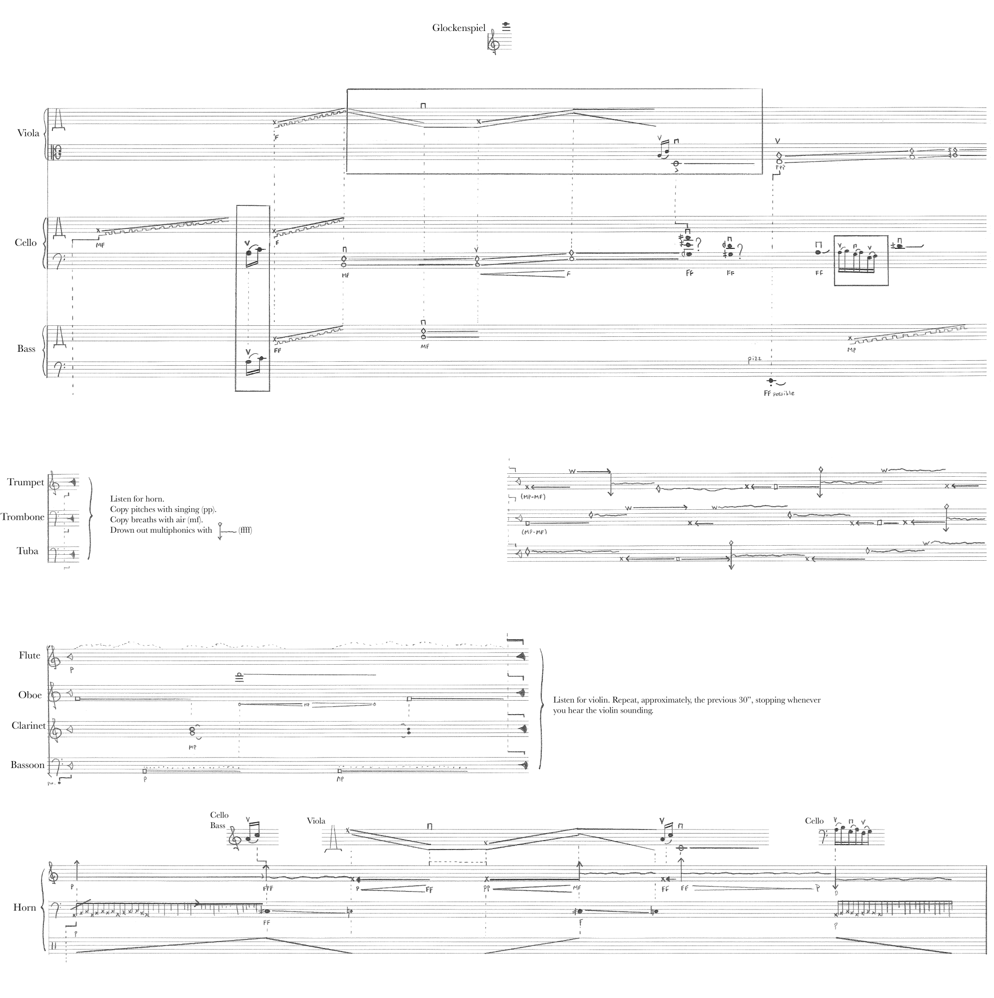
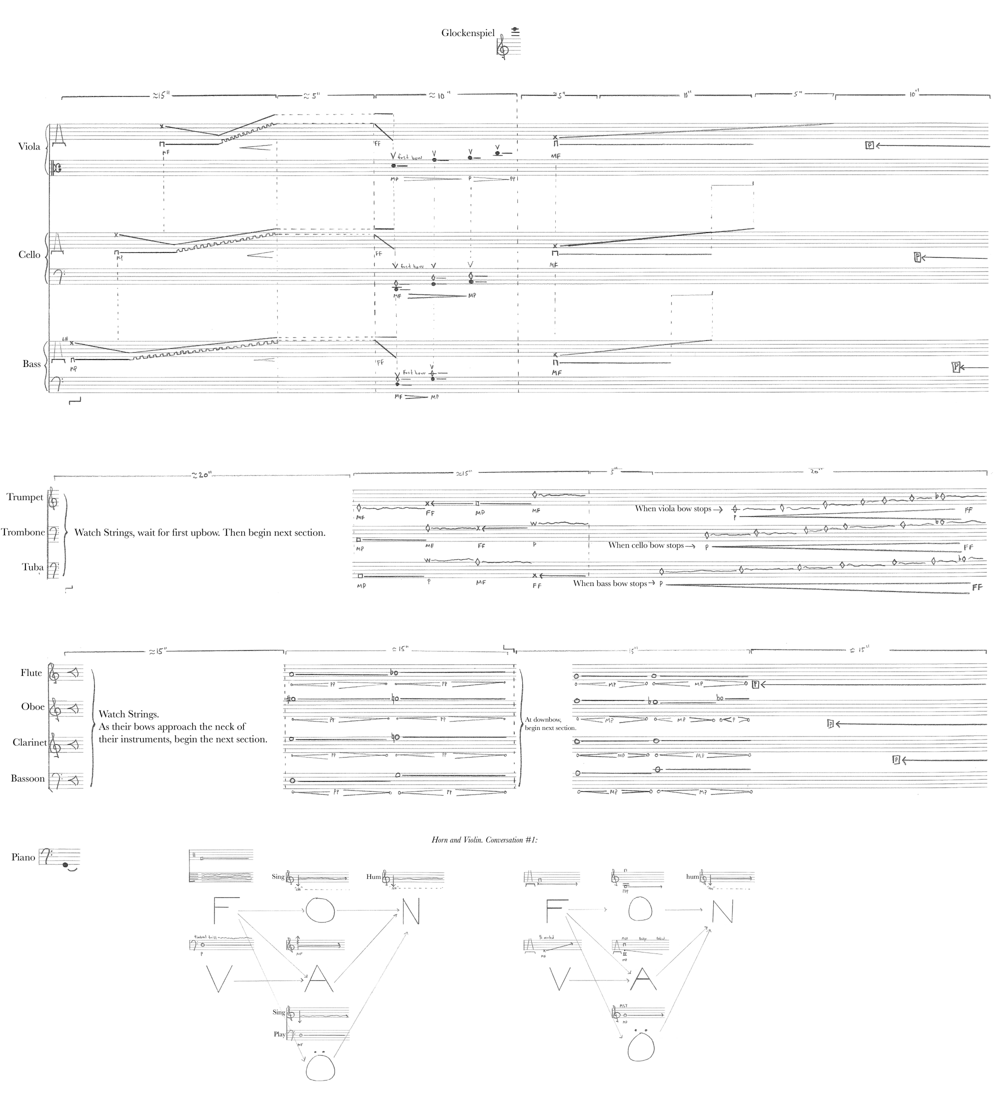
Stage Setup:

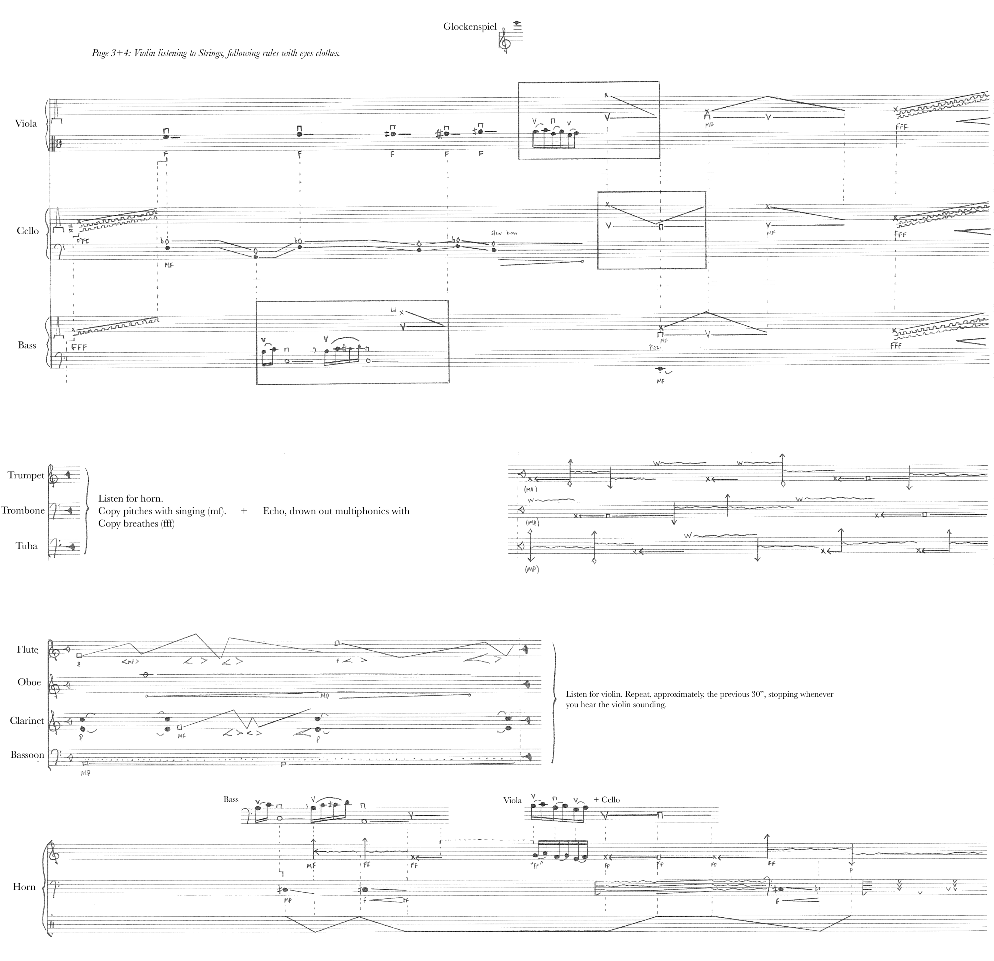



Pages 1+2: Violin listening to Strings, following rules with eyes closed.
Glockenspiel
Viola
Cello
Bass
Trumpet
Trombone
Tuba
Listen for horn.
Copy pitches with singing (ppppp).
Copy breaths with breaths (FF)
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Bassoon
Listen for violin. Repeat, approximately, the previous 30", stopping whenever you hear the violin sounding.
Viola
Cello
Viola
Cello
Viola
Horn
Piano
1


Glockenspiel
Viola
Cello
Bass
Trumpet
Trombone
Tuba
Listen for horn.
Copy pitches with singing (pp).
Copy breaths with air (mf).
Drown out multiphonics with (fff)
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Bassoon
Listen for violin. Repeat, approximately, the previous 30", stopping whenever you hear the violin sounding.
Cello
Bass
Viola
Cello
Horn
Piano



3



Piano

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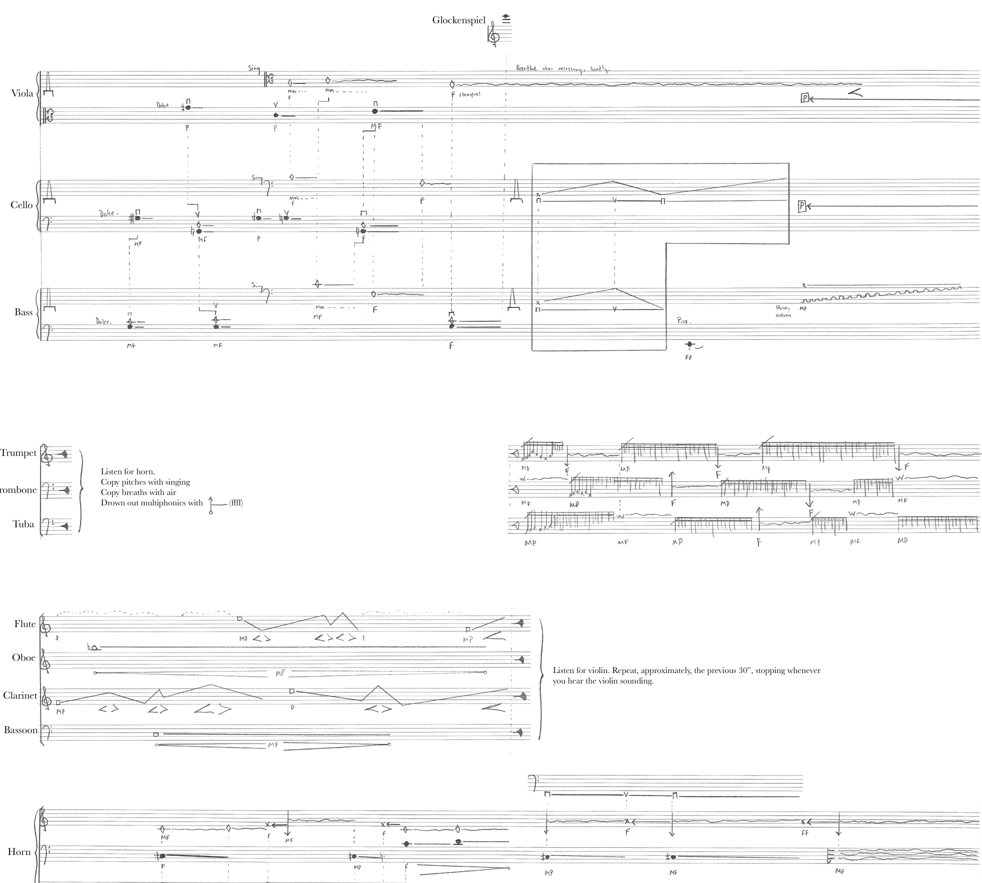
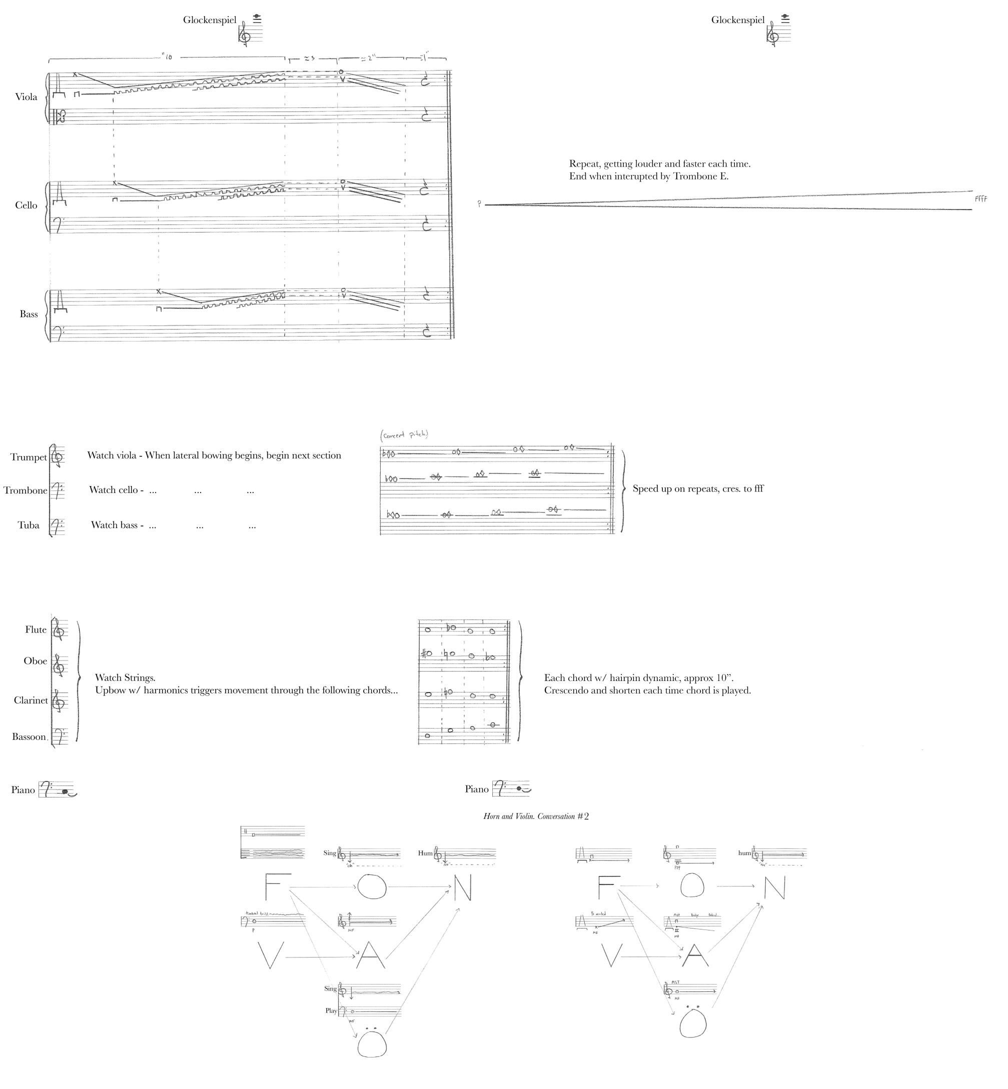
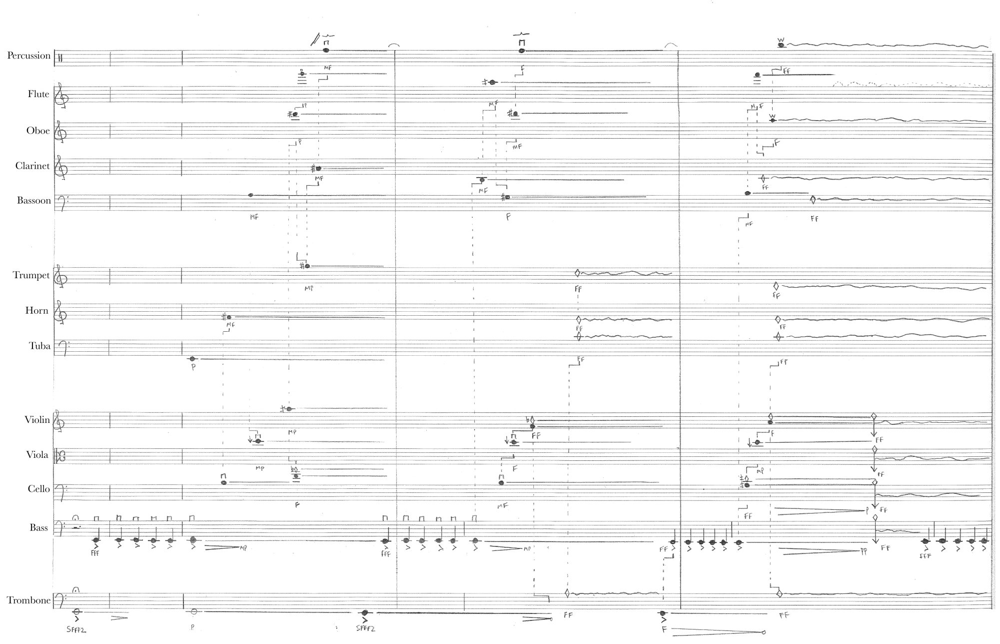


Piano


Glockenspiel
Glockenspiel
Viola
Cello
Bass
Repeat, getting louder and faster each time.
End when interupted by Trombone E.
Trumpet
Trombone
Tuba
Watch viola - When lateral bowing begins, begin next section
Watch cello - ... ...
Watch bass - ... ...
Speed up on repeats, cres. to fff
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Bassoon
Watch Strings.
Upbow w/ harmonics triggers movement through the following chords...
Each chord w/ hairpin dynamic, approx 10".
Crescendo and shorten each time chord is played.
Piano
Piano
Horn and Violin. Converation #2
Sing
Hum
Sing
Play
Hum
F
O
N
V
A
6.



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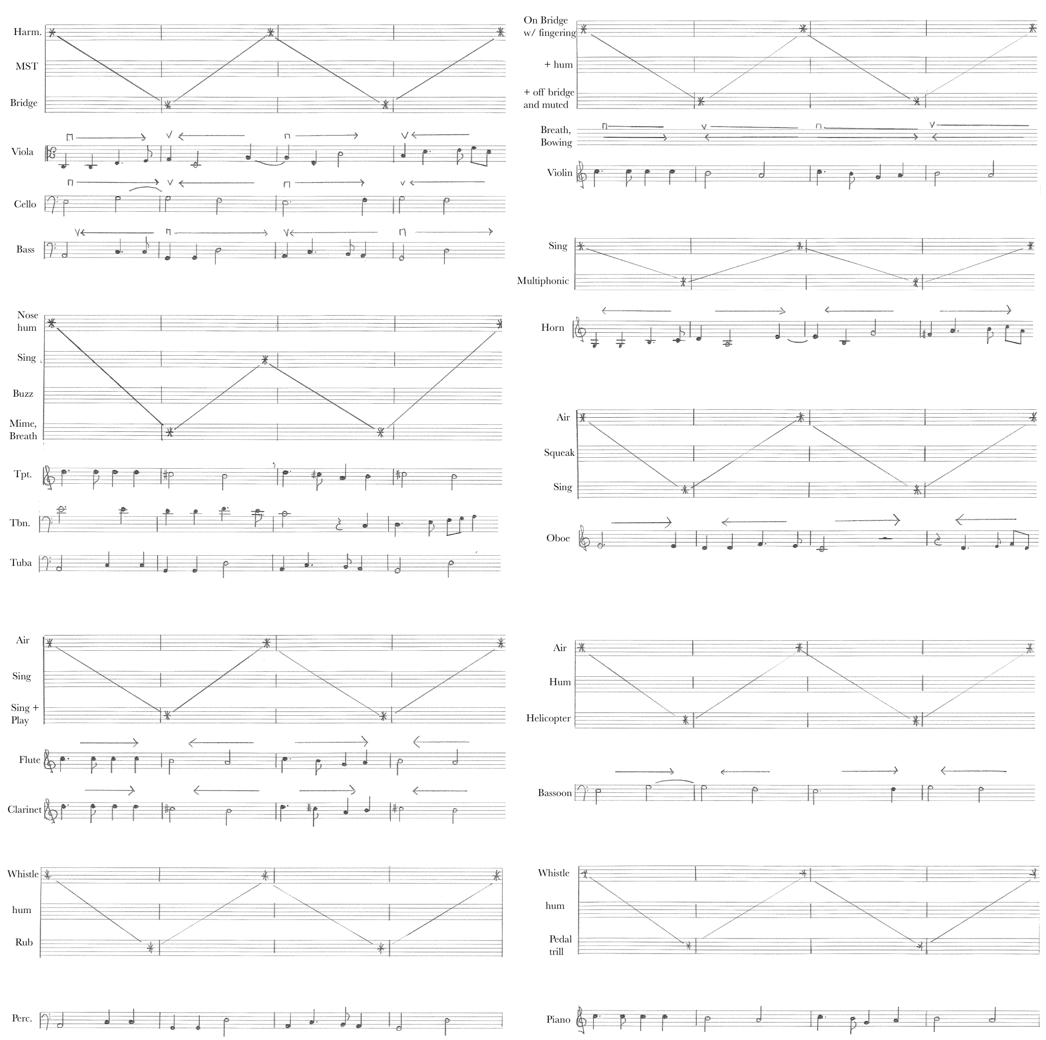
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Trumpet
Trombone
Bassoon
Assistant
Pianist



Repeat 8x… gradually decrescendo

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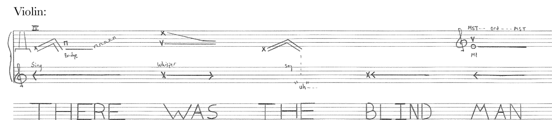
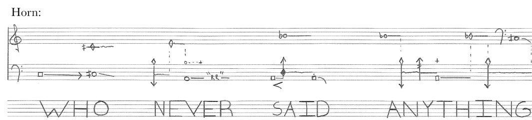
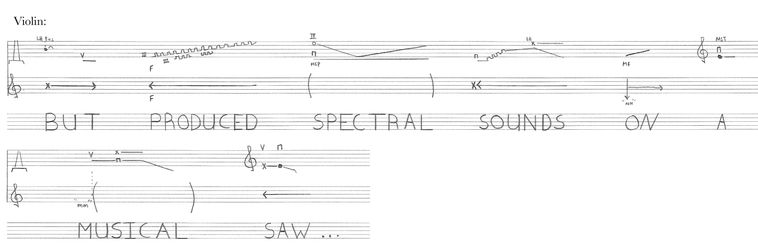
Violin:



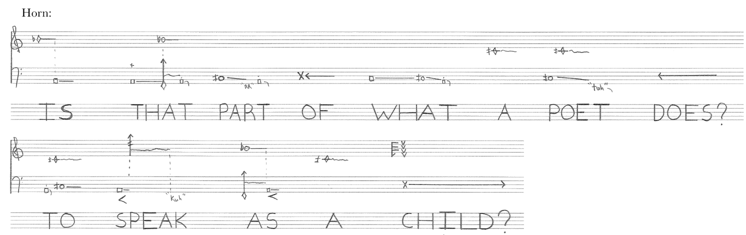
Horn:



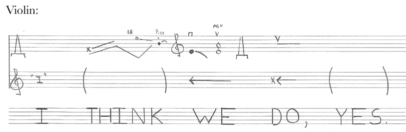
Violin:



Horn:



Violin:



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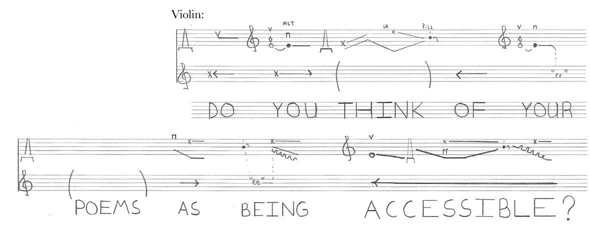

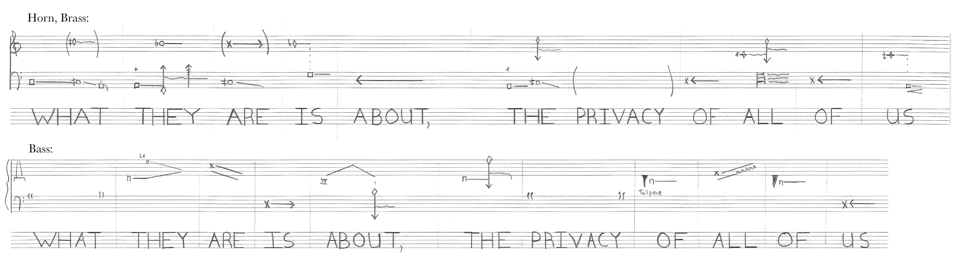

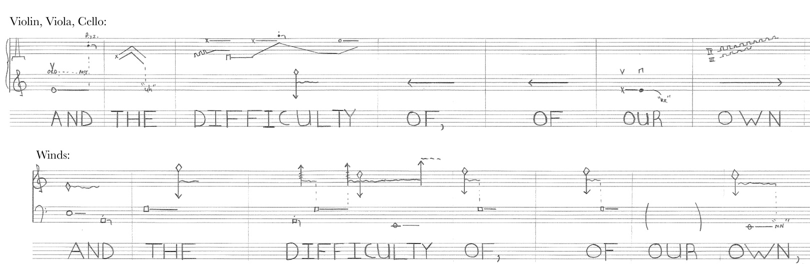

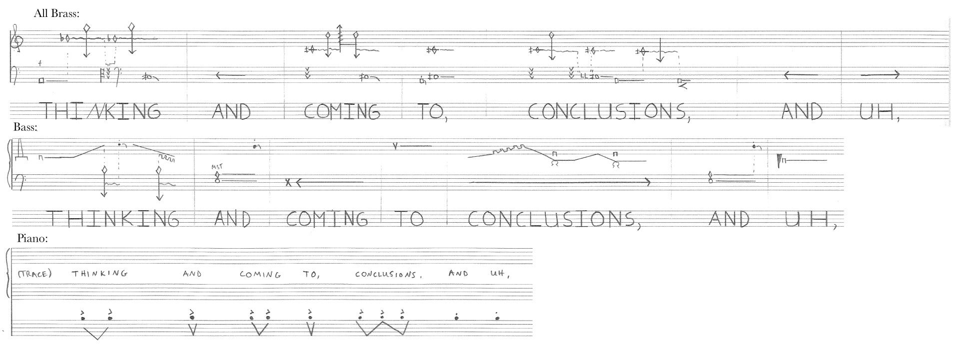

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Brass:
IN THAT WAY THEY ARE, I THINK, ACCESSIBLE,
Strings:
IN THAT WAY THEY ARE, I THINK, ACCESSIBLE,
Winds:
IN THAT WAY THEY ARE, I THINK, ACCESSIBLE,
Piano, Assistant, Percussion:
trace
IN THAT WAY THEY ARE, I THINK, ACCESSIBLE,
Winds:
IF ANYONE CARES TO
ACCESS THEM.
Brass:
IF ANYONE CARES TO
ACCESS THEM.
Strings:
ANYONE CARES TO, ACCESS THEM.
Pianist, Assistant, Percussion:
trace
IF ANYONE CARES TO
ACCESS THEM.
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