Understanding Michael Pisaro's Solo Piano Music through Alain Badiou's theory of the Event

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the works of the composer Michael Pisaro and their connection with the concept of truth as outlined by the philosopher Alain Badiou (*Being and Event*, 1988). The main concern of this research is with the relation between silence, Pisaro's piano music, and Badiou's theory of the event. The thesis argues that Badiou's faithful subject can be mapped onto the performer's faithful interpretation of Pisaro's composition, and involves the performance of many of Piasro's piano works: *fields have ears (1)*, *Les Jours, Mon Aubépine, floating, drifting*, *C. Wolff*, *half-sleep beings*, *time, presence, movement*, *pi (1-2594)*, *Fade*, *distance (1)* and *Akasa.* The thesis argues, taking Badiou's and Pisaro's arguments through to their logical (if sometimes seemingly extreme) conclusions, that it is in the performance (and recording) of these pieces that the research 'proper' of the thesis rests. I begin with a discussion of Pisaro's encounter with the music of John Cage – one of the most famous and leading experimental composers – and the influence it had on Pisaro in terms of using silence as a contingent part of his music. Pisaro's compositions reveal a kind of respect for silence; silent moments reflect an openness to the world of *truth*, which is expressed in the form of incalculable *events*. As such, Pisaro's encounter with Cage is conceived as a sort of truth process, in the terms Alain Badiou describes. It is not a coincidence that Badiou is, alongside Cage, one of the seminal influences on Pisaro, and the relationship of Pisaro's compositional work to Badiou's thought is a central aspect of the written portion of the thesis. Through employing Badiou's philosophy, this research argues that, though representation and its entire pursuit of beauty in art may be regarded as being at the outset of artistic truth procedures, representation in and of itself is not and cannot be integral to a truth procedure. The thesis concludes that to accept that Badiou's philosophy represents a profound and significant influence on Pisaro's music means that the performer must take, almost dogmatically, a *faithful* attitude to Pisaro's scores. Furthermore, it demonstrates that by understanding Pisaro's music through Badiou's theory of the *event*, new events (in the form of silences) intervene in performance situations, keeping in mind that the performer can only act *faithfully* on the basis of the demands of Pisaro's scores, and thus cannot 'force' silence to produce truth, but can only act in the faith that that *will have happened*.

Keywords: Pisaro, Badiou, experimental music, silence, the event, truth, the subject, fidelity.

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Introduction

The present thesis investigates how the works of the American composer Michael Pisaro might be said to evoke a truth event in the terms outlined by the French philosopher Alain Badiou—one of Pisaro's key influences—and argues that, if this stance is taken seriously as an axiom (or, perhaps more appropriately as an article of faith) to its full extent, then the performer *cannot* articulate what this would mean practically—which is to say the performer cannot seek to *represent* the truth event—but can only act *faithfully* on the basis of the demands of Pisaro's scores. Pisaro is a professor of composition at the California Institute of the Arts who explores the use, and meaning, of silence as one of his key compositional tools. He is associated with the Wandelweiser group of composers which is an international group that identifies with the experimental tradition following the work of the American composer, John Cage. Starting out from Cage's seminal *4′33″* (1952), which itself frames a notional silence over a defined time period, the Wandelweiser group creates works frequently referred to as 'silent music' even if, in reality, like Cage, they explore the connection between sound and the absence of sound rather than silence as such. Pisaro has composed over 80 works throughout his career, paying a great deal of attention to poetry and literature which have been a signal influence.

The aim of this thesis is to examine and develop a performing approach for Pisaro's piano works with the help of the philosophical theory of the event as propounded by Badiou, in his ground breaking—and, for Pisaro, formative—work *L'être et l'événement* (*Being and Event*),[1] originally published in 1988. By doing so, this thesis relates the Badiouian concepts of the event, truth, the subject, fidelity, and

[1] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. by Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2007 [1988]).

being to Pisaro's music. This thesis is the first to explore the performance of Pisaro's piano works through the lens of Badiou's theory of the event and, as such, this is also the first piece of research to investigate how Pisaro's experimental music and piano performances can be illuminated with the help of philosophical concepts. In particular, however, it concludes that, against the usual expectation that philosophical thought might either somehow *explain* something that is occurring musically or that the performance of the music might in some respect *exemplify* the philosophical thought, if one is to take seriously what Badiou's philosophy suggests—and to accept that the influence on Pisaro's music is of a profound nature—then the performer must take neither of these approaches, instead, almost dogmatically, taking a *faithful* attitude to Pisaro's scores. This results in a performance practice *almost* like that associated with non-matrixed performance, in the sense that it is a form of *doing* aside from *representation*. Furthermore, after considering the distinctions that might be made between Pisaro's approach and those of other members of the Wandelweiser group—specifically Antoine Beuger and Jürg Frey—I examine both what this might mean in the context of Pisaro's music in general and, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, what this means for the performer of Pisaro's music.

In employing Badiou's theory of the event, this thesis is related to the work of Frederic Dalmasso on what he terms Badiou's 'transitory theatre', in which Dalmasso addresses the relationship between philosophy and performance through Badiou's theory of theatre,[2] but instead of focusing specifically on Badiou's engagement with theatre practice, the current thesis reflects more upon the relationship between the event and musical performance through the lens of Pisaro's works. In this sense the thesis argues that Badiou's writings on performance as such are, paradoxically, less

[2] Frederic Dalmasso, *Alain Badiou's Transitory Theatre*, (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Loughborough, 2011).

significant for a performer of Pisaro's music than might be suspected, agreeing with Janelle Reinelt—the first theatre scholar writing in English to ask what Badiou might have to offer her discipline—that the larger questions—of truth, the event, and faithfulness—are more fruitful territory, as outlined in fuller detail below.[3]

Furthermore, this research seeks to fill the gap in knowledge when it comes to Pisaro's musical thinking regarding silence because, up until this point, there has not been a comprehensive study on this topic. Only the Dutch theorist Samuel Vriezen has engaged in a sustained way with the relationship of Badiou's philosophy to musical tendencies redolent of Pisaro's musical concerns but more in relation to Cage's works rather than Pisaro's, even though the latter is often mentioned in Vriezen's 'Rituals of Contingency'.[4] Specifically, Vriezen uses the notion of ritual to explore transitions between Badiou's politics and the musical practice of Cage.

Due to the limited space offered by a PhD thesis, this research will not consider Pisaro's complete output but devotes its attention to ten representative pieces:

1. *fields have ears (1)*;
2. *Les Jours, Mon Aubépine*;
3. *floating, drifting*;
4. *C. Wolff*;
5. *half-sleep beings*;
6. *time, presence, movement*;
7. *pi (1–2594)*;
8. *fade*;
9. *distance (1)*;
10. *akasa*.

[3] See Janelle Reinelt, 'Theatre and Politics: Encountering Badiou', *Performance Research*, 94.4 (2004), 87–94.

[4] Samuel Vriezen, 'Rituals of Contingency', *Theory & Event*, 4.17 (2014), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/562829#f5> [accessed 26 February 2019].

For the sake of clarity: these are the pieces which have been recorded as a part of this research project and form an integral part of the submission. However, in line with the thesis ultimately outlined here—that *if* these pieces are held to have to do with an event in Badiou's sense, as Pisaro's writings suggests, then the performer *cannot* explain what has been done, but can only *do it*, faithfully, recalling Cage's *bon mot* regarding Christian Wolff's music, the dedicatee of one of these pieces, that '[a]ll you can do is suddenly listen in the same way that, when you catch cold, all you can do is suddenly sneeze'—, the pieces themselves are not discussed as such within this written commentary.[5] Rather, a discussion of the practical work undertaken in preparing, performing, and recording them appears in an appendix to this document. Nevertheless, in the manner outlined herein, in several important senses, these recordings do not exemplify but instead *are* the research. This recalls Joe Panzner's note—here on listening—that

> [o]ne cannot choose to listen in a Cageian manner. Rather, one can only be open to an encounter […] such that one can *only* listen without recognition, […] [a]n involuntary pure listening, or a super-personal *event*, an event that fundamentally changes what it means to hear.[6]

Though Panzner is concerned with Deleuze and Cage—respectively, the most intimate of Badiou's "enemy thinkers" and Pisaro's most significant forebear—this description nevertheless mirrors what is advanced here: one can *only perform*, but faithfully.[7]

As already mentioned, this thesis employs and deploys the theory of the event as discussed by Badiou, both because Badiou's theory focuses on how unique events pave the way for new truths—in the same sort of sense Panzner describes listening in Cage—and because of the central influence Badiou's philosophical approaches have

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[5] Cage, quoted in Joe Panzner, *The Process That Is The World: Cage/Deleuze/Events/Performances* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 118.

[6] Panzner, pp. 117–18.

[7] See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, tr. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 2000 [1997]), esp. pp 1–8.

exerted on the development of Pisaro's compositional thinking.[8] As Pisaro himself confesses in his 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', a title which itself evokes Badiou's own 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art', Badiou is for him 'the most original thinker to come out of France since the advent of the post-structuralists, and, [...] unwittingly perhaps, the philosopher par excellence of experimental work in art, politics or science'.[9]

The motivation behind this study lies in my personal interest in experimental music which arose during my first interaction with the concept of silence in 2008 during my studies at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Kuwait. Though I did not notice it at the time—and would, in any case, not then have had the language to describe it—my reaction to my first conscious encounters with silence and, later, with experimental music—and Pisaro's music in particular—were for me truth events in the Badiouian sense. After them, the world was not only different, but it was *necessary* for me—I could not conceive of things differently—to act musically in the world in a way which was *faithful* to this radical change. Though these encounters were, perforce, chance ones, the way in which I experienced them was entirely in line with the description Badiou gives of such encounters and their effects upon subjects.

In Kuwait, Ameer Jaffar, the former head of the music department, introduced me to Bartek Rybak who stressed to me the importance of silences in any musical score, and how they need, too, to be treated as sounds: all the performed sounds *and* the silences, I realised, have particular fixed durations. This sort of structural thought helped me to move beyond the essentially metaphorical view I had of music and the

[8] Michael Pisaro discusses the influence Badiou and Deleuze had on his own compositional thinking. See Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', *Edition Wandelweiser* (2006), <http://www.wandelweiser.de/_michael-pisaro/texts.html> [Accessed February 26, 2019].

[9] Ibid., p. 1.

most important consequence for me was a desire to enrich and expand the research topics of my department in my home country in recognition of the *consequences* of this insight.

In light of this, and with Rybak's support, through the performance of classical repertoire, I received a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom, starting in 2013. I undertook this study under the aegis of an MA programme at the University of Huddersfield, having as my primary supervisor the pianist Philip Thomas, a leading performer (and scholar) of experimental music. During this time, I still regarded myself as an essentially classical pianist, but researched different types of music outside what I thought represented my core area of study and encountered an advertisement of the Huddersfield Centre for Research in New Music for a symposium on 'Extended Durations'. The symposium included the performance of music, but in a format wholly unlike any I had previously encountered. During the performances—which comprised, as the symposium title suggests, extended sounds and silences—audience members were encouraged, if they wished, to leave the room and return at any time, to switch seats, or even sit on the floor or simply wander onto the stage. I was, as Panzner suggests, open to the encounter. Indeed, I *could only be* open to it, exploring the sounds and the silence on a highly personal level, having the freedom of creating, in my sonic imagination, my own heard version of the performance. After the concert I approached a former Pisaro student, Greg Stuart, who spent some time discussing with me his performance of Pisaro's *Living with the Death of Time* (2012–13).

Thomas noted my fresh interest and helped me understand some of the traditions behind experimental music. As a consequence, for my final recital, I played a collection of experimental piano pieces, abandoning classical repertoire, including music by John Adams and Morton Feldman, and Cage's *Tossed as it is Untroubled* (1943), *4'33"*, *One* (1987) and *One*[5] (1990). At the end of my studies in Huddersfield, I

returned to Kuwait where I played the experimental pieces to the local audience with the sole intent of observing how a Kuwaiti audience would react to the extended silences, such as those of *4'33"*, which require nothing but hearing the sounds of their situation with an open ear. The audience did not feel comfortable, at first, during these silences but, after a series of concerts, audience members started to show a positive reaction to thinking of the silences in this way. It was finally because of this experience that I took the decision to continue my studies with a PhD on the experimental music of Michael Pisaro seen from the perspective of Badiou's theory of the event.

The reason for a singular study of Pisaro is simple: his work remains seriously under researched with only relatively few articles discussing him specifically. Even then, Pisaro is almost exclusively discussed in the context of other contemporary music composers. The motivation behind this topic lies, further, in the need for a comprehensive—representative, if not exhaustive—study of silence in Pisaro's music, especially since Pisaro does not argue for a fetishisation of silence but more for an exploration of the fruitful relationship between sound and the absence of sound, a topic that remains as experimental as Pisaro's experimental art itself.

One example of the limits of existing work might be represented by Katharina Rost, Stephanie Schwarz, and Rainer Simon's 'Tuning In/Out: Auditory Participation in Contemporary Music and Theatre Performances', which analyses whether and how auditory participation within a performance can be conceptualized, including a discussion of Pisaro's *space: for audience* (1996), but without a consideration of what this might have to do with the rest of his output.[10] Pisaro is discussed more often in the context of the work of the Wandelweiser composers as a group rather than independently, as in the case of James Saunders's 'Testing the Series', which discusses

[10] Katharina Rost, Stephanie Schwarz & Rainer Simon (2011), 'Tuning In/Out: Auditory Participation in Contemporary Music and Theatre Performances', *Performance Research*, 16.3, 67–75.

a series comprising multiple autonomous parts that share common features and/or a determining principle that he considers common to the work of the Wandelweiser composers generally.[11] G. Douglas Barrett in his 'The Silent Network—The Music of Wandelweiser' examines Wandelweiser as a unique social and artistic formation while also considering the social import of the group's artistic works. Barrett argues that Wandelweiser's aesthetic program can be located largely in its interpretations of John Cage's silent composition *4'33"*,[12] a point of view shared by the present author. Barrett continues to argue that the shared aesthetic concerns of the members of this group are related to thinking collectivity, this being the point of departure for understanding the group in his vision. Insightful though Barrett is, this approach by necessity means that the specificity of Pisaro's approach must be relegated to the side lines. Similarly, Nicholas Melia and James Saunders's 'What is Wandelweiser?', they outline a teleology of silence across the European musical landscape of the twentieth century, leading to the convergence of Wandelweiser composers Antoine Beuger, Jürg Frey, Chico Mello and Manfred Werder.[13] In short, though there is a relatively small body of work which deals with the collective concerns of the Wandelweiser composers, almost no attention has been given to Pisaro as an individual, drawing out the ways in which he shares these more general ways of working and the ways in which he departs from them, nor has a substantial body of Pisaro's work been examined 'in the round'. A part of the aim of this thesis is to fill that gap. Furthermore, the philosophy of Alain Badiou and his theory of the event are being put into use by this thesis in order to explore the relationship between Pisaro's music and Badiou's philosophy for the first time, the latter a key plank of what Pisaro conceives the act of composition to *be*.

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[11] James Saunders, 'Testing the Consequences—Multipart Series in the Work of the Wandelweiser Composers', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.6, (2011), 497–524.

[12] G. Douglas Barrett, 'The Silent Network: The Music of Wandelweiser', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.6 (2012), 449¬–470.

[13] Nicholas Melia and James Saunders, 'Introduction: What Is Wandelweiser?', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.6 (2011), 445–448.

What this thesis itself largely puts to the side is the broad field of music performance studies. This must seem paradoxical in the case of what is, nevertheless, a doctoral project investigating musical performance in a particular context. Yet, as should become clear in the following, and is already hinted at above, the sorts of concerns to which the tools of performance studies lend it, tend to be at odds with Badiou (and, by extension, Pisaro), precisely because, first, the question of faithfulness stands in opposition to the sorts of critical reflection which performance studies involves and requires and, second, because examinations of performance often tend, at least implicitly, to rely upon a model of music in which representation is of significance. Joining these concerns together, performance studies is interested in what can be said about performance, while a Badiou-inflected approach *to* performance requires an attempt to frame what can *not yet* be said. In short, a project not wholly unlike this one in focus could have been imagined proceeding directly from performance studies, but such a study would have, at best, been equivocal regarding its relationship to Badiou and, at worst, such approaches would have opposed the route leading from Badiou and from the event to such an extent that the project could not, truly, have dealt with Pisaro's key philosophical influence on his own terms, which surely must be a core priority of the first such examination of Pisaro.

Nevertheless, the development of knowledge crucial to this thesis, which situates it within the larger context of the field, has relied on a series of scholars working in performance studies, even if for the reasons stated above, after this introduction these approaches are necessarily set aside in the body of this text. These include the writings of Eric Clarke, Mark Doffman, Emily Payne, and William Rothstein, to name only a few. As such, what is sketched here gives an indication of the ways in which another version of this project *could* have progressed, but in which *this*

version did not, as well as noting the ways in which, under the surface, the project is still informed by such modes of thought.

Eric Clarke's 'Creativity in Performance',[14] examines, as the title suggests, various ways in which the notion of creativity has been used in relation to performance. This article offers insights into how one might discuss the significance of the different forms creativity in performance takes and, from my perspective, allows further exploration of some of the varied manifestations of creativity that can be found in performances of Pisaro's music. This is even more relevant in Pisaro's case, since his music allows its performer to exercise their *semi-free-will*: though there remain certain boundaries in approaching his music, imposed by the composer, within these boundaries, there are multiple ways of approaching the composer's instructions. Indeed, the boundaries delineate the territory in which the performer is set free. Although this is arguably the case for all notated music, Pisaro's music—like many musics in the experimental tradition—makes its boundaries visible, makes the play of freedom and constraint a tangible part of the activity of the performance.

Part of Clarke's approach is to examine multiple performances empirically, six to be exact, of Chopin's Prelude in E minor (op. 28, no. 4), given by a single pianist within a single hour. Likewise, using a similar approach, Emily Payne's 'Creativity beyond innovation: Musical performance and craft' considers 'everyday' moments of creativity, in opposition to revelatory events which generate apparently wholly new performance insights.[15] Employing an ethnographic approach to investigate creativity in performance, Payne reveals inherent tensions in models of creativity which prioritise innovation or novelty. In one sense, the sorts of reflections on performance which appear in the appendix focus on just these essentially mundane, but nonetheless—as

[14] Eric F. Clarke, 'Creativity in performance', *Musicae Scientiae*, XIX.1 (2005), 157–182.

[15] Payne, 'Creativity beyond innovation: Musical performance and craft', *Musicae Scientiae*, 20.3 (2016), 325–344.

Payne insists—surely creative aspects. In another sense, Payne's approach hints that one difficulty with a focus on moments of revelation is that—if Badiou's discussion of this is taken seriously—arguably they cannot be immediately assimilated or analysed, only undertaken: if there is revelation, it rests in performance itself, Badiou might argue.[16] Nevertheless, Payne's stress on process over outcome—*doing* over *having done*—is central to my thinking. Similarly, elsewhere Payne has stressed that, because crafting a performance is a progressive process, each performance and encounter with a score is different. The precise outcomes are multiple, and they are never repeated, because of the performer's continuous change of their skills and talents.[17] The same score is interpreted and played in various ways because 'performance is *itinerative* (i.e. involved in a journey) rather than iterative (simply repetitious)'.[18] In even more traditional guise, William Rothstein has encouraged—through his study of thematic and motive elements, meter, phrase structure and voice-leading in music by Bach, Beethoven and Chopin—pianists to celebrate ambiguity, in this case through maintaining an approach which could be read as the performer having to perform more than one of the several hypermetrical options a score seems to allow. Rothstein makes a distinction between analytical truth and dramatic truth but argues that the performer needs to be connected with both. Rothstein's truths are certainly not Badiou's, but his stress that the truths which actually take place in performance may very well be different from those which can be analysed—and, by extension surely, not *only* those which can be analysed on the basis of a score—acted as a useful and productive 'open

[16] A less rigid version of this might be to follow Badiou's suggestion in his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* that philosophy works not as a producer of truths but rather as a sort of privileged symptomology for identifying the (properly philosophical) truths which have been produced elsewhere (see Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, tr. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005 [1998]), pp. 1–15). In this case, one might argue that the sorts of insights that Clarke, for instance, provides are the privileged territory of musicology, but that the performer of the Chopin can—and must—only *do*. The performer would then produce the knowledge which the researcher would identify, name, and catalogue.

[17] Payne, 'The Craft of Musical Performance-Skilled Practice in Collaboration', (2018), 107–122, (p. 108).

[18] Ibid., (p. 110).

sesame' for my own work, as did his openness to ambiguity.[19] In the words of Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, '[w]hen music sounds different it is different, because music's meaning depends to a very important extent on its sound'.[20]

On a broader level, my work suggests that, albeit only in this very limited context, the sort of framing provided by Clarke and Doffman is not necessarily so straightforward as it might appear. The (presumably) nineteenth- or twentieth-century modernist performers would, in this sketch, have been 'ready to renounce their identities in their service to The Work, and, like biblical scholars or psychoanalysts, to draw out, from deep within the score, something mysterious, revelatory and previously unknown—inevitable and singular'.[21] Opposing this, Clarke and Doffman posit Cage—and the field of experimental music more generally—in which 'you couldn't tell who was supposed to be a composer, performer, or improviser because they were all forming "collectives", "pools" or so-called orchestras in which people couldn't play their instrument properly'.[22] Of course, Clarke and Doffman do not really believe the opposition to be such a simple one—and their implicit point that creativity takes place *between*, through *doing*, and that traditional delineations of roles is likely to obscure this is well-taken and forms an implicit part of my thinking—but Badiou's attitude, and Pisaro's interpretation of it, suggests something slightly different, since it might look like at least this part of the experimental music tradition recovers nineteenth-century thinking for different ends: the performer is *faithful* yes, but if there are truths to be drawn out, they do not already pre-exist in some transcendental Work. The score might be, in some sense, a condition of the event, a performance might be its site, but the truth

[19] Willaim Rothstein, 'Analysis and the act of performance', in John Rink (ed.), *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 217–40.

[20] Ibid., p. 658.

[21] Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman, *Distributed Creativity*, p. 1.

[22] Ibid.

truly *is* previously unknown, rather than waiting, somehow secreted in the score by the composer for the performer to draw out into the light of day.

In terms of aesthetics in—and the aesthetics of—performance studies understood more generally, a book that I found revealing, although it is not directly referred to in the main body of the present text, was Augusto Boal's *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*.[23] Boal argues the aesthetic imagination is a site where an alternative 'reality' to that of conventional appearances can be envisaged. Boal's model suggests that the practice of creativity increases the capacity to imagine multiple possibilities, and it is precisely for this reason that the desire for such a practice is pursued and developed. Creativity allows 'us' (understood in the broadest sense) to become creators of culture rather than simple, passive recipients. Though Boal's theatre remains in some senses concerned with representation, his invisible theatre both problematises the idea of staged actions as somehow distant or distinct from life—in ways which resonate with the practices of experimental music—and, simultaneously, draws attention to what representation *is* and what (and who) is represented (and, for that matter, what or who is *not* represented).

Notwithstanding the tensions that exist between the thinking of Badiou and performance studies, as traditionally conceived, within and without music, my thesis is nonetheless intimately linked to the more practical approaches implied and suggested by performance studies. What this thesis does is both no more and no less than to look for the relevance of Badiou's thought, and to accept the sometimes apparently extreme consequences of having done so, in experimental music—in Pisaro's music specifically—while sharing 'the concern to shift the focus from thinking in terms of

[23] Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, trans. by Adrian Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

discrete objects and subjects, towards a concern with processes, relations and happenings'.[24]

Thesis overview

This thesis consists of the present introduction, followed by two chapters discussing, respectively, Pisaro in the context both of the Wandelweiser composers and of the thinking of Alain Badiou and an examination of approaches to performance in which the question of representation is problematised, which leads into a discussion of the ways in which a Badiouian faithful subject must *present* rather than *represent*. An appendix presents a discussion of my practical work in preparing Pisaro's music for performance and recording. The first chapter begins with a short description of the Wandelweiser group and its origins and continues with a discussion of silence as presented by Cage's *4'33"*, arguing that this shaped the development of Pisaro's approach and that, as a result, Pisaro conceptualises silence as an ever-present void. This chapter contrasts the specifics of Pisaro's thinking with that of his Wandelweiser peers Antoine Beuger and Jürg Frey, in relation to Badiou's philosophy and provides an analysis of Pisaro's *Mind is Moving (I)* as a case study of what thinking silence in this way might mean for the experience of hearing this music.

The second chapter analyses developments in performance studies (Schechner), the happening (Allan Kaprow) and questions of non-matrixed performance (Michael Kirby, taken up by Björn Heile) in order to describe aspects of performance aspect related to Pisaro's own conception of the experimental music performance tradition. This chapter stresses an approach to performance in which performers seek to avoid

[24] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by Sarah Brady, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

actions which *represent* or which *figure* ideas (or other actions) and draws the link between this and Badiou's faithful subject, who does not *re*-present what already is in the world, but is a militant for that new truth which is *not yet* general recognised. In a way, Badiou's performer *acts* but does not *represent*. Operating in this way is, perforce, something of a wager—an aspect Badiou often draws attention to in his discussion of the faithful subject—and the gamble that the *faithful* performance of Pisaro's music is tangible, but not *explicable*, in the sound result is central to this project. "This has taken place, which I can neither calculate nor demonstrate, but to which I shall be faithful": this is the structure of the wager Badiou describes.[25]

The appendix concerns itself with my personal performance of Michael's Pisaro's compositions, including rehearsing, learning and recording the pieces as well as interpreting them in the context of the experimental performance practice tradition and the philosophical thoughts discussed in the other chapters. Nevertheless, as stressed above, this appendix focusses on essentially practical matters: the truth of the matter is necessarily contained within the performances themselves.

[25] Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008 [1992]), p. 123.

Chapter 1: Michael Pisaro in Context

In 1992, the same year as John Cage's death, the Wandelweiser group of musicians was founded; it is still active in the worlds of experimental music and art in general. It was initiated by Antoine Beuger, a Dutch-born composer/flautist and the German composer/violinist Burkhard Schothauer.[26] In 1994, a Swiss clarinettist and composer, Jürg Frey, joined the group, followed by the American composer and guitarist Michael Pisaro, in 1995. Though new artists from around the world join the group year by year, according to Pisaro, the Wandelweiser group 'as such doesn't ever come together as a whole, and includes others besides composers: musicians, artists, writers—friends'.[27]

Proceeding from the experimental tradition, first and foremost the Wandelweiser group took John Cage's silent composition *4'33"* as a starting point, and, broadly, the group members use his aesthetic to direct their way of making, composing, interpreting and performing their experimental music and artistic works.[28] In this context, they have regarded Cage's silent piece within their artistic works as a, or *the*, fundamental source of unforeseen sounds. The group's name, indeed, evokes this relationship with Cage, being, as it is, a neologism, eliding the German word for signpost [*Wegweiser*] with that for *change* or vicissitude [*Wandel*].[29] Pisaro has suggested that it "imeans 'change signpost' if one understands it as a combination of *Wandel* with *Wegweiser*; or perhaps more literally, 'change wisely', though he suspects the name was 'something that just popped out of Burkhard's linguistically inventive mind, rather than […] a description of any kind of aesthetic program'.[30] The Wandelweiser group's

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[26] Nicholas Melia and James Saunders, 'Introduction: What Is Wandelweiser?', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.6 (2011), 445–448 (p. 445).

[27] Barrett, 'The Silent Network: The Music of Wandelweiser', p. 451.

[28] Ibid., p. 449.

[29] Melia and Saunders, (p. 445).

[30] Michael Pisaro, 'Wandelweiser' (2009), <http://www.wandelweiser.de/_texte/erstw-engl.html> [accessed: 3 October 2016].

> sound events are framed by rests or periods of silence which may be relatively long and are organized in line with a fixed time structure which applies to the whole piece of parts thereof and is often periodic in nature. Further characteristics include the fact that changes between events, if notated at all, occur on a very limited number of parameters, and that the music is generally very quiet, or one could say: unassuming.[31]

Like the Wandelweiser composers in general, Pisaro has been influenced significantly by *4′33″*. Cage's silent piece has shaped the style of Pisaro's compositions by allowing him to explore silence, inviting unplanned sounds from the environment into his work. Cage stated that:

> [I]n this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated and those that are not. Those that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment.[32]

However, Pisaro makes use of silence, which is to say a space of 'musical' void or absence, not just by adding unplanned sounds or extending the time of a performance, but also by accepting accidental sounds as possible *truthful* and *eventual* encounters with his music—for example, he accepts environmental sounds, traffic sounds, bird song and factory noises.[33] These sounds operate as contingent accompaniments to musical works. Cage's composition *Telephone and Birds* is a clear precursor of Pisaro's way of using the environment, because both of them present the inactive environment as a source of sounds creating a focus on environmental sounds, usually ignored, as great as that on intended sounds:[34] in Pisaro's music (and perhaps in *Telephones and Birds* too), new 'eventual' sounds are created every time the music is played.[35] To explain what is meant by 'truth' and the 'event' in the context of Pisaro's

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[31] M. J. Grant, 'Series and Place', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.3 (2012), 325–542 (p. 531).

[32] Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 8.

[33] Yuko Zama, 'Silence, Environment, Performer: Beuger, Frey, Malfetti, Werder, Pisaro', *Surround* (2013), <http://surround.noquam.com/silence-environment-performer/> [accessed 9 February 2015].

[34] Martin Iddon, *John Cage and David Tudor: Correspondence on Interpretation and Performance*, pp. 197–200.

[35] Barrett, 'The Silent Network: The Music of Wandelweiser' p. 450.

work it is necessary to explore his relationship with philosophical thought, particular that of the French thinker, Alain Badiou.

According to Cage's ideal, each performance is a unique, new *event*.[36] To this end, Pisaro reads Badiou's theory of the event within his own compositions as a process through which he might create *artistic events*. In this way, Badiou's theory sheds light on how Pisaro's music might be understood.[37] In order to explain Badiou's theory of the event in this context, a discussion is required first regarding how the event takes place, according to Badiou, in general, before a consideration of this in relation to Pisaro's music.

The event, from Badiou's perspective, is something new or uncommon that intervenes in the process of being, which contains, and is constituted by, *situations*, which is to say, in simple terms, 'the ways things are' or what 'we all know' to be the case.[38] An *event* is something which enters, arises within, the *situation* suddenly, without anyone knowing how it has come to be: it is something which could not have been predicted from the situation, something it would have been impossible to have deduced even from all the available evidence. In Badiou's terms, then, the world is certainly *not* 'all that is the case': what 'we don't know' is the case too; an event is born out of the *absence* of knowledge, out of the *void*. It ruptures the situation (the way things 'are') and generates a new truth or, eventually (if it comes to be *generally recognised* as true), a new *situation*. According to Badiou, 'a truth is, first of all,

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[36] Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 35.

[37] Badiou, 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art', *lacanian ink*, 22 (2003), <http://www.lacan.com/issue22.php> [accessed 27 January 2015].

[38] See, for instance, Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens, 'An Introduction to Badiou's Philosophy', in Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, tr. Feltham and Clemens (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–30, esp. 8–13. Feltham and Clemens explicitly stress (p. 7) that Badiou draws the notion of the situation from Wittgenstein, hence the gloss below that the situation is 'all that is the case', even if the world contains, then, things that *are not* the case. The first-person plural here and below refers to anyone who is 'in' the situation, which might be to say anyone for whom the truth of the event seems to make no sense, not to be, in fact, true. An appropriate example, developed some way below, might be those Europeans who believed the Sun to circle the Earth—a thing 'we all' would have said to be the case—before (and, indeed, after) Copernicus showed this not to be the case.

something new. What transmits, what repeats, we shall call knowledge'.[39] Put simply, when a new idea—an idea which could not have been predicted from what 'we all know'—originates, that moment is an event. When the 'truth' of that idea has become widely recognized—when 'we all know' it to be true—then the event is, later, recognized as a 'truth event'. Once 'we all know' the truth of that new idea, the situation will have changed, in order to take account of this new truth, which has filled a void which 'we' had not previously noticed existed. Specific examples of this will be described below. Badiou's *events* take places in four types of *situation*: art, science, love and politics.[40] Thus, the artistic *situation* (from Pisaro's perspective) presents itself as a place where an *event* might take place.

Badiou's claim that the new, as such, arises from the void—from absence—sets him against the Parmenidean commonplace that 'nothing comes from nothing'. He re-reads, on this basis, Plato's assertion in the *Parmenides* that 'if the one is not, nothing is'.[41] An everyday reading might take this to mean that 'without one(s), which is to say *presence*, things cannot exist'. Badiou instead proposes that one read it as 'if the world does not contain singular, irreducible elements, what must exist truly is the void'.[42] He moves the stress from the word 'nothing' to the word 'is': it is not that *nothing* exists, but that nothing *exists*. Badiou proposes a mathematical model to justify this assertion (in line with his simultaneous claim that "mathematics *is* ontology"). According to Badiou:

> The multiple from which ontology makes up its situation is composed solely of multiplicities. There is no one. In other words, every multiple is a multiple of multiples […] The count-as-one is no more than the system of conditions through which multiples can be recognized as multiple.[43]

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[39] Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*, ed. by Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 45.

[40] Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. by Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 16.

[41] Ibid., p. 23.

[42] Ibid., p. 52.

[43] Ibid., p. 29.

What this means will be explained more fully below.

Badiou applies the mathematical (that is, ontological, since for him mathematics *is* ontology) model of *set theory*—specifically Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory with the axiom of choice (or ZFC)—to explain *being* in general and the presence of the *void*, the source in Badiou's terms of the event, in this situation.[44] In (relatively) straightforward terms, Badiou employs two of the axioms of ZFC to demonstrate the consistency of his theory of ontology with a particular mode of mathematical enquiry: the axiom of the empty set and the axiom of infinity.

The axiom of the empty set declares, simply, that there is—that *there exists*—such a thing as the empty set, which is to say, there is a set which contains no members, which might be written, therefore, as { }, which denotes that no elements are contained within that set. Equally, one might write this as ø, or null, which indicates, in ZFC set theory, the same *emptiness*. Since the empty set *is* empty, however, it is capable of forming an element of any other set, without altering its properties, which is to say: all sets *contain* the empty set. This being the case, although { } from one perspective is *equal* to ø, it would *also* be true to say that { } *contains* ø, which would mean that { } leads necessarily to {ø}.The axiom of infinity, then, treats this necessary principle in essence as a way of counting, as it were, 'from first principles', since what underpins this is that, at each stage, a further empty set must be added, since *all sets contain the empty set*. As such, the axiom of infinity thus generates a succession as follows:

{ } = ø

{ø} = {{ }} = 1

{ø, {ø}} = {{ }, {{ }}} = 2

[44] Ed Pluth, *Badiou: A Philosophy of the New* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 31

{ø, {ø}, {ø, {ø}}} = {{ }, {{ }}, {{ }, {{ }}}} = 3

and so on, quite literally *ad infinitum*. The axiom finally states then that there exists an infinite set, containing all the natural numbers, but one which, vitally, proceeds from axioms governing null, which is to say the empty set, a sort of bracketing off of the void and absence. From a mathematical perspective, Badiou insists, everything that is thought of as presence—even in the world of transcendental mathematics—is born from, and is constituted by and in, absence. It is from the absence that what is called presence is constru(ct)ed. It is also important to note then, that anything that might be thought of as singular—as individual—is, in the terms of the set theory Badiou deploys, *already multiple*: even the number 1 is made up of a particular way of segmenting the void (a void which finally produces a truly infinite multiplicity).

This is the Badiouian Paradox (and, indeed, the apparent paradox of set theory's axioms of the empty set and of infinity): the idea that nothing *contains* nothing, which means even nothing is constituted by something (even if that something is, paradoxically, also nothing): an infinite *multiplicity*.[45] Nevertheless, as noted above, events—truths—proceed from a site of absence: they occur, necessarily, at the point of the not-known, of that which *cannot be predicted* from the known, from the situation. This absence—the compositionally undetermined—is obviously of enormous significance to Pisaro, and inflects strongly his understanding of material in a post-Cagean world.

> According to Pisaro, silence
>
> is an openness to any contingency, that is, to any sound. The singularity of the work flows into a multiplicity, first by unfolding the composite, and allowing the "supplementary detours" to fill up the surface. This surface then expands

[45] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 59.

> into an even wider multiplicity, in which the performers and audience join, by staying open to "silence".[46]

Badiou claims that 'what makes an event happen is chance'.[47] The *event* ruptures the *situation*, being a singular multiple that changes the *situation* into something unique and true; it is quite the opposite, then, of a repetitive *situation*. The *event* makes an otherwise predictable *situation* new, since the *event* cannot be predic(a)ted on the basis of the *situation*. The *event* provides a possibility for changing the *situation* into something else and thus discovering the *truth* of the event. In order for an occurrence to become an *event*, however, subjects are needed to bear witness to its *truth* (this is what Badiou means by *fidelity* to the *event*). So, the *event*, from Slavoj Žižek's perspective,

> [h]as no objective or verifiable content; it takes place in a situation but is not "of" that situation. A truth persists, then, solely through the militant proclamation of those people who maintain a fidelity to the uncertain event whose occurrence and consequences they affirm – those people, in other words, who become subjects in the name of the event.[48]

I will return in more detail to the question of the subject's fidelity in Chapter 2. For the meantime, however, it is enough to say that the *situation* is 'a site where two very different things meet up and interact [...]. It is the name for the place where a certain kind of mixing occurs'.[49] The subject decides to remain faithful to the *situation*, in that s/he witnesses the *events* that come from the void, and s/he will takes on an active *fidelity* becoming (the) subject of (or to) the place.[50] This subject can be active, in Badiou's terms, only in the four *truth* procedures (*situations*) of science, art, politics and love.[51] According to Badiou, *fidelity* involves a subject who 'commits him or

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[46] Michael Pisaro, 'Multiplicity', *Edition Wandelweiser* (1997), <http://www.wandelweiser.de/_michael-pisaro/texts.html> [accessed 23 November 2016].

[47] *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. By Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 203.

[48] Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. xxv.

[49] Pluth, p. 107.

[50] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. xiii.

[51] Nick Hewlett, *Badiou, Balibar, Ranciere: Re-Thinking Emancipation* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 24.

herself to working out the consequences of the occurrence of an *event* in a *situation* for the transformation of that situation'.[52] The *truth* that appears from the fractured *situation* constitutes 'a hole in knowledge';[53] in other words, this *truth* is the opposite of knowledge. In short, the faithful subject cracks open the repetitive *situation*, permitting an *event* to change the (artistic) *situation* from a habitual one into a *true*, incalculable act. The faithful subject is responsible, then, for changing the *situation* via a new *event*.

Pisaro's particular approach to Badiou can be seen in his 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music'—which are directly modelled on and influenced by Alain Badiou's 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art'—, the fifth of which states that '[a] genuine artistic creation springs from a rupture (event) from which a truth procedure (the long term evaluation of what an idea is capable of) follows (or might follow)'.[54] This statement apparently fuses Badiou's third and fifth theses: 'Art is the process of a truth' and "[t]he subject of an artistic truth is the set of works which compose it"'.[55] The rupture which Pisaro mentions—the eventual site from which the truth procedure flows—seem paradoxical: the site on which the truth is founded is a rupture, a void. This seeming paradox is central to Badiou's theory of art, as articulated in his thirteenth thesis: 'Today art can only be made from the starting point of that which […] doesn't exist. Through its abstraction, art renders this inexistence visible'.[56] In his first thesis, Pisaro insists that '[o]ne of the only realms where the words "truth" and "ideal" have any active contemporary relevance is in art'.[57]

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[52] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. xxxii.

[53] Hewlett, p. 34.

[54] Pisaro, 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', *Edition Wandelweiser* (2006), p. 5 <http://www.wandelweiser.de/_michael-pisaro/texts.html> [accessed 23 November 2016]

[55] Badiou, 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art', *lacanian ink*, 22 (2003), <http://www.lacan.com/issue22.php> [accessed 9 November 2016].

[56] Ibid.

[57] Pisaro, 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', p. 2 [accessed 9 November 2016]. The others, one might presume, would be politics, science, and love.

Pisaro's second thesis—'Artistic activity is the infinite exploration of an event along the plane of immanence'—is a fusion, first, of the second part of Badiou's third—'this truth is always the truth of the sensible or sensual, the sensible as sensual', which is to say immanent, that which can be sensed in the world—and his seventh: 'This composition [the set of works which make up the subject of an artistic truth] is an infinite configuration'.[58] In both Pisaro's and Badiou's formulation, the event is a rupture, a void, on which infinite configurations are founded. Yet Pisaro uses his second thesis as a way of introducing ideas more familiar from Badiou's writing more broadly. Pisaro restates his second thesis as follows: 'In other words, our activity, at its most engaging, is the pursuit of an idea (or a concept or an aesthetic), faithfully following its consequences wherever they might lead'.[59] The truth to which one (here, the performer) must be faithful is not of an everyday kind, however. As Pisaro's third thesis has it: 'An artistic procedure is carried out, not as the strict adherence to a clear code or law, but the way in which discoveries of any kind might be pursued: a process which passes through questioning, hypothesis, experiment, doubt, evaluation, and so on, in an endless cycle—without any assurance (other than intuition and the works themselves) that a particular path is the right one'.[60] Pisaro explains the sort of doubt that is at stake not as 'self-doubt, but a kind of openness to the actual result of the work—an avoidance of pre-judgment and a preparedness to evaluate the results of the experiment (or wager) in the light of the decision already taken'.[61] As he puts it, this openness to "what happens" 'is a part of the process of remaining "faithful" to the event'.[62] Below, after considering the distinctions that might be made between Pisaro's

[58] Badiou, 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art', [accessed 9 November 2016].

[59] Pisaro, 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', p. 2 [accessed 9 November 2016].

[60] Ibid., p. 3.

[61] Ibid., p. 4.

[62] Ibid.

approach and those of other members of the Wandelweiser group—specifically Antoine Beuger and Jürg Frey—I examine both what this might mean in the context of Pisaro's music in general and, more importantly for the purposes of this document, what this means for the performer of Pisaro's music.

1.1 Post-Cagean Silence and Antoine Beuger, Jürg Frey and Michael Pisaro's Relationships with Badiou

Pisaro and his post-Cagean Wandelweiser peers (here, specifically, Antoine Beuger,and Jürg Frey) have very similar attitudes towards the aesthetic of silence. Nevertheless, the silence produced by each composer appears to function differently. Pisaro commented that 'Wandelweiser does not embody, as far as I'm concerned, a single aesthetic stance'.[63] This is, at least in part, a result of the differing ways in which silence functions in their musics, differences which can also be articulated through, too, differing relationships to Badiou's aesthetics. In this section, silence will first be discussed from the point of view of Beuger and Frey. Next, their particular approaches will be explored and compared with Pisaro's silence. Subsequently, each composer's treatment of silence and their perspectives on the function(s) of silence, understood through Badiou's aesthetics, will be outlined.

From Beuger's perspective, any sound arising out of *silence* is a cut, an 'event', an 'interruption of what is there',[64] because what is there is the silence (a dense infinite continuum of noise, which Beuger regards as 'the world').[65] Within this context, cuts *are* Beuger's musical material which puncture this infinite continuum to form the

[63] Pisaro, 'Wandelweiser', *Edition Wandelweiser* (2009), <http://erstwords.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/wandelweiser.html> [accessed 21 September 2017].

[64] Barrett, *After Sound*, p. 52.

[65] Saunders, 'Antoine Beuger', p. 231.

composition. Beuger argues, by way of a metaphorical explanation, that all the music that has ever existed or will ever exist comes from the noises, and the performer's task is to 'cut' into these noises to shape any particular music, just as a sculptor uses a chisel to shape his sculpture from raw stone.[66] For Beuger this is an sort of fractal process: even a small cut *itself* contains timeless noises/sounds.[67] Beuger argues that asking someone to 'play an "a" of a certain duration, a certain volume, and a certain tone colour […] is like asking him to write the number pi: he'll do something more or less approaching something else'.[68] Thus, each finite cut leads the performer (metaphorically) to approach the noise continuum to choose what s/he needs 'to be taken out and to be used as elements of a composition'.[69]

Beuger also holds another opinion, in which he considers silence as a 'stillness'.[70] In Beuger's Dutch, the noun *stilte* means not just silence, but also, simultaneously, stillness (it is analogous, then, to the German *Stille*, while *zwijgen*—to keep quiet—has the same relationship to *schweigen*); in so doing, it opens up the possibility for other elements, like the environment or the audience to be 'read' musically. Yuko Zama remarks that

> Equality seems to be the key to Beuger's music – where all the elements including the performers' sounds, the silences, the environmental sounds, and the audience are all considered as parts of the music.[71]

Frey treats a musical situation as a place of infinity that is made up of multiple sounds and silences. For Frey, the performance situation is the 'opening up' of

[66] Saunders, 'Antoine Beuger', p. 231.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 232.

[70] Ibid., p. 238.

[71] Zama, 'Silence, Environment, Performer: Beuger, Frey, Malfetti, Werder, Pisaro', *Surround* (2013), [accessed 3 November 2017].

multiple, potentially oppositional, realms.[72] Philosophically, Frey's realms consist of a *time-space of sound* and a *time-space of silence* overlapping to construct what he terms 'time present' in one place: 'together they form the presence of the play'.[73] Therefore, when sounds appear in the situation, the silences disappear; even the very softest sound counts as a sound. But when the sounds disappear, they leave a musical trace behind, so the silence appears in the situation as a 'permeability', or as the 'physicality of the silence',[74] because, the silence, from Frey's point of view, gets its power (that is, its physicality) when the sound just heard disappears.[75] Thus, sounds come into 'being' by entering the 'border' of the *time-space of silence*.[76] It is important to state that the silence is not influenced as such by any preceding sounds, but that, for Frey, the last played sound makes 'the silence possible […] in order to 'give it a glimmer of content'.[77]

Pisaro sees silence as an 'ever-present void', bringing ruptures of truth from nothing (void), and the listeners' main task is to believe in these ruptures as truthful events initiated to change the situation's auditory knowledge. Clearly this is distinct from Frey, for whom silence and sound are like interpenetrating, balancing spheres, their relationship in constant play. And, though this appears initially close to Beuger's understanding, Pisaro is different in that, while Beuger actively punctures the void—his act of composition *is* a cutting of or into the silence, which is the infinite(ly) dense continuum of noise(s)—, for Pisaro, the void—the silence—is always already placed at

[72] Jürg Frey, 'The architecture of Silence', *Edition Wandelweiser* (1998), <http://www.wandelweiser.de/_juerg-frey/texts-e.html#THE> [accessed 14 September 2017].

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

risk of *being punctured*, as from within, by virtue of, precisely, being a situation in Badiou's term. As Nicholas Melia states it, events

> constitute a "truth" that variously "punches" or "pierces" a "hole" in or "makes" an "incision" into the body of knowledge charged with ordering the situation, but the event itself remains exterior to ontology.[78]

This is to say that Pisaro *places the silence at risk* of the event. The performer must be faithful—a matter returned to below—to this possibility. Indeed, a further key point of distinction between the three is in the position of the performer within this context. In Beuger, the performer is more or less the *agent* of the event (which is to say in the terms outlined in the introduction, Beuger might expect his performer to *represent* the event), while in Pisaro the performer remains attentive, faithful, to its possibility (in which case, as stressed earlier, the performer cannot *re*-present). Frey's music calls the performer to soften the tensional borders between the overlapping sounds and silences.[79]

As suggested, then, Pisaro explicitly links his work to Badiou's philosophy and theory of the event. What follows comprises a general discussion regarding Pisaro's *Mind is Moving (I)* aside, however, from any considerations of performance as such, but in the context of Pisaro's deployment of silence and employment of Badiou's thinking: The *Mind is Moving* series of solo pieces was composed in 1996 (with *Mind is Moving (IX)* added in 2011).[80] I use *Mind is Moving (I*) to explain Pisaro's work from Badiou's perspective, away from any music that I might perform myself, in terms of the listening experience of these pieces and with an ear to what truths, then, might be revealed to someone who encounters a performance of them.

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[78] Nicholas Melia, 'Stille Musik—Wandelweiser and the Voices of Ontological Silence', *Contemporary Music Review*, 30.6 (2011), 471–495 (p. 488).

[79] Frey, 'The architecture of Silence', [accessed 14 November 2017].

[80] Pisaro, 'Mind is Moving (I)', *Timescraper* (1995), <http://www.timescraper.de/_michael-pisaro/catalogue.html> [accessed 16 June 2017].

Pisaro uses Badiou's aesthetics as a way of revealing that his music is a truth-procedure, both implicitly and explicitly. Badiou has described his aesthetics as, in what appears to be a paradox, *inaesthetics*, a term that for him captures the two main aspects of art: its immanence and its singularity. Regarding immanence, art itself is a truth-procedure: it brings truths to light; it *makes truths immanent*.[81] On the other hand, the singularity of art objects insists that the truths of art objects can be found *only* in art.[82] The role of philosophy in this context is to clarify and to make manifest the relationship between immanence and singularity: philosophy does not in itself *produce* truths, but is more like a symptomology, identifying and describing truths in the context of art.[83]

Mind is Moving (I) for solo guitar is a piece presented in 7 sections (1a., 1b., 1c., etc.) lasting different durations. It is not necessary to play all sections; the composer requires that at least 266 beats must be played altogether (each beat equals a count of approximately 3 seconds). Three of the sections (1a., 1f., and 1g.) may be played independently because those sections are longer than the required 266 beats. Subject to these restrictions, the sections may be performed in any order. Every section has a predetermined length; each incorporates both silences and played notes.[84] The composer provides extra silent 'breaths' which appear in the score as separate papers, each of which contains one figure (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 8) indicating the number of (literal) breaths between sections which the performer is required to take; their arrangement can be freely chosen by the performer.[85]

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[81] Badiou, 'Art and Philosophy', in *The Handbook of Inaesthetics,* ed. by Werner Hamacher, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 9.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Pisaro, 'Mind is Moving (I)', [accessed 16 June 2017].

[85] Ibid.

In *Mind is Moving (I)* the guitar is retuned according to partials of the harmonic series on E, starting from the fundamental E of the lowest string:

> The tuning of the guitar is entirely based on harmonics which can be found on the low E string (sixth string). The fifth string is tuned to the eleventh partial (three octaves lower); the fourth string to the seventh partial (two octaves lower); the third string to the ninth partial (two octaves lower); the second string to the third partial (in the same octave—this is the normal tuning); the first string to the seventeenth partial (two octaves lower).[86]

The piece's materials are silences, single notes, dyads, and triads alongside four other types of sound: string noises using finger nails, string noises using finger flesh, ricochet, and the performer's natural whistle. Each lasts, on each occurrence, for a defined number of beats. Each section's contents in beats, and the percentage this constitutes of the total number of beats, in outlined in table 1.

Table 1: *Mind is Moving (I)* outline table

	1a.	1b.	1c.	1d.	1e.	1f.	1g.
Single beats	106 (37%)	25 (40%)	null	23 (23%)	20 (37%)	153 (34%)	95 (35%)
Single notes (duration in beats)	94 (31%)	15 (24%)	4 (50%)	33 (35%)	13 (23%)	140 (31%)	78 (29%)
Dyads (duration in beats)	47 (16%)	23 (36%)	4 (50%)	21 (22%)	10 (19%)	69 (16%)	33 (11%)
Triads (duration in beats)	54 (17%)	null	null	16 (16%)	10 (19%)	66 (15%)	52 (20%)
String noise (nail)	3	2	null	1	1	4	4
String noise (flesh)	5	null	null	1	null	6	1
Whistle	3	3	null	1	null	3	5
Ricochet	7	1	null	3	1	12	4
Total noises	18 (5%)	6 (9%)	null	6 (5%)	2 (2%)	25 (4%)	14 (5%)

Curiously, the other four 'other' types of sounds production together somehow determine the duration of each section or, at any rate, they do in the sole recorded version of the piece, which is Pisaro's own. A more accurate performance, in terms of tempo, would not yield this result, though it is intriguing that, in Pisaro's own hands, this is what occurs. To explain more, as shown in table 2, there is a potential relation between Pisaro's own performance recording durations of his piece *Mind is Moving (I)* and the total counted numbers of the other four sound productions.[87]

[86] Ibid.

[87] Pisaro, *Mind is Moving (I)*, Michael Pisaro, Edition Wandelweiser Records (EWR 0106, 2001), [on CD].

Table 2: Potential relation between Pisaro's recording durations and the other four sound production in *Mind is Moving (I)*

	1a.	1b.	1c.	1d.	1e.	1f.	1g.
Number of noises	18	6	0	6	2	25	14
Pisaro's recording time	18:01	05:57	00:55	05:49	03:24	25:23	15:08

In each section, a short, stopped note (a semiquaver with a *staccato* marking) is played once, in an unpredictable location. Nonetheless, these notes are regular in that they appear within a very limited range of bar lengths, for example in '1a.', '1b.', '1c.', '1d.', and '1g.' the stopped notes are played within bars of 4 beats, '1e.' played within a two-beat bar, and '1f.' played within a one-beat bar.

Concerning the numerical structure of the piece, table 3 shows a detailed analysis of beat lengths within each section, with sections indicated along the left-hand column and the lengths of beats along the top row, such that, for instance, in section 1a., there are 4 events indicated which are a single beat in duration. This tabulation helps to expose the *underlying* structure of the whole piece. Evidently, four numbers—1, 2, 3, and 4—predominate to an enormous extent. One logical hypothesis for why this might be, and why the longer durations are exclusively silences, would be to suggest that the piece is, in the first instance, constructed from a statistical, essentially equal distribution of these numbers, following which what element 'fills' each resulting beat duration is added, according to some other, perhaps equally systematic, chance process. Axiomatically, each single note, dyad, chord, or noise fills each given beat fully; by contrast, if three beats of silence were determined to follow four beats of silence, the result would be a composite beat duration of seven, all of which would be taken up by silence. Though this is necessarily speculative, it accounts both for the general construction of the piece and for the *near* equality of distribution of 1s, 2s, 3s, and 4s. Such a statistical distribution also means that what is to happen next in the piece—from the listener's perspective—is necessarily surprising but in a constrained way: a very

limited number of options is available on the one hand; on the other, the necessarily variable lengths of silences mean that, if the listener is to listen to the piece at all (in any meaningful way), she must always be attentive, including throughout silences, listening to the silences always *as if* they might be filled with noise.

Table 3: *Mind is Moving (I)* sections against durations in beats

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1a.	4	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2a.	3	6	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3a.	1	4	6	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4a.	3	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5a.	1	2	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6a.	5	5	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7a.	2	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8a.	3	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
1b.	3	1	4	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2b.	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1c.	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1d.	3	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2d.	3	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3d.	2	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4d.	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1e.	0	6	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2e.	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1f.	0	1	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2f.	3	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3f.	4	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4f.	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5f.	5	4	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6f.	3	5	5	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
7f.	5	2	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8f.	2	3	4	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9f.	5	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10f.	4	0	3	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
11f.	2	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12f.	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1g.	5	2	5	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2g.	2	3	3	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

3g.	3	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4g.	2	1	6	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
5g.	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6g.	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7g.	4	0	1	5	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total beats	97	103	104	92	5	4	5	8	1	1	1	1	1	0	1

1.2 'Truthful' Listening Experience through Silence

Pisaro's *Mind is Moving (I)* proposes a performance situation in which listeners encounter various sounds and noises. The composer applies a numerical order (a mathematical model which structures the piece's unfolding within certain statistical limits) to determine the duration of the sounds while also using silence as a means to interact with background noise, with this combination in turn becoming a new source of sound. As a result, intended sounds and chance noise adopt the same sonic function; they are both always unpredictable. Pisaro uses extended silent pauses which play a crucial role in opening the composition to situational sounds, which as a result of the process which gives rise to them, as noted above, must be attended to in anticipation of the next 'musical' sound, such that they themselves must be attended to as if they *are* the next 'musical' sound. He arranges these spaces of silences through a numerical process, which frequently appear in variable positions and intervals, for instance at the beginning of a section, before, after, or at the end of a section. These extended durations of silences are a result of combining and eliding the piece's underlying beat durations (1, 2, 3, and 4), which result in varying durations of the noise of everyday life being allowed into the composition. Pisaro uses numerical constraints to organise the alteration between sound and silence which the listener interprets during the performance. *If* the listener is to attend to the piece (and the listener might choose not to), it is necessary that she listen attentively to all the silences, listening *for sound*. She listens to the silences, because of

their length and presence, because she cannot know when the next apparently musical activity will happen, and must act *as if those silences are filled with music*. Pisaro opens the silences to the possibility of musicality. He thus creates the conditions for the multiplication of sonic possibilities by embracing a numerical logic as the means to distribute intended and unintended sounds derived from daily life, so that listeners may experience the performance as an experimental situation.[88] Due to the varying lengths of the periods of silence (short or long), the listeners are pushed to heighten their hearing so they can hear all the sounds from the silence, but with the fear of sudden interruption, an interruption in this case which would be that of the music 'itself'.[89]

Overall, the combination of sounds—notes and noises—positions the listener as an active participant in the performance who listens to all sounds, whether she likes them or not, accepting all the sounds musically. Indeed, the aim of the experimental composer is to 'place the listener at the heart of the experience, seeking a unique hearing on behalf of each listener and dissolving distinctions between listening in "life" and in "art"'.[90] By merging sounds, Pisaro also blurs the boundary between life and art, exploring 'art as life' rather than 'life as art'. Indeed, as Cage sees it, if listeners consider 'life as art', they 'risk falling into aestheticism', because by thinking of sound only in artistic terms they therefore try 'to impose something, a certain idea of life'.[91] Experimental music requires listeners who are accepting of all types of sounds, and for whom music is a concrete encounter towards the creation of the unexpected. Thus, intended notes and silences play an equal part in allowing room for chance sounds to be a vital source of renewal for music in a performance.

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[88] Joe Panzner, *The Process That Is the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 125.

[89] Nancy, *Listening*, p. 12.

[90] Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockkhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 214.

[91] Cage, *For the Birds*, p. 87.

In fact, experimental music demands that listeners consider sounds/noises as a method of changing predictable elements of performance into uncertain ones. Cage himself was one such listener, and even embraced methods which ensured that he would remain surprised by sound, to the benefit of his own compositions and his daily routine: 'The ringing telephone is a recurring metaphor. Cage chose to remain listed in the New York City phone book throughout his composing career as a way of letting a more contingent, distributed, impersonal approach to creativity into his studio'.[92] Unplanned encounters were indeed vital to Cage's experimental performances in general, as they kept listeners on their toes by interrupting or interfering with their habitual sensory engagement with music.[93]

Sounds are distinctive, and point to events which are unpredictable and uncertain, and thus require the listener to be open to new experiences. Listeners can only liberate their auditory senses when they are generous—open to hearing all kinds of sounds without prejudice—, allowing the musical piece to fully unfold during the performance. Cage emphasises this state, suggesting that what the listener must do first and foremost is 'to open one's ears immediately and hear a sound suddenly before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract, or symbolical'.[94] Furthermore, applying Pisaro and Badiou's attentive ways of listening to events as new ruptures shows how even if a listener attends the same performance many times, the results will always be different:

> New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activity of sounds […]. This means that each performance of such a piece of music is unique, as interesting to its composer as to others listening.[95]

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[92] Panzner, p. 67.

[93] Ibid., p. 118.

[94] Cage, *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 98.

[95] Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 10. One might argue that one does—or can—encounter this in *all* music, but it is specifically revealed or disclosed in Pisaro's music, as integral to his approach.

Listeners can be faithful to this silence/openness by accepting all sounds and noises without preference or prejudice. Through their generosity, listeners disregard and forget previous impressions by 'strip[ping] sounds of their habitual meaning […] notes, scales and the conventional forms'.[96] What they hear instead are sounds in themselves, through a faithful exploration of sonic events in all their indeterminate richness, as they let nothing except the sounds of the performance guide their ears, and, ultimately, their minds. As Pisaro phrases it, '[a]nyone should, through careful listening, be able to understand what is happening in one of my pieces'.[97] Elsewhere he observes,

> The consciousness of this way of *sensing* [my italics] would have to come not from a single location, but from the corners of the world. The expanse and the boundary exist everywhere […] [T]he concepts of the incommensurate, of unreachable places, of unmeasurable distances, is a part of everyday life on every continent. This sensitivity, which can be easily experienced by the eyes, is also something which can be taken in by the ears.[98]

In conclusion, Pisaro's *Mind is Moving (I)* is a blueprint for arranging sounds and noise in a performance; it puts forward a situation in which new sound combinations can be explored. These new combinations may arise from the intended sounds or from the intrusion of daily life in the form of noise. What matters is that no sound is the same, and that it is due to the difference in space and time that openness into borderless outcomes is produced. Pisaro's work shows how 'organised openness' through this numerical order can works as a dialectic between openness and constraint, although both produce unforeseen results and, too, come to interpenetrate one another. This practical constraint—such as the strict numerical patterning—may in fact allow for freedom, for the unexpected to occur, thus making the determinate glide over into indeterminacy. It also shows that there is no intrinsic difference between the sounds emanating from the

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[96] Panzner, p. 113.

[97] Pisaro, 'Hit or Miss' (1998), <https://www.wandelweiser.de/_michael-pisaro/texts.html#HIT_OR_MISS> [accessed 10 February 2015].

[98] Pisaro, 'Times Undergrounds' (1997), <https://www.wandelweiser.de/_michael-pisaro/texts.html#Times_Underground> [accessed 26 May 2018].

score and those arising from everyday lives: both are 'just' sounds, events arising through openness by listeners accepting them with a generous spirit, awaiting the outcome of the performance. It embraces sounds with an open mind and open ears, allowing them to become pure events by faithfully following through the effects of the performance wherever they lead.[99]

[99] Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 154.

Chapter 2: Performance Practice of Experimental Music

2.1 Positions on Performance

Richard Schechner divides the act of performance into 'being', 'doing', 'showing doing' and 'explaining "showing doing"', with 'being' referring to the place of the performance (which might be active or static), 'doing' meaning the actions undertaken in that place, while 'showing doing' is 'performing—pointing to, underlining and displaying doing', while 'explaining "showing doing"' is the work of 'performance studies'.[100]

In this context, 'actions' might cover almost any human activity that can be perceived as an artistic gesture. Every action involves years of practice and training, both in the case of art and in one's daily routines; every performance and each everyday action is built on the foundation of many instances of behaviour and experiences. (The routines of daily life are less likely to be practiced intentionally with the goal of excelling in them. It is simply the case that when an individual needs to perform the same action every day, after repeated attempts they 'unconsciously' develop the requisite skills to excel).[101] In these terms, anything whatsoever—any human, which is to say performed, action—can be (part of a) performance, including meeting people, walking down the street, visiting a store, having a cup of coffee, cooking and so on. This also adds up to a sum of performances of, within, and for everyday life, which Schechner terms 'restored behaviour'.[102]

Schechner argued that restored behaviour in fact means: 'me behaving as if I were someone else, or as I am told to do or as I have learned'.[103] An individual's

[100] Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by Sarah Brady, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 28.

[101] Ibid., p. 29.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 34.

behaviour, in this sense, is a collective of anonymous, traditional (aesthetic) conventions.[104] Restored behaviour includes a vast range of actions. In fact, according to one view, all behaviours are sorts of restored behaviour: outcomes of the recombination of aspects of previously learnt behaviours.[105] Necessarily, though, restored behaviours are never 'restored' on the first occasion (even if, on the first occasion, in a way they are not yet 'behaviours' at all).[106] As such, Schechner refers to all habitual actions—and in truth much more besides—as 'twice-behaved'.

In his work, his happenings, Allan Kaprow (1927–2006) applied, albeit *avant la lettre*, Schechner's sense of 'restored behaviour' to artistic situations as 'once-behaved', in the sense that everyday behaviours might be framed, 'organised, performed and displayed' on stage in the same way such things would appear in the everyday life.[107] In doing this, Kaprow sought to dissolve boundaries between art and life; specifically he suggested that 'the line between art and life should be kept as fluid and perhaps indistinct as possible'.[108] Here, then, the performer generally 'tend(s) to "be" nobody or nothing than themselves': the performer is not trying to 'perform', but to 'be' on the stage.[109] Kaprow's happenings include elements which would constitute Schechner's 'restored behaviour': 'cooking, dressing, taking a walk, talking to a friend' might form artistic events in a performance that have been transferred from daily life onto the stage. Kaprow is *close* to everyday life, in the sense that his 'art slightly underlines, highlights, or makes one aware of ordinary behaviour—paying close attention to how a meal is prepared, looking back at one's footsteps after walking in the

[104] Ibid., p. 35.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 36.

[107] Ibid., p. 29.

[108] Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. by Jeff Kelley (California, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 62.

[109] Michael Kirby, 'On Acting and Not-Acting', *The Drama Review (TDR)*, 16.1 (1972), 3–15, (p. 3).

desert'.[110] One might feel that one's actions 'may appear to be new or original',[111] most of the time one probably does not notice either that one is 'acting' nor that that such actions are habitual ('restored') activities ('behaviours'). In Kaprow's happenings, what occurs on stage is the execution of people's restored behaviours *as* artistic events in performance.[112] Kaprow's purpose is to 'make one aware of ordinary behaviour' by 'paying close attention' to any activity in the present moment that may be considered as a performance.[113] In short, Kaprow's work reveals the habitual actions of everyday life simultaneously *as* habit *and* as action. Performance reveals everyday life as performative and, as such, serves to undermine any hard distinction between life and art.

2.2 Non-Matrixed and Matrixed Performance Practice

In theorising such modes of performance, Michael Kirby defined non-matrixed performance as a way of breaking down the 'traditional barriers that separated audiences from performers, professionals from amateurs, as well as what constitutes music from the noise of daily life', as Everett summarises it.[114] In Kirby's view, the non-matrixed performance does not imply any particular, specific idea as it is 'characterised by the deliberate absence of an information structure containing plot and dialogue'.[115] The performer in such performance as Kirby describes it is not 'acting', simulating or impersonating, but functions as a physical bridge for the delivery of actions: the non-matrixed performer, in a sense, *acts* (does) rather than *is acting*

[110] Schechner, p. 29.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., p. 35.

[113] Ibid., p. 29.

[114] Yayoi Uno Everett, '"Scream Against the Sky" Japanese Avant-garde Music in the Sixties', in *Sound Commitments: Avant-Garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. by Robert Adlington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 196.

[115] Yayoi Uno Everett, p. 196.

((dis)simulates). Experimental performance in general, then, tends towards the non-matrixed. In Kirby's non-matrixed performance, the performers 'do not act, and yet they are part of the visual presentation'.[116] For example, in Kirby's article 'On Acting and Not-Acting', he cites the kurombo or kōken of Japanese Kabuki theatre, attendants who are visible on stage, simultaneously within and without the 'action', as non-matrixed performers, arguing that there are 'numerous performances that do not use acting. Many dance pieces would fit into this category'.[117] In the case of the kurombo or kōken, the attendants

> move props into position and remove them, help with on-stage costume changes and even serve tea to the actors. Their dress distinguishes them from the actors, and they are not included in the informational structure of the narrative. Even if the spectator ignores them as people, however, they are not invisible. They do not act, and yet they are part of the visual presentation.[118]

In a non-matrixed representation, an individual does not act; instead, his/her costume symbolises something or someone else. Without portraying a character, the performer focuses exclusively on representing or carrying out certain actions during a performance.[119] Kirby explained that, in a performance of *Oedipus Rex* undertaken in this style, the actor portraying Oedipus might limp in a performance, not because he is pretending to have a limp, but because there is a stick attached to his leg while he is walking normally.[120] Therefore, although the performer's task is to simply carry out the actions and not deliberately limp, the stick forces him to do so and consequently achieves the required purpose.[121] Likewise, the involvement of the stage décor on a performance stage does not have any connection with the performer's activities on the

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[116] Kirby, *A Formalist Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 4.

[117] Kirby, 'On Acting and Not-Acting', p. 3.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., p. 5.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Heile, 'Toward a Theory of Experimental Music Theatre: "Showing-Doing", "Non-Matrixed Performance" and "Metaxis"', p. 345.

stage or the objects frequently found on it, which might have 'no relationship to the action on the stage'.[122] Specifically, Kirby states that, in non-matrixed representation, 'the referential elements are applied *to* the performer and are not acted *by* him', who is still not acting but carrying out actions and activities instead.[123]

By contrast, in matrixed acting as defined by Kirby, the performer's task in the 'acting' category is to pretend, simulate, imitate, represent and impersonate; this may be either bodily or expressively, according to the acting situation.[124] In addition, in such a performance, according to Schechner, the performer's 'entire physical, mental and emotional capability is involved in the portrayal of a character' and is fully related to, wholly subsumed *by*, the character, as one might find paradigmatically in so-called 'method' acting.[125] In short, the better the actor, the more invisible s/he becomes. Eskelin and Tronstad summarise the distinction, adding additional important nuance:

> [M]atrixed performance is when the time and place established on stage differs from the time/place of the spectators—when the performers impersonate fictional characters in traditional theater for instance. The nonmatrixed performance, by contrast, takes place in the same time and place as its audience, and no "acting" is involved—only nonmatrixed "acts" of the nonmatrixed performer.[126]

2.3 Experimental music and/in performance

Experimental music performance, in general, falls under the non-matrixed performance style because, for one thing, the performers' actions do not reflect any emotional or affective representation.[127] In the tradition of Kaprow's happenings, where everyday activities are denuded of their everyday significance through performance on stage, the

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[122] Roselee Goldberg, *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present* (London: Thomas and Hudson Ltd, 2001), p. 188.

[123] Ibid., p. 5.

[124] Ibid., p. 7.

[125] Schechner, p. 176.

[126] Markku Eskelin and Ragnhild Tronstad, 'Video Games and Configurative Performances', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 195–220 (216, n. 25).

[127] Heile, 'Toward a Theory of Experimental Music Theatre: "Showing-Doing", "Non-Matrixed Performance" and "Metaxis"', p. 336.

performers are also presenting less themselves than 'merely' undertaking the right actions at the right time; as Heile describes it in the case of experimental music theatre, the performers' 'actions do not refer to a fictional plot there and then (outside of the time and place of the performance itself) but are solely experienced here and now'.[128] To be clearer, translating Heile's observation into the frame of 'abstract' music, actions which, under other circumstances, one might expect to be shaped into a 'musical' outcome, are, too, undertaken faithfully according to the requirements of a particular score or set of instructions. In passing, one might note that this also enables a reflection on 'musical behaviour', just as Kaprow enabled a reflection on everyday behaviours. As such,

> the experimental performer engages with a task and pursues it with rigour and devotion, and is open to the multiplicity of options which have the potential to radically change each performance of the same piece.[129]

One example is the pianist Philip Thomas's interpretation of Cage's *Music of Changes* (1951), which was composed through a series of chance procedures but is completely fixed and fully notated. He states that here '*the pianist's job* [my italics] is to correctly realize the score, measuring the lengths and distances between events and relating these to the tempi provided' (which may be constant or changing).[130] The performer needs, then, to determine every action faithfully, but for the sake of faithfully undertaking that action only; 'there is nothing in the score to suggest that an interpretation which consciously seeks out shapes within the music', Thomas adds.[131] Accordingly, experimental performers 'willingly adopt a performance approach which is non-interventionist. With alert ears and responsive bodies, experimental performers

[128] Ibid., p. 336.

[129] Thomas, 'A Prescription for Action', p. 76.

[130] Ibid., p. 82.

[131] Ibid., p. 83.

attend themselves to the task at hand [my italics]'.[132] One might compare this to the classical performance tradition which seems closer to what Kirby calls 'acting', particularly in its 'complex' form, in that the performer's role is to shape the given materials into a satisfying, coherent, affective and, above all, *musical* whole, on the basis of musical behaviours which, from the experimental perspective, represent habits. Descriptions of performing Christian Wolff's *Music for Pianists II*, which relies on a complex set of indeterminate relationships between the two performers, stress too this sort of attention, if with a necessarily slightly different nuance, since here one

> simply could not prepare for as many possibilities as one might encounter or rehearse any one of them as many times as one would need to accommodate any contingency. The tension that ensues seems unnerving—or perhaps nerving in the sense that each player in the Duo II had to be fully present in the moment of performance. One could not "lose oneself" in the piece but only stay alert for the piece's constant mutations.[133]

Performers of *Duo for Pianists II* need to consider the interpretation as a decision (or set of decisions) free from any previous relation or any favoured actions approach; certainly,

> [p]laying Christian Wolff's music is very complicated. You are so involved with actually making the sound that you have no chance of emotional indulgence; you have a job to do and it takes all your concentration to do it efficiently—i.e. musically. With this music you learn the prime qualities needed in performing: discipline, devotion, and disinterestedness.[134]

The indeterminate actions in this performance lead to 'blurry boundaries', to use Schechner's term, in which the consequences of actions are unknown to both performers.[135] The indeterminate is used as a tool to remove the performer from pre-determined actions and direct them towards spontaneous ones.

The performer is, here, just as in experimental music theatre,

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[132] Ibid., p. 92.

[133] Michael Hicks and Christian Asplund, *Christian Wolff: American Composers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 26.

[134] John Tilbury and Michael Parsons, 'The Contemporary Pianist (in Conversation with Michael Parsons)', *The Musical Times*, 110.1512 (1969), p. 151.

[135] Schechner, p. 44.

> not given a key that would allow us to "unlock" any hidden meaning and lend coherence to the different elements. The result is a radical openness; both performer and perceiver are free to make of the elements what they will—or, expressed negatively, they have no choice but to make the most of the few hints they get.[136]

Like performers of experimental music theatre—a genre even more obviously liminally between performance *qua* performance and the performance of experimental music—performers of experimental music use their bodies as the source of actions and gestures to make music; they are embodied, through their intentions during a performance, in physical activity and, as a result, 'gesture is not a physical phenomenon, but an *embodied* one'.[137] To elaborate, while the term 'gesture' has been widely used in many fields, Catherine Laws refers here to 'purely sonic objects with certain characteristics, purely physical phenomena (i.e. a particular movement of a musician), or an entity that combines the physical and sonic',[138] such a gesture employing the body as a *vehicle*.[139] Accordingly, the performer concentrates on carrying out such gestures, as there is no music without gesture: indeed, in some senses, gestures *are* music.[140] By contrast, in the case of physical gestures in classical music, the scores do direct the performer's actions, interpretation, and expression, but to provide a given aural result and, as such, bodily movement is simply a result which occurs during a performance (and a result which is, thus, necessarily a consequence of whatever a particular individual needs to do in order to bring about a sonic result, rather than the sonic result being a consequence of the physical activity). Indeed, the

> Western classical tradition is informed by an idea of neutrality and transparency, whereby we are enjoined to disregard the physical actions and

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136 Heile, 'Music, Performance Theatre', p. 3.

137 Catherine Laws, 'Embodiment and Gesture in Performance', in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, ed. by Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore (Orpheus: Leuven University Press, 2014), p. 133.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., p. 134.

> potential idiosyncrasies of a performer and concentrate solely on the sound produced.[141]

If one were to generalise Heile's claim here, allowing of course for the fact that there are doubtless numerous exceptions to such a general rule on both sides of the equation, one might argue that in the classical tradition, the performer in a sense *represents* the composer's notation by becoming someone else, making his/her personality invisible during a performance to represent the ideas of the composer: this is a matrixed performance. By comparison, the experimental music performer presents his/her indeterminate interpretation by being 'there' consciously, ready for the next decision or event: this is a non-matrixed performance.

The performance of experimental music and music theatre would, then, avoid in general a nineteenth-century approach to interpreting the music because, in this arena, in one were to follow the model of Cage, the performer only undertakes 'the required event within the time-frame', without 'making any overtly visual statement'.[142] Cage's experimental music theatre consists, as one might expect from the thinking of Kaprow and Schechner above, of taking everyday life tasks and, by staging them as a non-matrixed musical performance—a 'framing of the event as performance, which distinguishes a disciplined action from an everyday action'—Cage 'allows us to perceive the former as aesthetic or otherwise significant'.[143] For example, *Water Music* (1952) includes not only piano playing but also the tuning of a radio, the blowing of numerous whistles which imitate birdcalls, the shuffling of a deck of cards (which are then dealt over the piano strings) and the shaking of water-filled vessels. The piece is performed, then, by carrying out more-or-less everyday tasks, or ones which could certainly happen in everyday life under a particular set of circumstances, according to a

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[141] Heile, 'Music, Performance Theatre', p. 3.

[142] William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam, NH: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), p. 27.

[143] Heile, 'Toward a Theory of Experimental Music Theatre: "Showing-Doing", "Non-Matrixed Performance" and "Metaxis"', p. 341.

set of predetermined timings, indicated by a stop-watch on the stage. According to Heile, who draws here directly on Kirby and Schechner, Cage's aim was to

> erase the boundary between the inside and outside of the performance event, stressing how everyday situations can be experienced like theatre and how extraneous "noise" can be accepted alongside musical performance and presumably, unplanned events alongside theatrical performance.[144]

The actions in this piece are significantly 'small and efficient, and do not call attention to themselves apart from the sounds'.[145] In brief, a 'performer can execute the prescribed actions as neutrally as possible, with a blank expression and dead-pan delivery'.[146] One might recall here the 'present anonymity' of Kabuki's kurombo or kōken. Moreover, Cage's own statement amplifies the sorts of erasure being performed between actions which might be considered strictly 'musical' and one which are, instead, 'theatrical' or, as he says, everyday:

> There is no categorical difference between what are traditionally considered musical or theatrical, or, for that matter, everyday actions, in this case between playing a couple of notes on a piano, pouring a jug of water, or shuffling a deck of cards. All these actions consist of physical movements that have acoustic results.[147]

One is reminded here, of course, of Laws' description of the combination of the physical and the sonic. One should remember in this context, too, that Schechner and Kirby's own writing in this area were in their earliest versions impelled by descriptions of the then-new performance practice of Cage's music and, vitally, not just his music theatre but perhaps more pertinently the almost 'dead pan' approach of David Tudor.[148]

In Pauline Oliveros's experimental music theatre composition, *Bonn Feier*, 'an environmental theatre piece for specialized and non-specialized performers',[149] she

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144 Ibid., p. 339.

145 Fetterman, p. 26.

146 Heile, 'Music, Performance Theatre', p. 4.

147 Heile, 'Toward a Theory of Experimental Music Theatre: "Showing-Doing", "Non-Matrixed Performance" and "Metaxis"', p. 338.

148 See, especially, Cage, Kirby, and Schechner, 'An Interview with John Cage', *TDR*, 10.2 (1965), 50–72.

149 Amy Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification*, p. 210.

combines stage elements and the environment by framing them, within the context of performance, through 'transform[ing] a city, over as much as a year, into the setting for a range of activities that subvert comfortable assumptions about everyday life'.[150] Her idea was to 'rethink the static, frontal positioning of listeners in traditional concert venues by allowing listeners to wander around the real space of the hall [city] and penetrate the performers' space'.[151] The city is an open theatre.

2.4 Badiou and Representation

In Badiou's writings on performance, theatre never lacks representation as such but remains, immanently, *in tension* with representation.[152] Badiou sees theatre as an assemblage of invariable components where all these components—'a text, a place, some bodies, voices, costumes, lights, a public'—'are gathered together in an event, the performance whose repetition, night after night, does not in any sense hinder the fact that, each and every time, the performance is evental, that is, singular'.[153] Badiou continues by saying that theatrical representation will never abolish chance—evoking Mallarmé's poem, 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' ('A throw of the dice will never abolish chance')—because the very theatrical performance emerges from a trial of chances and theatrical truths are those anchored in this dual fortuity. Simply put, for Badiou representation is an encounter between a given universal text and the inexhaustible variety occasioned by a particular public staging.

Nonetheless, Badiou's arsenal of concepts and axioms must be read as a repeated meditation on the processes of the constitution of representation in his

150 Larry Sitsky, *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 2002), p. 345.

151 Sander van Maas, 'Introduction', in *Thresholds of Listening: Sounds, Technics, Space*, ed. by Sander van Maas (New York, NY: Fordham University Press), p. 13.

152 Jonathan Owen Clark, 'Dance and Subtraction: Notes on Alain Badiou's "Inaesthetics"', *Dance Research Journal*, 43.2 (2011), pp. 51–64.

153 Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano. (Stanford CA: Stanford, University Press, 2005), p. 72.

writings which deal directly with performance and the theatre. However, there is one detail that also needs to be attended to when discussing any type of representation seen as an artistic performance, and that is given by the ethics of it. Alain Badiou offers a unique anti-humanist ethics which consists, as he discusses in his book *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, in the capacity of people of becoming carriers of truths into the world of situations, regardless of the natures of these situations. Even if talking about political, love, artistic or scientific situations, these truth events shatter the pre-existent framework of reality.

In what follows, I discuss how representation and its entire pursuit of beauty in art, as seen by Badiou, may be regarded as being at the outset of artistic truth procedures, but that representation in and of itself is not and cannot be integral to a truth procedure. Artworks require representation in order to be (re-)presented in another situation. Inside the theatre, performers and actors alike are working on representing again, and again, and again, what seems to have been already presented in real life, a sort of repetition/reproduction of sounds, gestures and emotions. As John Brown's *What is Theatre?* states, '[t]here is nothing in the world—what we experience by being alive—that cannot be placed on a stage'.[154] This is to say that, as the truism has it, theatre 'holds up a mirror to nature'. If it *is* a mirror, it may be a revealing one, but its capacity in this respect is to *re*-present, to present again, if insightfully, that which is already known: in this sense, one might imagine that representation *means* 'to disclose the situation'.

There is no doubt that understanding and applying Badiou's philosophy to other domains remains a very complicated endeavour and it is for this reason that there is a

[154] John Brown, *What Is Theatre?: An introduction and Exploration*, (Oxford: Focal Press, 1997), p. 8.

need for additional support especially in discussing artistic manifestations and understanding their representation and production. In discussing *representation*, a very important guide is offered by the German scholar Martin Püchner's account of Badiou's theatre. Püchner notes that philosophy has principally thought the theatre so far through this model of 'representation'.[155] According to Püchner's description of this model, theatre is a domain where the illusion is the key fundament of all representations, presenting an illusion, a fake reality, as paradigmatically in Plato's cave: theatrical presentation is always already re-presentation.

This, then, is in tension with Badiou's insistence that the event as such is something which the situation—the way things are, what 'we all known'—cannot comprehend. Badiou more or less suggests just this, even querying, in *Rhapsody for the Theatre,* "unable to show the revolution, caught in the habit of the State, is theatre not the only art to establish a certain visibility of the State? The only art to show the State?"[156] This is to say: theatre, through representation, can make political situations visible: doubtless this may be valuable, but it suggests strongly that *re*-presentation cannot ground the event. Yet this would recall Badiou's own critique of the State and its apparatus: '"the *State always represents what has already been presented*"'. In contrast to this', as Lavery describes it, thinking of Jean Genet's late theatre, 'the militant of the event, […] is committed to the excessive equality that the state cannot represent, and which he defines, like Genet, in terms of the void'.[157] As Riera argues, 'the state of the situation prohibits the presentation of the void, which is fundamental element for any particularization'.[158] To simplify: the origin of an event must be a void,

[155] Martin Püchner, 'The Theatre of Alain Badiou', *Theatre Research International*, 34.3 (2009), 256–266 (p. 256).

[156] Badiou, *Rhapsody for the Theatre*, p. 206.

[157] Carl Lavery, *The Politics of Jean Genet's Late Theatre: Spaces of Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2010), p. 16.

[158] Riera, p. 3.

in the terms of Badiou's philosophy more generally, in the sense that it must be something which is *absent* from the situation. Lavery's summary is, again, instructive:

> In linguistic terms, the event can be loosely defined as a moment of rupture which shatters the existing 'state of the situation' and discloses the capacity for bringing a different world into being. According to Badiou, the truth of the event resides in the subject's fidelity to the gap in knowledge it has opened up: "[a] fidelity … is not a matter of knowledge. It is not the work of an expert: it is the work of a militant".[159]

To the extent the theatre is representational, then, it is not evental. Importantly, though Brown argues (and Badiou implicitly agrees) that anything that has happened can be re-presented on stage, that is not the *only thing* that can happen on a stage.

Doubtless, this is one reason why Janelle Reinelt, the first theatre scholar to make significant use of Badiou's thought within her own discipline, when she asked 'how does "theatre" meet Alain Badiou?', answered herself: 'Not necessarily at the entry point of his discourse of Art, but perhaps more easily through reference to his ideas about Truth Events and Ethics'.[160] Indeed, Fred Dalmasso's 2011 doctoral dissertation stresses that there have been two principal trends in the application of Badiou's thought to performance: first, through a consideration of the event (Reinelt's work falls into this category, as does that of Adrian Kear); second, through a consideration of the void, as in the work of Matthew Causey or Andrew Gibson. Dalmasso notes, more or less rightly, that the void is a positive notion, which does not lead to nihilism since the situation, declared as void becomes a blank canvas for the unexpected to occur.[161] What this means is that, in fact, given that the void comes to form the eventual site, considerations of Badiou by theatre scholars have, in the main, pushed his discussion of theatre to the side, in favour of the greater applicability and

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[159] Lavery, p. 15.

[160] Janelle Reinelt, 'Theatre and Politics: Encountering Badiou', *Performance Research*. 9.4, (2004), 87–94, (p. 87).

[161] Ibid.

force of the central thoughts of his philosophy.[162] As Dalmasso stresses too 'for Badiou, event and theatre happen only intermittently. For him, the event is a rare occurrence. The event has this in common with a theatre performance, which is only truly exceptional, once out of fifty times, according to Reinelt'.[163] 'Yet we continue to go to the theatre in search of those experiences', Reinelt continues, concluding that 'Badiou's Events are borne on the backs of many non-events'.[164] Regardless, if Reinelt and Dalmasso's point stands, the theatrical event cannot simply be a question of (everyday) representation: the theatrical *event* must stand aside from representation. This is not to say that such an event might not include representation, traditionally conceived, *but* that representation is *aside* from the event. Moreover, *if* the event is central to a particular mode of performance, the performer's role is not, and cannot be, simply to *represent* the event—to shape the performance as an expert actor might—but rather to be a *militant for* the event: 'there is no hero of the event',[165] Badiou says. Rather, '[a] subject is nothing other than an active fidelity to the event'.[166] As will be outlined in what follows, undertaking this looks a great deal like a sort of non-matrixed performance—or simply 'doing one's job', as Thomas might put—except that, recalling Cage, one's feet are a little off the ground.

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[162] Frederic Dalmasso, *Alain Badiou's Transitory Theatre*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Loughborough, 2011), p. 40.

[163] Dalmasso, p. 41.

[164] Reinelt, p. 92.

[165] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 207.

[166] Ibid., p. xiii.

Conclusion

To understand Pisaro's experimental music practices, it is crucial to understand the key ideas that characterise his compositions and his expectations of the performer's artistic interpretations. By focusing on the performer's practical side, Pisaro offers an extension of the post-Cagean and non-matrixed performance traditions, insofar as the performer is urged to create a novel interpretation of the same piece each time it is played. What makes this distinct from other musics where something similar might be said to happen is that he is effectively mapping the idea of 'doing' onto Badiou's theory of the event, with a focus on Badiou's 'faithful subject'. This illuminates his experimental music performance practice and the performer's duty of synthesising Badiou's concept of *fidelity* (faithfulness of a subject to an event) with Pisaro's artistic event. One of Pisaro's fundamental performance requirements is to add the characteristic of making the performance situation a place through which (the) artistic truth might be revealed by a performer's *fidelity*. *Fidelity* means believing that an event (in Badiou's terms, as outlined in Chapter 1) has occurred in a situation and the duty of the subject (or, here, the performer) is to accept it as a true event.

In the following, I show—or reiterate what has been thus far implicit, which is—how Badiou's faithful subject can be mapped onto the performer's faithful interpretation of Pisaro's composition and what it means, in such a context, to be faithful to an event. I will, first, describe a significant scientific event from world history that acts as an exemplar of one of Badiou's particular situations (love, art, politics, or science) before, second, reworking it in the context of Pisaro's music and his performer's (subject's) faithfulness in a musical performance (situation). The astronomical discoveries of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) changed the world. I explain, then, how the subject (Copernicus) and his *fidelity* towards his discovery and

ideas brought this about; likewise, this phenomenon can be mapped onto Pisaro's performer, who, analogously to Copernicus, interacts and immerses her-/himself faithfully into the composition and the inspiration behind it, so as to bring new and truthful artistic interpretations to each performance. The comparative event here is the strength of Copernicus's faithfulness (fidelity) towards the *truth* behind the scientific theory he discovered (heliocentrism), and the *fidelity* of a subsequent subject, Galileo Galilei, towards Copernicus's belief, and his passion and eagerness to bring out (perform) the truth. This *faithfulness* towards a novel belief is the spirit and essence demanded by Pisaro for both himself, as the composer, and his performers, towards his compositions.

A last, but no less fundamental, aim of this section is to show that Pisaro's requirement for fidelity and the theory of non-matrixed performance practice mentioned above are *almost* identical, but with a key distinction, because, although in the experimental music performance the performer ought to follow the score with discipline and accuracy, within this vision of Pisaro's music, the performer is put *at stake* in interpreting the score *faithfully*. This faithful factor gives privilege to a performance and the performer's interpretation a sacrosanct atmosphere, wherein the performer is *solemnly devoted* to embracing any occurrence that happens during the performance, intentional or not, as a truthful encounter. Needless to say, the faithfulness and the non-matrixed performance are linked to help the Pisaroian performer to bring about this moment.

First, however, in order to provide a more concrete conceptualisation of how one is to be faithful to an idea/creation and an event, I outline the case of Copernicus, a Polish astronomer and mathematician, who is widely considered to be among the most influential European scientists in history, and whose research and publications changed the way that we see our planet today. Copernicus was the first scientist to suggest that it

is not the Earth that is the center of the universe, but the Sun.[167] Challenging and defying the theory of geocentrism, a theory (or, to be more accurate, at that time a *fact*) that Western society had fully adopted, Copernicus remained faithful to his ideas and all the inspirations and reasons behind them. In practice, Copernicus persisted with his research and, to perform his ideas out, he moved on to publishing them in his book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*. Following him, Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was compelled by and remained faithful to Copernicus' theories, even in the wake of a condemnation by the Inquisition for heresy, and acted upon them by conducting more extensive research on those theories.

The genesis of Galileo's discovery was his devoted belief in Copernicus' theory: there is a possibility that the theory might change the world and the then-common understandings of the solar system. Mapping this onto Pisaro's expectations of his performers, this *possibility* is a potential idea, a 'could-be' *true event*. Badiou designates this possible event as 'something new', which is to say something that disturbs the habitual happening of a specific situation, be it in art, politics, love, or in Copernicus's case, science.[168] In Copernicus's time, geocentrism represented what Badiou might refer to as a *knowledge* situation: 'everyone' *knew* that the Earth was at the centre of the universe. By contrast, what happens thereafter reveals the possibility of a *truth* event, as in Copernicus's proclamation of heliocentrism.

Since the genesis of the truth has happened *as an effect* of the events that ruptured the knowledge of geocentrism, the rupture in Copernicus's discovery of heliocentrism might be characterised in more general terms as 'a concrete process that starts by an upheaval (an encounter, a general revolt, a surprising new invention) and

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[167] Technically speaking, Aristarchus of Samos (*fl.* second-century BCE) had already proposed a theory of heliocentrism, but this was rejected in favour of Aristotelian and Ptolomaic geocentrism. Though it goes beyond the scope of this thesis, one might extend the argument above to suggest that Copernicus was, in a sense, a *faithful subject* of Aristarchian heliocentrism.

[168] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 16.

develops as fidelity to the novelty thus experimented'.[169] As a result, Copernicus initiated a possible event of truth by the declaration of heliocentrism; this event needed a faithful subject to continue believing in him and to sustain his idea after his death. Galileo had to take the *decision* to become the next advancer of Copernicus's heliocentrism or, as Badiou would describe it, the *subject* of this possibility. Given the necessary uncertainty of his success in persuading others of the truth of what Copernicus had declared, Galileo accepted Copernicus' possible events as a life *wager*,[170] in Badiou's terms saying that '[n]othing permits us to say, "here begins the truth"'.[171]

After deciding to accept Copernicus's (possible) event, Galileo thus accepted the role of be(com)ing a *faithful subject* of this event.[172] Becoming that *faithful subject*, Galileo announced his subordination to Copernicus. Subsequently, Galileo declared that an event has occurred, the event of heliocentrism, and that he cannot yet reason or illustrate its truthfulness.[173] However, he remained faithful to this event by dedicating himself to the interpretation, analysis and experimentation of all its precepts and consequences, accepting any consequent results that arise as a true event.[174] In the words of Badiou, Galileo became a faithful *subject* of Copernicus' events,[175] in which becoming a

> subject (and not remaining a simple human animal) is to participate in the coming into being of a universal novelty. That requires effort, endurance

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169 Christoph Cox and Molly Whalen, *On Evil: An Interview with Alain Badiou* (2001), <http://www.lacan.com/badiou-on-evil.htm> [accessed 16 May 2017].

170 Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, p. 46.

171 Badiou, 'On the Truth-Process', *European Graduate School* (2002), <http://www.lacan.com/badeurope.htm> [accessed 16 May 2017].

172 Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, p. 46.

173 Ibid., p. 46. To be clear: in 'our' terms, Galileo's scientific logic in his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* is no less obviously truthful and persuasive than the Ptolomaic version was to the Catholic Church of the time: Galileo's faith should be understood in that the truth of what he had to say was not 'reasonable' in the context of his own time.

174 Badiou, 'On the Truth-Process' (2002), [accessed 16 May 2017]

175 Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, p. 143.

> sometimes, and self-denial. I often say it's necessary to be the 'activist' of a truth.[176]

So, to be faithful to the event, a subject needs to apply the procedures of *fidelity*, which is, according to Pluth:

> a task, and a process, rather than a state of mind. Fidelity is not one something one can stay still with, as if one could say, "I've had my conversion, I know what's what, and now I'm done". What fidelity requires in Badiou's philosophy is the performance of a series of decisions about the elements of the situation in question, asking whether each one is modified by the event or not.[177]

Galileo took that wager and faithfully followed the process of *fidelity* and thus he became a *faithful subject* of all Copernicus' potential and possible events. From this perspective, Pisaro's musical compositions function as a potential event for the performer to allow a truthful event to emanate. By believing in (being faithful to) Pisaro's composition, the performer thus has faith in the potential events that might (or might not) take place in the (performance) situation, now understood as the possible site of a truthful event. As the performer interprets Pisaro's composition, this action consequently constructs the performer into a subject of truth. Being a subject of truth, the performer has faith in the possibility of transforming the habitual situation (of listening) into something interesting and new, a situation that will never be the same again and that will never be repeated, thus, a 'new event'. To claim (truth*fully*) that Pisaro's compositions and any decisions made by the performer in pursuit of interpreting those compositions might achieve this is a life wager that the performer needs to accept and believe in faithfully. Believing in this wager leads the performer to become not just a subject, but a *faithful* subject in all of Pisaro's artistic events.

By faithfully accepting this wager, the performer will, in effect, base all her/his performing decisions on changing an existing auditory situation (the way 'we all know'

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[176] Cox and Whalen, (2001), [accessed 16 May 2017].

[177] Pluth, p. 97.

how to listen), declaring to her-/himself that the *truth* will be revealed during the performance. The effects caused by these decisions can then construct and confirm that the performer is a loyal follower of the composer's truth procedure, and showing a (metaphoric) spirit in which the performer sets out to place his 'life' at stake—at the stake of following all of the composer's instruction faithfully, as if they concern a massive matter in his life.[178] For instance, the performer treats all musical tasks and duties written in Pisaro's compositions as an *abstract* sets of tasks. Regardless of what happens, the performer must accept that all outcomes are crucial parts of the performance by interpreting them truthfully, and faithfully blend those interpretations into their performance that follows. The tasks that performers carry out are not pre-existing schemes planned beforehand to be performed during the performance, but novel and truthful interpretations of the performer's interactions created simultaneously alongside a performing process. Therefore, all events that happen during a performance are truthful events, and all of them come together to make up the performance. The performer's interpretations of each sound are begun afresh with every performance. The way in which the performer interprets and manages silence during a performance also has to be reignited, with the performer treating each and every silence (if any) with fidelity as a renewed source of sound. By doing this, it then implies that the performer accepts all the consequences of his or her fidelity to the score, as a part of the Pisaroian event.[179] To confirm this perception, Pisaro stated that 'an avoidance of pre-judgment in the light of the decision already taken […] is part of the process of remaining "faithful" to the event'.[180]

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178 Pisaro, 'Roundtable Discussion', *Another Timbre* (2012), <http://www.anothertimbre.com/page146.html> [accessed 23 June 2017].

179 Thomas, 'A Prescription for Action', p. 76.

180 Pisaro, 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', p. 4.

For that reason, a faithful performer makes new interpretations and possible configurations during every performance: each and every decision is crucial during Pisaro's performance. One might argue that this is just as true for Chopin as it is for Pisaro and perhaps it is, but the undertaking of it is the, or at least *a part* of the, central thematic of Pisaro: it is, as Cage might have put it, "[j]ust the same, only somewhat as though you had your feet a little off the ground".[181] One might almost say that one represents this truth in Chopin, but presents it directly in Pisaro.

This is the essence of the spirit of *fidelity* that Pisaro's compositions require. This is the part where the performer, still remaining faithful to Pisaro's piece, might change an (unexpected) situation by introducing new experiences through an unexpected happening. As with all experimental music performers, those performing Pisaro need to be creative during a performance. Whilst being disciplined when following the composer's scores, the performer needs to seek interpretational insights amongst the musical instructions and develop sometimes limited score elements into something distinctive. Gottschalk suggests the attitude a performer should take when facing any sonic possibility as unknown consequences during a performance, as well as the methods to manage the outcomes from it. According to Gottschalk,

> There is a score, or at least a set of clear instructions. The performers are faithful to that score, and do not deviate from it. Their actions are completely prescribed. The element of surprise and the substantial differences from one performance to another are not results of the performers' choices, but of their timing, tuning, playing technique, the instrument, and the acoustic qualities of the performance space. These pieces require faithful execution, but the result is especially dependent on one or more of these factors.[182]

What is unique in the interpretation of Pisaro's music is that, although it possesses almost exactly the same characteristics as the experimental music tradition and the non-

[181] Actually, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, quoted in John Cage, 'Julliard Lecture', *A Year from Monday* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1967 1952]), p. 96.

[182] Gottschalk, p. 14.

matrixed performance, the Pisaroian performer is, in addition, committed fully to the score and the analysis of the score, to be open to each and every consequence, in a spirit not quite of discipline, but rather of *faith*.[183] To explain more, Pisaro referred to Tudor's practice as one of the sources for his ideas:

> to realise or make a version of a piece is not to compose one. David Tudor did sometimes write out versions of some of the pieces he played […] he seemed conscious of the fact that he was doing the work of interpretation, trying, as in all notated music, to represent as *faithfully* [my italics] as possible whatever was indicated by the images and words of the score.[184]

So, the Pisaroian performer is not only faithful to the score, but to her-/himself as an interpreter and the intent behind the analysis of the score.

Pisaro himself understands the relationship between scores, fidelity, and events in similar fashion:

> I think that "being faithful" to a score means that one finds the things in It [*sic*] that are genuinely relevant to one's own concerns as a musician (even if, as can be the case, one discovers those concerns in the score one is performing). So for me our music is really no different in this sense than any other music with instructions/notes/changes, etc., […] I cannot prove that an event occurred, let alone that it should be important for people who do not see anything there. I'm also not saying that this is the only possible candidate for an event of that time or the only way of seeing this particular event. I can only believe it happened and hope to act (i.e. make music) in a way that reflects that belief. I think that I will spend the rest of my life trying to follow the implications of what happened, which I imagine is the case for (most of) the rest.[185]

Therefore, Pisaro constructs the subject (the performer) to be, as it were, a conscript of and for the truth, to make the performer take complete care while dealing with his artistic situation. As a result of the performer's fidelity to the event, the truth would shine through, which ultimately helps to bring the score into the performance's situation.

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[183] Pisaro, 'Roundtable Discussion', [accessed 23 June 2017].

[184] Pisaro, 'Writing, Music', p. 44.

[185] Pisaro, 'Roundtable Discussion', [accessed 25 July 2017].

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Appendix I: Commentary on Performing Pisaro's Piano Works

This commentary discusses my performance of Michael Pisaro's piano compositions, including rehearsing, learning and recording the pieces as well as interpreting them in the context of the experimental performance practice tradition and the philosophical thoughts discussed in previous chapters. Furthermore, I conduct in-depth examinations of and reflections on my recordings of Pisaro's piano pieces. The pieces that I have recorded are: *fields have ears (1)*, *C. Wolff*, *Les Jours, Mon Aubépine*, *floating, drifting*, *half-sleep beings*, *time, presence, movement*, *pi (1-2594)*, *fade*, *distance (1)*, and *akasa*. I specifically selected these pieces from Pisaro's vast collection to reflect on the proposals made in previous chapters regarding performance practice and non-matrixed performance and Badiou's philosophy of the event and the implications of the Badiouan term *fidelity*.[186] Thus, this commentary is, simultaneously, a reflection on what I personally encountered in (and with and through) these pieces. I attempt to highlight the difficulties—including wholly practical ones—I faced when rehearsing, learning and recording the pieces while applying the aesthetics of experimental music tradition, including Pisaro's thoughts, as well as his musical interpretation of Badiou's (in)aesthetics, and to explain how I overcame those challenges, as well as highlighting what is gained through taking such an approach.

fields have ears (1)

Fields have ears (1), which was composed in 2008, brings together the sounds of daily life, including those usually heard in a School of Music under one roof, as it were. Specifically, this piece requires the use of a field recording, comprising twenty minutes of unintended/natural sounds, which should have been captured in real time and be

[186] Pluth, p. 97.

reproduced in a performance environment using four-channel speakers (that is to say, quadraphonic speakers): each speaker presents five minutes of the total twenty. Additionally, electronically generated pink noise (filtered white noise) should be mixed with the recording. Each of three stretches of pink noise has a duration of four minutes, equally divided across the four speakers (each speaker produces one minute of pink noise during the specified stretch). The pink noise starts at three points during the whole composition at 4'30", 9'30" and 14'30" with each stretch lasting four minutes. For example, the first period of pink noise starts at 4'30" from speaker one, 5'30" from speaker two, 6'30" from speaker three and 7'30" from speaker four. The second period starts at 9'30" from speaker one, 10'30" from speaker two, 11'30" from speaker three and 12'30" from speaker four. Finally, the last pink noise stage starts at 14'30" from speaker one, 15'30" from speaker two, 16'30" from speaker three and 17'30" from speaker four.[187] Furthermore, there is also a sequence of 20 sine tones which appears every minute, the first tone in speaker one, the second in speaker two, the third in speaker three, and so on. Therefore, each minute of the 20-minute piece has a different sine tone frequency: C1 (65 Hz), D1 (74 Hz), F1 (86 Hz), G1 (99 Hz), Bb1 (115 Hz), C (132 Hz), Eb (154 Hz), F (176 Hz), Ab (205 Hz), Bb (234 Hz), c# (273 Hz), d# (312 Hz), f# (364 Hz), g# (417 Hz), b (486 Hz), c#1 (556 Hz), e1 (648 Hz), f#1 (741 Hz), a1 (865 Hz) and b1 (988 Hz).[188]

The piano part contains 33 musical measures, each measure containing a note or notes of specific length(s) and pitch(es). Time code indicates where measures are to begin, such that the first measure begins at or around fifteen seconds, the second at or around thirty seconds, with an underlying tempo of around 52 to 60 crotchet beats per minute. The sustain pedal is depressed throughout. Furthermore, there are just two

[187] Pisaro, 'Fields Have Ears (1)', *Timescraper* (2008), <http://www.timescraper.de/_michael-pisaro/catalogue.html> [accessed 28 February 2018].

[188] Ibid.

levels of dynamics: *pp*, which Pisaro directs is a level which merges with the field recording, and *mp*, which is to be slightly louder than the field recording.[189] Several measures are to be repeated: the measure beginning at 2'15", a dotted minim B-flat, is to be repeated three times.[190] What is essential in these repetitions is that each successive note should be played softer than the preceding one until the number of repetitions the composer has set is achieved.

My version of *fields have ears (1)* was recorded in November 2014 and uses a very different sort of field recording from Pisaro's version. Pisaro recorded his in Val Verde, California,[191] whereas my version was recorded in Leeds city centre. This setting was chosen in order to explore another sound surrounding that could, while remaining in line with Pisaro's intended compositional outcome, provide a 'natural' field surrounding. A location near an industrial area in Leeds was identified: this location was chosen both explicitly to generate different ambient results from Pisaro's field version (his field recording is audibly taken from a more-or-less rural area, like a state or national park, or some similar area), and because it would be highly likely to comprise unintentional sounds in which no acoustic occurrence was arranged on purpose. It was also a sort of park, though, in this case, a car park. The recording was taken with a Zoom recorder and two external microphones. I set up the Zoom recorder, walked nearly ten metres from where I had placed it and set a 20-minute timer on my phone to alert me when to end the recording session. I distanced myself from the recording area to avoid any intended sounds on the recording.

At the end of the 20-minute recording, the outcome was a reflection of the usual audio sounds of the location, the sounds of everyday life in that place, which included

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

sounds that could not be discerned by our ears. It is necessary to bear this in mind when listening to the field recording, as the recorder has an objective 'view' of all the sounds, unlike our subjective norms, such that typically we only hear what interests our ear or what we hear is conditioned by what we see. Most people do not concentrate on or pay attention to such sounds, even though they are audible; people do not stop to listen to or record them intentionally (possibly because they consider them noises rather than musical sounds).

Regarding what was heard, the sounds in the field recording can be divided into three types: natural sounds (e.g. the wind, birds chirping and rustling leaves), industrial sounds (e.g. rumbling of passing aeroplanes, trucks, chainsaws, sledgehammers and drills) and human sounds (e.g. people walking and chatting near the microphones). These sounds differed from those highlighted in Pisaro's field recordings, which included only typical park sounds, such as the chirping and squeaking of birds and squirrels, sounds of insects, although the occasional aeroplane noise can also be heard. Pisaro's recording lacks the sounds of humans and of industry; in a clichéd sense it performs 'nature'. Conversely, my version includes just those sounds, without being any less a field recording or any less ambient: in a way it opposites Pisaro's own 'natural' recording with a 'cultural' one, even if, in another way, it is no less 'natural' a recording.

The second stage of the recording was the live piano portion, which was recorded at Leeds Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall (School of Music, University of Leeds). While performing the piano part (after many rehearsals), the field recording and electronics were played back simultaneously through quadraphonic speakers, rather than, as might theoretically be undertaken, later dubbing the field recording over the recording of my live piano.

From Pisaro's perspective, all kinds of sounds are welcomed as music.[192] As such, *fields have ears (1*) can be seen as a type of intervention—in which the 20-minute field recording, the live piano section and its electronics set-up (pink noise and sine-tones) are all gathered in one pre-determined recording because the composer roughly determines the broad idea of when/what things will happen—by allowing unlimited freedom to be open to any possibility that might occur due to this openness.

C. Wolff

Pisaro's solo piano piece *C. Wolff* was composed in 2014. The piece, which contains 13 sections and 31 measures, is divided into 2 parts. Each of the smaller sections finishes with a double bar line, while an empty bar, bar 14—with a *fermata* over the rest—divides the larger parts from one another.[193] According to this reading, the first part begins at measure 1 and ends at measure 13, and the second part continues from measure 15 until the end of the piece at measure 31.[194] Measure 17 is also an empty measure, but containing no rest marking (nor any other musical element).[195] The sustain pedal is to be depressed throughout the piece, including during the silent measures 14 and 17. The pedal is released only when the performer comes to the end of the piece. Rhythmically, the piece comprises semi-breve notes, semi-breve rests, minim notes, dotted minims, crotchet notes and quaver notes, but across its course, the piece gradually slows, which is evidenced by the relative increase in the use of long notes (which are often accompanied by a *fermata*) and the relative decrease in the use of

192 Pisaro, 'Eleven Theses on the State of New Music', p. 6.

193 Pisaro, 'C. Wolff', *Timescraper* (2014), <http://www.timescraper.de/_michael-pisaro/catalogue.html> [accessed 23 February 2018].

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

shorter durations. Although the score describes the tempo as 'quite slow', there is no more specific tempo marking to indicate the particular dimensions of that slowness.[196]

Each of these 13 sections' measures ends either with a semi-breve note or a minim note (dotted minims appear only twice, in section 12). In addition, there is a semi-breve rest in section 6, and an empty measure in section 7. However, the endings of sections 2, 3, 7 and 9 have no *fermate*, but instead natural note/rest durations. This causes the sounds of the piece to be sustained in certain limits according to their ending types. What is more, the penultimate measure of section 7 ends with a natural note, and the final measure contains no musical notes or rests, only a 'void'. I have devised three hypotheses regarding the final measure of section 7; these have helped me to interpret the empty measure within my performance. The first hypothesis is that the emptiness could be played as a silent pause, similar to the previous pause in measure 14, section 6. This is because they have the same function (a silent pause), which makes the ending of section 7 a semi-breve with a *fermata*. The second hypothesis is that the time could be replicated similarly to measure 5 in section 2, measure 8 in section 3, measure 16 in section 7 or measure 23 in section 9, because these all end with no *fermata*, and the empty measure has no *fermata*. My third hypothesis concentrates on the aesthetics of Pisaro's philosophy. From Pisaro's perspective, one might argue that the empty measure in section 7 should be dealt with as an 'empty space',[197] following his opinion that silence is an 'ever-present void' in which the sounds of the environment are present as part of the performance.

My first two hypotheses were helpful but flawed: they do not reflect a strong relation to the *emptiness* of the measure, because they are related to a specific time indication, while the empty measure is not. By contrast, I think the third hypothesis,

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[196] Ibid.

[197] Gottschalk, p. 135.

related to Pisaro's aesthetics, is the most effective way of interpreting the empty silence. This approach shows that there is a potentially or theoretically unlimited duration of silence within section 7 and that the performer should interpret its length as he or she sees fit.

According to Gottschalk, Pisaro considers emptiness not to be a restrained musical pause, but rather as a way to escape from the usual structure of time. He is not '"telling time" but creating a space in which the listener can find his or her own time. The piece becomes, not a duration to mark, but a space to occupy'.[198] In order to further stress the relevance of how sound structures the time in section 7, Pisaro suggests that:

> [I]t has become possible to see time as having its own structure: not as something imposed on it from the outside by music, but which is already present, which exists alongside the music […] time is marked by sound and becomes perceptible. We register through change.[199]

In other words, the empty space in section 7 imposes a situation that helps to 'shut out' the last sustained sounds, thus shifting the focus of the performance toward the sounds of silence.[200] The empty measure works by changing the performance state, reducing the intended sounds to accept the outer sounds. The main difference of this silence, compared with the other silent pauses, is that it does not have a time limitation; that is, there is 'not a duration to mark'.[201] As Pisaro has it:

> An empty sound, as I was thinking about it, is in a somewhat different realm than the purely acoustic. This has to do with a guess that when our mind is away or focused on something else, there's a kind of acoustic inattention: perhaps a more profound gap or emptiness than when the sound of a piece stops. Of course, I'm not a neuroscientist, so this is merely a guess. But it is something I think we all experience when we ask: What just happened? How did we get here all of a sudden, without experiencing the stages between?[202]

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198 Gottschalk, p. 135

199 Pisaro. 'Time's Underground', [accessed 20 February 2018].

200 Ibid.

201 Gottschalk, p. 135.

202 Lucas Schleicher, 'Michael Pisaro: A Conspiracy Against the Ordinary', *Interviews and Features* (2012), <www.brainwashed.com> [accessed 23 May 2018].

Regarding the length of the measure 17 within section 7, if the length of pause is longer, it will create what Pisaro calls a "stable contingency", which is to say "that apparently just about anything can happen at any time", including the continuation of the silence. However, this ongoing silence is, also in Pisaro's terms, an "unstable continuity" because the silence is always already 'threatened' by the possible arrival of the next note, in measure 18.[203] The longer the pause, the less strong the listener's memory of the previous played sounds will be: stronger will be, increasingly, the sound of silence, of the pause. In thinking about this I followed Gottschalk's description of Pisaro where she says that these silent intervals 'have the effect of putting the listener more deeply into the time and space of the performance [… and] during the long silences [the listener] finds herself lacking sufficient musical material to draw that attention'.[204] The longer the pause, the more likely it will be that the listener will hear this pause as a structural division. During my rehearsals I practised both long and short pauses in order to assess what duration suited the piece most effectively, a calculation to which I return below.

During my rehearsals, the basic issue I faced with this piece was determining the tempo that Pisaro had described as 'quite slow', an indication of the score's pulse. Traditionally, *adagio* would indicate 'quite slow' and a reasonable *adagio* tempo range is between 62 and 70 bpm, so I determined the piece's tempo to be within this, rather traditional, range. Furthermore, I analysed the tempo from the only recording of this piece to see how another pianist interpreted its tempo. The pianist Reinier Van Houdt plays the piece between 62 and 65 bpm which is roughly within the *adagio* range outlined above. As such, I determined the tempo range for my own performance to be at the lower end of the range, roughly 62–64 bpm.

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[203] Schleicher, 'Michael Pisaro: A Conspiracy Against the Ordinary', *Interviews and Features* (2012), <www.brainwashed.com> [accessed 23 March 2018].

[204] Gottschalk, p. 144.

The piece is played at a 'quite slow' tempo, along with the *piano* dynamic, the extensive use of *fermate* and long-duration notes. This provides a situation of calmness and slowness in which there are restrictions in terms of the rhythmic choices available. For example, even though all bar two measures containing notes begin with a quaver or crotchet, indicating a moderate speed, each ends with a longer rhythmic duration. During my rehearsals, I made sure to interpret the piece in a slow and restrained way, which I reinforced by using calm musical gestures, not *emphasising* any of the piece's musical characteristics, but rather trying to *occupy* its musical space.

In addition to the process outlined above, I practised each section individually in terms of my analysis of the piece, to gain a better understanding of how the work unfolds within each section. This allowed me to interpret each section's elements individually and to understand their limitations. In my practice sessions, I was able roughly to pre-determine the length of the empty space in section 7, which I conceived of, following Pisaro's interpretative hints mentioned above, as indicating the need to pause until the previous sounds had been 'shut out', which is to say *precisely* until I judged that silence *qua* silence had begun. I endeavoured to move on to the next measure at exactly the point at which the 'void' had become perceptible. This, for me, in the case of a studio recording, seemed to take a relatively brief 15 seconds. Conceivably, in a concert performance, however, that pause could be significantly longer, perhaps even lasting several minutes.

Les Jours, Mon Aubépine

Les Jours, Mon Aubépine (2012), a solo piano piece, comprises 24 measures, which Pisaro calls 'capsules'. The capsules can be played once each (in any order) except for the sixth capsule (a long silence) which may be repeated 'a few times' and the seventh

which may be repeated once.[205] Between each capsule—and perhaps implicitly, then, even *before* the first capsule and *after* the last, though Pisaro does not say so—the pianist is to introduce silent pauses of varying duration. The performer can determine the length of these pauses, but none should be longer than the 'long silence' of capsule VI (Fig. 1). In capsules XI and XV, the given pitches are to be read instead as pitch classes: each note may be played in any octave. The same is true of the first half of capsules XVI and XVII; in the second half, pitches must be played where they are located on the score. The dynamics of the piece are *ppp, pp, p, mp* and *mf*, although the loudest appears only once, demonstrating a generally soft dynamic level, an impression amplified by the multiple possible repetitions of the silent sixth capsule (which is surrounded too, necessarily, by other, shorter silences). The sustain pedal is depressed throughout, even during the silent capsules and other silences between each capsule. Finally, the tempo of the piece is approximately 40 crotchet beats per minute (bpm), although Pisaro observes that it may 'vary as much as 20% from the tempo'.[206]

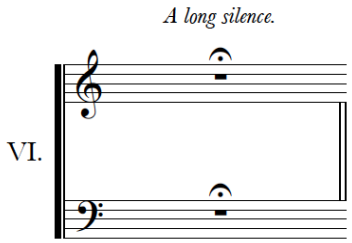

Figure 1: The prolonged silent measure in *Les Jours, Mon Aubépine*

Rhythmically, throughout the piece, there is a variety of note values: semi-breves, (dotted) minims, (dotted) crotchets, and quavers. The capsules either end with a note or a rest, some of which are accompanied by *fermate*. There is no absolute consistency,

[205] Pisaro, 'Les Jours, Mon Aubépine', *Timescraper* (2012), <http://www.timescraper.de/_michael-pisaro/catalogue.html> [accessed 23 February 2018].
[206] Ibid.

but typically the final event of a capsule has a long duration; when capsules end with a crotchet rest, these rests are always extended ones.

The score scarcely indicates how to articulate the tones, with the exception of four crotchets carrying *tenuto* markings. These notes are to be found in capsules III and XXI (F5), capsule XVI (B3) and capsule XVII (G4). Pisaro notates three breath marks within capsule XXII that result in short breaks and help to produce a slight separation between the notes within this capsule.

Between each capsule there is a pause, which must, as noted, not be longer than the duration determined for capsule VI.[207] Thus, to determine the pause lengths between the capsules, I needed to determine the approximate duration for capsule VI. Through the score directions, Pisaro has given the performer the choice, during the performance, to flex the general tempo of 40 bpm by about 20%, which is between approximately 32 and 48 bpm. At 40 bpm, the semi-breve of capsule VI would last 6 seconds; 20% slower, it becomes 7.2 seconds and 20% faster, 4.8 seconds. There is, too, a *fermata* extending whatever duration may be selected. In general, I have conceived of this as remaining at or around 40 bpm, leading to a range in performance of 7–9 seconds, including the *fermata*. It is worth mentioning that capsule VI and the pauses before and after have a similarity with measure 14 in *C. Wolff*. This is because they indicate the activity of pausing. However, in *C. Wolff,* at the empty space in measure 17, there is no musical mark that indicates a specific activity for the performer to accomplish, but only a space where the performer needs to do nothing but be open to the silence.[208] Mainly, all types of pauses and other silence indicators (empty spaces) produce an opportunity to represent/welcome the performance's indeterminate sounds as part of the score's outcomes.

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[207] Ibid.

[208] Gottschalk, p. 30.

During my rehearsal, I made sure that I dealt with each capsule as an individual piece to understand the restrictions and freedoms associated with each of them. This approach focuses on each capsule's technical elements (tempo, rhythm and dynamics) by exploring/practising them in more depth. In addition, I dealt with each capsule according to its specific requirements, such as repetition times, note arrangements, and ways of interpretation. I also used the pauses provided as separations between each capsule for breaking down the performer's control of sounds and by letting the silences appear as an external source of sound: these pauses work as a tool for resetting the performer's mind for the next capsule and preparing the next gesture as if it were *wholly* new. As in non-matrixed performance, the body should not do more than the gesture requires: the gesture itself is (self-)sufficient and each capsule is to be prepared/performed as a new occurrence independent of previous and subsequent capsules. Later, I practised the capsules in succession to pre-determine—though roughly, allowing for the possibility that in performance I might decide against these pre-determinations—their sequence and their pause lengths, depending on my subjective preference or under some circumstance that I will discuss below. These interpretive directions provide a thorough understanding of each capsule to structure the realisation of them in sequence. Also, of course, I made sure to only repeat capsules that are allowed to be repeated during a performance (capsule VI a few times and capsule VII once), and I pre-determined where each note would be played within any octave, such as in capsules XI and XV and the first part of capsules XVI and XVII: these decisions were invariant in performance.

Rather than pre-determine any fluctuation in tempo, I aimed, if *loosely*, to keep to the central tempo of 40 bpm throughout, but did not adhere to this rigidly. I inserted capsule VI between other capsules on a few occasions, such as in the middle and at the end of the recording session. However, during a live performance, capsule VI might be

played a few more times than it is on the recording, as suggested by Pisaro who mentions that it '[m]ay be repeated a few times during the piece'[209] (and also played in succession—one version of capsule VI might immediately follow another version of capsule VI—for a longer silent pause). The performer uses her/his subjective preference to determine how many times capsule VI might be played, to decide how many times constitutes 'a few'.

Under certain circumstances, the performer might face a(n unreasonable) limitation given by the concert organiser to perform this piece for a shorter period than its instructions require (and that demand might be made too late in the day to adjust pre-determined decisions). Thus, the performer is obliged to follow such regulations by experimenting and evaluating the proper way to adjust the piece to fit the requirements, for instance, accelerating the piece's tempo between the legal range, limiting capsule VI repetition times and reducing their pause durations. Of course, one might also simply not perform the piece under such conditions. A similar situation occurred with the performance of Cage and Tudor at the Donaueschingen Festival in Germany in 1954. The piece they were due to premiere was *34'46.776"*, which was to be played, as the title indicates, for more than half an hour. The concert organiser Heinich Strobel was anxious about the length and suggested that Cage needed to shorten the length of the piece to fit with the performance requirements. Eventually, Cage re-titled his new version and reduced its length for this festival, here simply by cutting some two thirds of the material of the piece entirely: the new title *12'55.6078"* indicated its new duration.[210]

Another factor that the performer might consider when applying these extended pauses are that some listeners might find these pauses interesting and others might miss

[209] Pisaro, 'Les Joures Mon, Apiane', [accessed 23 September 2018].

[210] Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockkhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 160–2.

the point that silent pauses *are* the sounds. Again, a similar situation can be found in the history of performances of Cage's music: famously during the premiere of *4'33"*, '[p]eople began whispering to one another, and some people to walk out. They didn't laugh—they were irritated when they realized nothing was going to happen, and they haven't forgotten it 30 years later: they're still angry'.[211] In short, pre-determined decisions might be changed in light of unexpected circumstances. The performer needs to adapt the piece with sense and care as part of the process of rehearsal and performance.

floating, drifting

Pisaro's *floating, drifting* 2001 contains ten 'sections' that are played in a specific numbered sequence (1–10). Each section contains a number of semi-breves, each of which has a duration of eight seconds (Fig. 2). These semi-breves are arranged as single notes or as dyads. Each section contains either one or two of these single notes or dyads, such that the sparsest section contains just one note and has a duration of eight seconds, while the densest contains four notes and has a duration of sixteen seconds. Each of these sections is to be repeated between one and ten times, with each possible number of repetitions from 1 to 10 appearing on a single occasion. As in *mind is moving (1)*, discussed above, a simple numerical strategy seems to generate relatively complex results and, as there, one cannot be exactly sure what the underlying process is, though some speculation is possible. The number of units in a section seems to be arranged in a decreasing mirror, such that reading from the bottom one sees, in sequence, three two-element units and one one-element unit (2,2,2,1), followed by, from the top two two-element units and one one-element unit (2,2,1), framing the central part of the mirror, which could be read in either direction—2,1,2—but is, in

[211] Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, p. 65.

either direction a further decrease of the general pattern (2,1, then simply 2), such that the structural elements in this sense, redistributed, read: 2,2,2,1; 2,2,1; 2,1; 2.

Laid out as they appear in the score, a similar process then seems to govern whether a single note or a dyad appears. Reading the first eleven semi-breves in sequence is arranged as: 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1. That the expected next element, 2, does not appear does not undermine the sense that something systematic is being undertaken in order to generate the piece's variety from quite simple means: arguably the process collides here with a similar approach read backwards from the end of the score—1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1—where rather than the numbers of absolute repetitions decreasing, the number of times a '1' appears before it is interrupted by a '2' governs the process. A similar way of thinking, then, means that the ten sections are repeated, as noted, from one to ten times, so that the shortest possible section, number eight, comprises a single repetition—of a single note and a dyad—with a duration of sixteen seconds and a total of three notes. The longest section, section 10, is not the densest, however; the section consists of eight repetitions of two single notes, thus having a duration of 128 seconds and sixteen notes in total. The densest section, section 6, consists of seven repetitions of two dyads; the duration, then, is 112 seconds, but it contains 28 notes (almost twice its nearest rival, which *is* the tenth section).

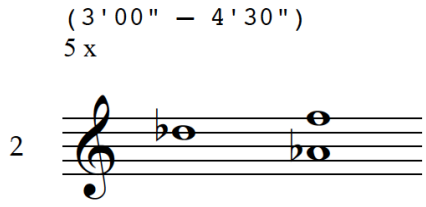

Figure 2: Section 2 from the piece *floating, drifting*

During my rehearsals, I divided the score into individual sections in order to practise them as single segments comprising their own singular durations of sound and silence. This allowed me accurately to sense and understand how to tackle each section

by following and being aware of each particular duration. Thus, I practised playing them from different starting points to establish a comprehensive understanding of their freedom within their limited time boundaries. Later, I created a table that helped me roughly to pre-determine my starting time for each section and predict the approximate ending time. For example, if I were to start playing the first section at the exact time of 0'30", in theory it would finish at 2'06", and so forth with the other sections as seen in table 4. The subsequent silence, then, begins once the final repetition of the section has sounded; the next section can be started at (but not before) 3'00" and, in any case, no later than 4'30". Thus, each section mostly has an unspecified (floating) beginning; however, once the performer has started the section, the ending time will be determined in advance, unless the performer drifts. The ending of a section is the starting of the sound of silence; however, both sound and silence are integral to the piece's temporal continuity: as Eva-Maria Houben, another member of the Wandelweiser collective, puts it, by definition, '[t]he sound of the piano decays. […] It appears by disappearing, starting to disappear just after the attack. In disappearing it begins to live, to change. The piano: an instrument, that allows me to hear how many ways sound can disappear. There seems to be no end to disappearance'.[212]

Table 4: *Floating, drifting* section detail

Section	Time bracket	Repetitions	Duration	Ending time from the first licit start point
1	0'30"–1'20"	6x	1'36"	2'06"
2	3'00"–4'30"	5x	1'20"	4'20"
3	6'00"–8'40"	2x	0'16"	6'16"
4	9'00"–10'50"	4x	1'04"	10'03"
5	12'00"–13'30"	10x	1'20"	13'20"
6	15'00"–16'00"	7x	1'52"	16'52"
7	18'00"–19'40"	9x	1'12"	19'12"
8	21'00"–23'40"	1x	0'16"	21'16"

[212] Eva-Maria Houben, 'Presence – Silence – Disappearance', *Timescraper* (2010), < https://www.wandelweiser.de/_eva-maria-houben/texts-e.html#Houben_Presence> [accessed 12 June 2018].

9	24'00"–26'00"	3x	0'48"	24'48"
10	27'00"–27'30"	8x	2'08"	29'08

Even if I unintentionally flex the boundaries of some sections during my performance, I am aware of each section's limitations, and aware of them on the basis of each section as a singular entity, which acts as a sort of correction mechanism, especially as part of the process of working in this way involves a particular commitment to each section as (equally) important in its own right. In a sense, working in this way means a refusal to countenance any succession which undermines the individuality of any particular, unique section, while still accepting that these sections necessarily occur in a particular order. This, then, is not about fidelity to the score, as such, but about a broader commitment to *being* faithful.

As Gottschalk describes it, Pisaro 'does not control the time but acknowledges its conditional ebbs and flows. Sounds come forth and bring their own logic and necessities, both in the writing process and the listening process. Time is not *told,* but occupied and discovered'.[213] This leads to a locally instable execution of each section but within limited time boundaries.[214] Thus, when periods of silence occur, the listener faces these gaps as moments of suspension, which 'have the effect of putting the listener more deeply into the time and the space of the performance',[215] because each section/silence emerges as a fresh sonic discovery that disturbs the listeners' common experience of sound. These silent gaps and the non-action of the performer simultaneously create a space that almost gravitationally attracts, potentially, any sonic object as part of the piece's outcome; however, the performer can release the tension by

[213] Gottschalk, p. 136.

[214] Ibid., p. 116.

[215] Ibid., p. 144.

playing the next section, as *must* happen according to the letter of Pisaro's instructions.[216]

half-sleep beings

Pisaro's solo piano piece *half-sleep beings*, which was composed in 2013, comprises three sections with two distinct styles of interpretation: sections 1 and 3 have time signatures, while section 2 has no time signature, but bars are played (per Pisaro's instruction) as unmeasured long tones and pauses. The entire piece's dynamic is an extremely soft *pp*. The total tempo in this piece is restricted within a range of 60–70 bpm, though the performer is free within these limits. Rhythmically, the piece contains only semi-breves, (dotted) minims and (dotted) crotchets. These notes' values reflect simple and clear phrases, restrained in character, resulting in a tranquil atmosphere throughout. Section 1 contains numerous different time signatures, with the first measure indicating 3/4 time, measure 2 indicating 5/4 time, measures 3–10, 12–15 and 17 indicating 4/4 time, measure 11 indicating 6/4 time and measure 16 indicating 8/4 time. Furthermore, there is a short pause between measures 14 and 15, and two notes with *tenuto* markings in measures 15 and 16. There is a semi-breve rest in measure 7, and semi-breve notes each in measures 12 and 17, which are all supported by *fermate*, seemingly as structural markers, as seen in several of the pieces already discussed. The *fermata* in measure 7 is appended to a semi-breve rest and prepares the listener to hear the new phrase as a fresh sound beginning, while the *fermata* in measure 12 indicates the end of the phrase which spans measures 8–12. Measure 17 both indicates an end of the phrase which covers measures 13–17, but also heralds a new section of unmeasured tones, the *fermata* over the semi-breves blurring the division between sections, since this bar, too, becomes unmeasured.

[216] Ibid., p. 145.

Section 2, which includes measures 18–24, contains no time signature; rather, it has seven measures that contain semi-breves notes, performed as ‘unmeasured long tones’. The performer might prolong these measures, then, at his/her preference. Likewise, measure 19 contains a stemless minim (or at any rate, an open notehead inclining to the right, rather than the more lozenge-like semi-breves elsewhere in the score) dyad and a single stemless minim, linking it to measure 23, wherein the first and the third notes are stemless crotchets (or closed noteheads of the same sort described above) that are separated by one stemless minim note. Notably, the stemless notes represent playing without any specified rhythm (they represent minim and crotchet note beats, which might, presumably, imply that the stemless minim is double the time of the stemless crotchet and the semi-breve note is longer than both). Finally, there are only two *fermate* remaining: one in measure 22 over the penultimate dyad and one in measure 23 at the third stemless crotchet; these notes combine two forms of extension: first, the section’s rule of ‘unmeasured long tones’, which means that they should be played with no specified duration, and, second, the rule of *fermate* that extends the notes’ length. However, these *fermate* are not only extending note values, as in section 1 and 3, but also introduce an element of indeterminacy, into the mind of the listener too, as to whether what should next be attended to is sound or silence: the fifth event of the second page, for instance, extends a semi-breve otherwise identical to those which have preceded it *and* to the one which follows it; this succeeding semi-breve chord either comes (too) late or unexpectedly or both. The extended crotchet followed by silence in the subsequent section then has the opposite effect, that a note *should* follow it, but by the time it does, silence is what is expected: here it is almost impossible to decide aurally whether what one hears is still the decaying A, on hold, or a silent pause as they bleed into one another.

Moreover, in section 2, each measure is separated with double-bar pauses; the seven measures of section 2 have seven double-bar pauses, each of which represents a break of "varying length". These pauses indicate an invisible border between each measure. Thus, the performer could interpret these pauses as s/he sees fit. The pauses, following the discussion of the pause in Pisaro above, reflect a usually 'disorienting listening experience', so that the listener cannot be certain how long they are required to be played (or, equally, *not played*).[217] What Houben says about Beuger is true here too, in that undecidability is central: 'The blurring of the transitions from silence to sound, from sound to silence, from sound to sound, from silence to silence, and the blurring of the beginning and the end are brought to the centre of perception'.[218] Bringing this interstitial space to resonance is a central aspect of the performer's role in the central section of the piece, although it is not specified as such within the score.

Last, section 3 begins at measure 25 and ends at measure 30. This section contains only six measures, including two measures (25–26) in 3/4 and four measures (27–30) in 4/4. The last four measures (27–30) end with semi-breve notes that are supported by *fermate*.

Analytically, the whole structure of the piece has multiple repeated pitches, with *f* and *f*# appearing most often. The *f* is specifically described by Pisaro in the score as 'asleep-awake', and the *f*# as 'awake-asleep', which indicates their relationship to the piece's title, *half-sleep beings*. The hyphens within the piece's title and the descriptive notes are an indication of a relationship that 'eleath' is experiencing between being asleep and awake (swinging between being half-asleep and half-awake) within the performance situation: who or what 'elaeth' is not clear from the score itself, but the notes *e*, *a*, and *b* are those which appear most often, and they act as a cipher for

[217] Gottschalk, p. 140.

[218] Houben, 'Presence – Silence – Disappearance', *Timescraper* [accessed 12 June 2018].

'elaeth'. The letter 'e' appears in the score as the note *e*, the letter 'l' appears as the note *la*, and another letter of 'a' appears as *a*, the letter 'e' appears in the score as the note *e*, the letter 't', or *ti,* appears in the score as the note *b*, and finally the letter 'h' appears as another note *b*.

The piece is dedicated to the pianist Joann Cho, "for the elaeth songs", a project Cho initiated on the birth of her son, Elaeth. Thus, the measures from 13 and 14 signify the full name of Joann Cho's son, 'eleath', as they clearly appear as: *e*, *a*, *a*, *e*, *b*, *b*. With this in mind, this is a possible hypothesis about the piece that could be explored further. The letters of the notes might have a dual meaning, as they also reveal a secondary cipher, the word 'babe'. This word, eleath's name, and the *f* and *f#*—to denote a being both half-asleep and half-awake, which might well indicate a newborn—are all indications that this piece might be thought of (and played) as a cradle song or a lullaby: with this in mind, it becomes strikingly similar to, for instance, the Berceuse from Louis Vierne's (1870–1937) *Twenty-Four Pieces in Free Style for Organ* (1913–14).[219] Both of these pieces exhibit a tranquil structure using a limited number of notes and figures, which creates a calm atmosphere.

During my rehearsal, following the practice mentioned above, I dealt with each section as if it were an individual piece to understand the requirements and details whilst expanding my awareness of their restrictions and freedoms, though the sections here are undoubtedly rather longer, oddly rather *more* self-contained, than in the pieces discussed above. I practised each section's time requirements by making use of a more subtle, restrained approach rhythm in sections 1 and 3, and a more flexible interpretation in section 2, which contains only long tones and pauses.[220] However, conceived as a measurement, the semi-breve needs to be played longer than the

[219] Rollin Smith, *Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral*, (Hillsdale: Pendragon, 1999), p. 495.

[220] Pisaro, 'Half-sleep Beings', [accessed 20 February 2018].

stemless minim and the stemless crotchet needs to be played shorter than the stemless minim, of course. Nonetheless, during the performance, I roughly determined the notes and the pauses to be more or less than 8 seconds by employing the present time to mark their appearance without thinking of any theoretical/rhythmic rules but only dealing with them as unrestricted sound materials: the more space there is to occupy, the more they act within that space.

In my practice and performance of Pisaro's piece I make an interpretation that serves the piece's purpose of presentation by organising the musical elements with more restriction and precision. In the same way, I determined my tempo from the allowed range of 60–70, which is approximately 63 bpm. A flex might happen within this range, but that is part of the piece's unforeseen outcomes during a performance. Indeed, the soft dynamic and the slow tempo mirror the sedate and quiet character of this piece, played as a cradle song that puts the infant (Elaeth) to sleep (or, given that the final dyad contains an F—indicating asleep-awake—, perhaps fails to: in early practice, I occasionally read this as the more 'soothing' F#). The uncertain length of *fermate* within the piece makes the listener lose a sense of the central tempo, which ideally blurs the listener's comprehension of the piece's temporal and metrical structure(s). Therefore, the piece causes the listener to perceive only sounds and silences as part of the performance reality, going with the flow rather than counting or marking the rhythms and measures.[221]

time, presence, movement

The score *time, presence, movement* (1997) is a collection of 14 score pages, each containing a single musical pitch—to be played at a barely audible dynamic—and a six-by-five grid which indicates when and how often that pitch should be sounded in a

[221] Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, p. 23.

five-minute period. In these grids, blank spaces indicate ten seconds of silence, while black circles indicate that the page's given pitch should sound for precisely five seconds and to be followed by silence for another five seconds, each notional box in the grid lasting, then, ten seconds. The total duration of each page is five minutes; therefore, the duration of all 14 pages is 70 minutes. Each page contains a different grid. Four pages (1, 8, 10, and 11) contain pitches which do not appear on any other page. The same pitch appears on pages 2 and 7, pages 3 and 12 pages 4 and 6, pages 5 and 9, and on pages 13 and 14. The grid must be played traditionally: from left to right and top to bottom. As well as playing pitches as softly as possible, no pedal of any kind is to be used during the performance, and the performer must not make any unnecessary sounds during the silent periods. A stopwatch is ideal in this piece for counting the duration (in seconds) of the dots and blanks.

The fourteen pages are to be played in a randomised order, without repetitions of pages; however, not every page is to be played: some pages should be replaced by the same duration—five minutes—of silence. The score implies, though does not state outright, that which pages are so replaced should be determined by chance. According to Pisaro, it is unlikely that all pages will be played in one performance. The performer can use any random tool, as the composer recommends, to randomise the page's arrangement (below I discuss my own software tool for generating random results). What is important to specify here is that, regardless of the number of pages played, the duration of a performance of this piece remains 70 minutes. For example, if the result is 10 minutes (2 pages) of sounds, the performer needs to play the 60 minutes as silence, therefore resulting in a total duration of 70 minutes.

Thus, during my rehearsals, I practised each page—before any determination of which pages might not be presented in a given performance—and its specified pitch to experience the sonic possibilities, softness types, and different arrangements from page

to page. Such arrangements of course differ depending on the number of black dots and blank spaces. This—the identical format from page to page, which is, nevertheless, internally and across the several pages of the score, highly diverse—provokes a highly attentive state when playing the soft sounds and silences because of their unstable arrangements, which forces the performer to be in a persistent state of readiness with more awareness than the apparent simplicity of the materials might suggest. The performer's duty is simply either to play the sound or allow the silence to be present but this occurs with an increased consciousness of ensuring each occupies their specific time-span.

The performer might group the phrases mentally, as binary patterns, recalling the Gestalt theory described by Tenney, mentioned above. The basic combination of sound as 1 and silence as 0 means that the total available two-event patterns might be written as 10, 01, 00, 11. In this way, on page eleven, the fifth row of the grid would read (000001), a long, *continuous* silence with only one sound at the end. This phrase challenges the performer's concentration as it insists upon a deeper engagement with the performance's space, which requires the performer always to recall the last pitch while keeping still during such extended pauses; nonetheless, this fifty-second pause is *also* five ten-second pauses, which also need to be counted individually, *breaking* the continuity. Similarly, in the first phrase (110111) on the same page, the period of silence breaks the continuity of the sound and draws the performer's attention for ten seconds of silence to attract the sounds from the surroundings, interrupting the performed sounds. Thus, the performer needs to deal with them as a tool that plans or structures how sound and silence mark their appearance within each page length.[222] According to Pisaro,

[222] Gottschalk, p. 31.

> Sound moves the air, and is thus always an indicator of space and location. But, more importantly, sound needs time to reveal itself. Sound and time are thus interwoven: sound rides on time and acquires its identity; time is marked by sound, and becomes perceptible.[223]

I tabulated each page's distribution of sound and silence. For example, on page four, there are 21 black dots which indicate playing the assigned note 'Bb5' 21 times; the total number of the blank spaces represent 9 silent pauses, ten seconds each. However, on page 14, the reverse obtains: there are only 9 black dots which indicate playing the assigned note, here 'F6', and 21 spaces of silence. The table below highlights these details, adding too the 'extra' silence which follows each indicated pitch.

Table 5: ***Time, presence, movement***

Page	Pitch	Dots	Sounding	Silent	Spaces	Duration	Total silence
1	D1	18	1'30"	1'30"	12	2'00"	3'30"
2	G#4	16	1'20"	1'20"	14	2'20"	3'40"
3	A1	15	1'15"	1'15"	15	2'30"	3'45"
4	Bb5	21	1'45"	1'45"	9	1'30"	3'15"
5	D#5	15	1'15"	1'15"	15	2'30"	3'45"
6	Bb5	15	1'15"	1'15"	15	2'30"	3'45"
7	G#4	21	1'45"	1'45"	9	1'30"	3'15"
8	G7	18	1'30"	1'30"	12	2'00"	3'30"
9	D#5	13	1'05"	1'05"	17	2'50"	3'55"
10	B2	17	1'25"	1'25"	13	2'10"	3'35"
11	C7	14	1'10"	1'10"	16	2'40"	3'50"
12	A1	15	1'15"	1'15"	15	2'30"	3'45"
13	F6	14	1'10"	1'10"	16	2'40"	3'50"
14	F6	9	0'45"	0'45"	21	3'30"	4'15"

In addition, as noted above, the piece's instructions suggest playing the five-minute pages in a random order and that not all 14 pages are necessarily to be played at all, suggesting the use of some randomising device to determine the played/non-played pages during any performance. I therefore worked on this project with my research

[223] Pisaro, 'Time's Underground', [accessed 20 February 2018].

colleague, Stuart Mellor, by using the computer software MSP/Max to create a patch that randomises the score arrangement of the 14 pages and determines which pages will be played and which will not (Fig. 3).[224] I decided to use MSP/Max instead of analogue approaches because this provided me with randomised possibilities, from a mathematical perspective, which makes it the best option compare with the other options. Mellor helped me programme the patch to randomise the 14 pages for both practice and listening, as well as, ultimately, performance. It is possible to use the patch before a live performance to determine the played pages or to listen to them as a recording by creating a playlist for listening to the 14 tracks after recording them. Thus, the patch has two functions. The first function has two steps. The first step is to use it before each performance to generate a new arrangement from the 14 pages in order to practise them. The patch here is used as a tool that randomises the 14-page sequences, such that a new page order might be 1, 6, 14, 5, 10, 11, 12, 4, 13, 7, 3, 8, 9, 2. The next step is to use the patch to randomly exclude/include the pages to practise them before the upcoming performance. On the patch below, I used number 1 to represent a page which would be played and 0 one which would not. As a result, the performer needs to prepare and perform the pages as the patch determined, which, continuing the example below is 2, 14, 3, 11 and remains silent during the unmentioned ones. The second function of the patch is to listen to the recorded 14 pages as 14 musical tracks. The user only drags the 14 tracks inside the specified area (via a drag and drop gesture) and generates new arrangements by clicking on the 'generate' button at the top left, which will determine a selection of tracks from the 14 (similar to the performance process but for listening rather than performing), bearing in mind, each track is played only once.

[224] Max/MSP is a visual programming language for electronic music and other media. It was developed by 'Cycling '74'.

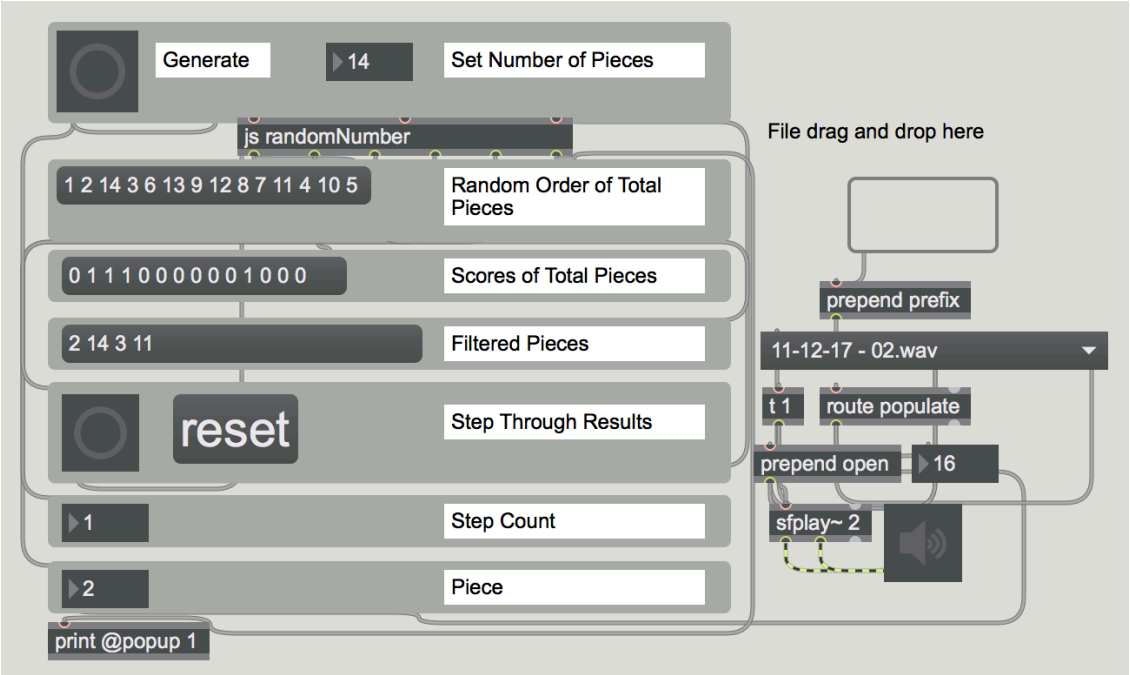

Figure 3: Max/MSP *time, presence, movement* patch

Critically, the patch helps the performer to remove any personal intervention by letting him/her accept the results without any judgment or prejudice. In such a case, the performer needs to follow the results determined by the patch honestly, arranging the pages according to the patch's output and practising them before the performance. The performer might be asked to perform for five minutes (one page) or 70 minutes (14 pages); as such, s/he also needs to view each page as a self-contained element, *as well as*, if the patch results demand the performance of more than one page, highly self-similar materials to be played in succession: the pages are both singular, discontinuous, unrelated *and* part of a holistic continuity.

Of course, the performer might be unsatisfied with the unweighted—essentially *blank*, impersonal—results of the patch and may want to modify the score as they see fit, by reducing or adding pages, but the main purpose of the patch is to constrain the performer's ego and increase self-discipline by the acceptance of results without personal decision-making. As Cage described his use of chance, 'if we want to use

chance operations, then we must accept the results',[225] even if it must be noted that Cage's distributions were not always unweighted. According to Cage's own description of his work on *Music for Piano*, he divided the hexagram into three groups:

> normal (played on the keyboard); muted; and plucked (the two latter played on the strings). For example, having tossed numbers 6 and 44, a number 1 through S will produce a normal; 6 through 43 a muted; 44 through 64 a plucked piano tone. A certain weight of probability exists in favor [*sic*] of the second and third categories.[226]

This is, at it were, an 'unweighted' way of weighting the results. Nonetheless William Brooks has hypothesised that Cage simply tossed two coins, which is to say that there are four total possible results: TT, HH, HT, and TH.[227] This means that there are not four, but three distinct results: all tails, all heads, and mixed, with a mixed result likely twice as often as either of the other results. According to Brooks's statistical analysis of *Music for Piano*, Cage appears not to have used the system he describes at all, but rather to have had mixed results stand for normal playing on the keys and notes without accidentals (with tails and heads standing for flats and sharps as well as pizzicato and mute). Over the long run of the whole sequence of pieces, Brooks demonstrates that natural and keyed notes do indeed appear more or less twice as often. [228] Both the method Cage does seems to have used *and* the one he describes introduce a particular bias into the likely musical results. Just as in Cage's compositional process, another pianist might decide to bias the Pisaro's patch's system (or any chance method) making some modifications to suit the performance's total duration, for example, by altering the patch to give for example only three or four pages from the total 14 with different arrangements. In my own work, however, I have always accepted the results provided,

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225 Cage, *For the Birds: John Cage in Conversation with Daniel* Charles, p. 87.

226 Cage, *Silence: Lectures and writings* p. 61.

227 William Brooks, 'In re: Experimental Analysis', *Contemporary Music Review*, 33, 5–6 (2014), 539–555 (pp. 543–549).

228 Ibid., (pp. 548–551).

where there is an equal likelihood of any possible sequence or number of pages, including a version wherein I am asked to play no pages, although that result has not yet occurred in my experience of using the patch.

distance (1)

Michael Pisaro's *distance (1)* (1996) requires an advanced keyboard technique to play its complex clustering/chording technique as softly as possible. It follows a rigid time of 10 seconds per chord (Fig. 4), demanding unexpected and uncomfortable finger positions: at any rate, to make sense of the otherwise extremely odd voicing between the two staves of the score, the most obvious meaningful solution is to regard the upper staff as being for the right hand and the lower for the left. If one were, as one might, simply to re-transcribe the piece such that the voicings were simple to play, the tension of the piece would vanish, and the distances implied by its title cease to be significant. It would become a simple piece, but one without any of the specific performative richness that seems regularly to occur in Pisaro's output.

In practical terms, the performer's fingers must sometimes be positioned across one another and the hands must sometimes cross to opposite sides of the piano and stretch quite some considerable distance to play the notated pitches with the specified hand: this is often physically uncomfortable and toward the limit of what the body can do.[229] These positions must be held for as long as the performer can manage, up to the maximum (ideal, but impossible) duration of 10 seconds before striking the next chord, a transition which often exacerbates that which is already challenging. The piece has 57 clusters, and each cluster must be sustained for 10 seconds by physically sustaining the clusters, importantly without the pedal. Each hand is assigned four notes per cluster,

[229] One recalls, for instance, the longstanding narrative of the damage done to Schumann's hand through an attempt to expand its capabilities, even though other explanations have been put forward for the injury (see, for instance, Eric Sams, 'Schumann's Hand Injury', *The Musical Times* 112.1546 (1971), 1156–1159 (pp. 1156–1158).

each cluster having, then, eight notes. Each cluster must be played softly yet with an attack and light release movements. The performer needs to treat the piece both as a collection of detached sound events—each ten-second event individual and unique—and as a set that provides a continuity of dense clusters and unpredictable silences because of the physical complications of switching from one cluster to the next: this simple process—play each cluster for as close to ten seconds as possible, then play the next, and so on—thus leads to a complex interaction between embodiment and unpredictability.
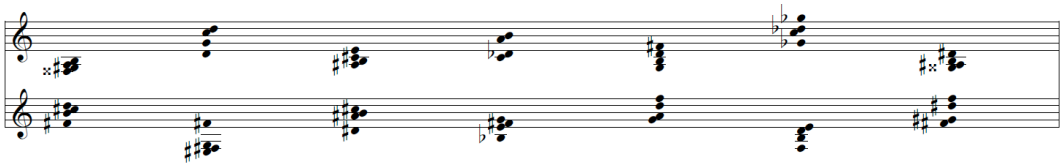
Figure 4: Each two-clusters played together for 10 seconds

While rehearsing *distance (1)*, I practised each cluster individually, considering each one as a sound event with its own sonic character, in a perhaps more extreme version of the way in which fragments were treated independently in many of the other pieces discussed above; each cluster has its own sound and highly specific musical gesture. After practising them individually, I played them as one event of a 'window' of seven clusters, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the overall sounding style, without the increased restriction which would be cause by moving immediately from individual clusters to the complete piece. Practising each cluster alone helped me observe its total sonic outcomes and practising the set of seven clusters helped me to measure the possibility of reducing the silent distance between each of the clusters' transition times. In theory, the seven cluster events contain fourteen individual events if we count the necessary periods of silence in between them as 1 present sound and 0 present silence, which means that the sounding result is necessarily understood in Gestalt terms, therefore, as 10101010101010. Yet, in a perfect world, the clusters

would be play in succession (1111111) with no indication of any silent gaps, only unbroken sound until the end of the piece. However, in the real world, it is of course impossible for the chords to be performed with no gaps in between them, but only to minimize these gaps as much as possible. However, the piece already has a high possibility of failing to manage that succession; the performer's role here is to reduce that amount of failure by limiting these distances to the greatest extent possible. Nonetheless, these silences are already anticipated, as captured in the piece's title, which anticipates a distance of silence at least as much as it does the ten-second distance between attacks. Pisaro explains that silence is, in fact, as important as sound to convey the principal idea of the piece's music:

> Music traces the border between sound and silence. It erases and redraws the boundary with a fine line, or, erects a wall which is soon knocked down - thus determining the breadth of the expanse by building obstructions. We measure distance by limiting it; we grow by pushing this limit as far as we can imagine.[230]

Here, the silent spaces create distances that not only present a silent jolt between the clusters (as in the other types of silences mentioned above), but they also embody the aesthetics of failure: the piece demands the impossible achievement of playing these clusters without breaks. To amplify this point, I also took a slight risk whilst measuring the piece's clusters; I played them according to their proper timing, thus accepting any potential failure as part of my careful interpretation. It could be argued that an unintended failure even with that amount of carefulness is, in fact, a sort of success: one could be deemed to be failing with honour. Conversely, failing on purpose—without the honest attempt to fulfil the score's unfulfillable demands—could be seen as a 'negative' form of failure—perversely one would be failing to fail. According to Eldritch Priest: 'failure can only ever succeed, and this success is failure's failure'.[231]

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[230] Pisaro, 'Time's Underground' [accessed 20 February 2017].

[231] Eldritch Priest, *Boring Formless Nonsense: Experimental Music and the Aesthetics of Failure* (London: Bloomsbury, (2013), p. 3.

To apply this thought here: the authentic trial and error process the performer undertakes in experimental music is surely more important than the final goal (or than reaching it, at any rate). In principle, the failure here is an immanent part of Pisaro's *distance (1)* where the performer's duty is to succeed in reducing the distances, which must result in a succession of honest failings. The performer in Pisaro's *distance (1)* faces the same essential challenge as in Tom Johnson's (b. 1939) composition *Failing: A Very Difficult Piece for Solo String Bass* (1975), although the failure in Pisaro's case is more hidden, rather than dramatized in the case of Johnson. Johnson's piece consists of reading a text while playing the notation; the tempo of the latter gradually changes in level of difficulty, dynamic and rhythm, with the performer bound to follow the piece's instructions in aiming to reduce the level of failure. Both pieces predict failure; however, in Pisaro's piece, the failure is assured with *each* cluster execution, because of the impossibility of reaching the next cluster on time without introducing silence. Thus, in every quick, risky movement I undertake, a new failure is assured, but the *way* it appears is unknown; what is known is the need to accept it and keep pushing the limits to reduce these failures and admit they are part of my side of being faithful to the score's instruction. Moreover, these silences are, by virtue of being interwoven with the failure of my particular body, coloured in always fresh, new ways. Each silence is, somehow, virgin. Thus, failure in *distance (1)*, in fact, helps to lead to the ultimate goal of producing something which no one could anticipate: this is the very essence of Pisaro's aesthetics of accepting the wager posed by the experimental music tradition.

fade

Pisaro's *Fade* (2000) is a piano piece containing a mere 39 written pitches that are distributed irregularly throughout the six-page score, but 560 regular pulses of between 27 and 30 bpm. Each written pitch needs to be repeated slowly, one attack per pulse,

with each successive attack slightly quieter than the previous one until the pitch can no longer be heard (which is to say the point at which the piano mechanism takes over from the pitch). These *diminuendi* are, then, the fades of the piece's title. Every pulse will either contain a pitch—or more than one pitch, given that some fades necessarily overlap—or contain silence (Fig. 5).[232]

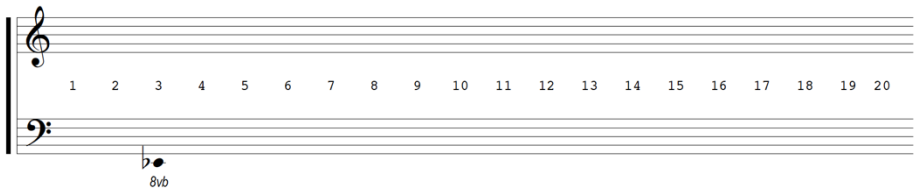

Figure 5: *fade* pulse

Moreover, the score shows multiple possible *diminuendi*: fading one pitch until it vanishes with its last (silent, save for the piano action) repetition, fading two pitches at the same time with variable endings dependent on the degrees of dynamic differentiation available for each pitch (a dyad appears uniquely at pulse 212), and fading one pitch while overlapping it with the next. This last results in a performative attempt to create two simultaneous linear *decrescendo*, which enters into a dialogue not only with the possibilities the piano affords mechanically, but also with a technique which not only tends to avoid absolute linearity in this respect, but also tends to fuse *decrescendi* together (particularly striking moments occur where two notes occur in very close proximity to one another, as at pulses 390 and 391, or where they are close enough to overlap but quite distant in pitch space from one another, as in the case of pulses 156 and 158). Naturally the number of pitch repetitions within a performance will fluctuate, depending on the capabilities of both a particular instrument and a particular performer: this is not, though, truly a question of interpretation since the score is clear that the number of repetitions should be the greatest number possible within the restriction that each must be quieter than the previous attack. According to

[232] Pisaro, 'Fade', *Timescraper* (2000), <http://www.timescraper.de/_michael-pisaro/catalogue.html> [accessed 23 February 2018].

Pisaro, ‘given the variation in the range of tones, the action of the various keys, the exact loudness of the first repetition, and the physical resources of the player, the number of repetitions for each tone will very likely vary’.[233] Finally, the sustain pedal needs to be depressed throughout performance.

Throughout my rehearsal session, following my general approach, I practised each individual pitch’s fading as a process separate from any combination of pitches in order to consider their individual and distinct fading techniques, the gestures which were required in touching the given keys and their dynamic possibilities. Given the relationship between specific pitches and the piano mechanism, it is particularly important here to take each pitch alone and practise their possible repetitions period and to be aware of their timbral restrictions to understand their individual sonic character. Thus, I worked on distinguishing each key’s mechanical limits, by, for instance, slightly pressing the key down to bring the hammer felt near the string before playing the next attack to reduce hammer impact.

The piece suggests the performer start the process of fading from a moderate to soft dynamic (taken by Pisaro to mean *mp* to *p*), such that a theoretical *decrescendo* might simply be written out as *mp–p–pp–ppp–pppp–ppppp* (and so on if possible). Nevertheless, Pisaro states that, ‘under different circumstances, a tone might receive as few as two repetitions or as many as eleven, possibly even more’.[234] Thus, a silence begins when the last note fades, which means the performance contains undetermined silences depending on how many repetitions been executed (the silence disappears when the next pitch is played), but this also depends upon the perception of a listener regarding when an attack has become truly silent: this aspect is, naturally, emphasised

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

much more strongly on a recording, without the visible, physical cues of a performing body and *with* the possibility of close miking.[235]

In the process of fading, each tone requires a lightly fixed finger and upper body movement; these act in consort for a successful *diminuendo*. However, the main issue still lies in playing simultaneously pitches more physically distant from one another. The performer here needs to apply the same finger and body movements but extend the distance between the shoulders to fade these tones accurately, especially given that under almost all circumstances they do not *begin* to fade at the same point, even though the different characteristics of different parts of the piano could mean that a note which begins to fade later will have reached silence sooner. Thus, each tone requires particular body motions whether they are close to one another, like Eb6 at the 390th and Bb5 in 391st pulses, or if they are distant, like C#1 at the 156th and G5 at the 158th pulses. Taking the latter as an example, the performer plays the first two strikes at the lower end of the piano at tone C#1, fading the tone between 156th and 157th pulses, then joining the third attack of C#1 (at 158th pulse) with the first attack, at the highest octave of the piano, of G5 on the 158th pulse. The lower tone here forces the performer—or forces *this* performer, at any rate—to lean the upper body to play C#1, but when the highest tone begins, the body has to be adjusted to balance to the body to fade two tones at the same time, each of which already have specific requirements with regard to touch. Though always of course literally singular, metaphorically or conceptually speaking, the performer needs to divide and separate the body into two parts: each part takes control of a particular tone and the process through which it fades away by degrees. Thus, I prepared a physical choreography to fade more than one pitch, especially for those physically distant from one another, by assigning to each

[235] Ibid.

tone a specific gesture. It is essential that the performer needs to prepare multiple choreographic possibilities to overcome any contingencies: very minor fluctuations in touch—whether caused or not by the position of the upper body and the stresses upon it—can cause a particular pitch to fade more rapidly or more slowly than expected in ways which are always, if only a little, unpredictable. This is simple to account for when only a single pitch is involved. But the performer must be ready to adjust and adapt to such shifts in the case of dyads.

All these aspects naturally fluctuate depending on the details of the performer's interpretation: Pisaro gives a restricted tempo range between 27 and 30 bpm, though also adds '*ca.*' to that range, suggesting that the range might not be absolute or that a little 'pull' higher or lower might be acceptable depending on the performer's initial decisions. Nevertheless, the performer needs to determine a specific tempo within this range to start with and allow any tempo fluctuations to arise unintentionally. I determined my starting tempo to be 28 bpm, in the middle of the range Pisaro defines. Flex in tempo might slightly accelerate or slow down the fading process (even if only in the mind and ear of the performer. Pisaro also states that the total duration is *ca.* twenty minutes, though of course these fluctuations will mean it might be (slightly) longer or shorter within each performance.

pi (1-2594)

Pisaro's score *pi (1–2594)* (1998) is a collection of 15 solos for a piano piece that uses the decimal places of Archimedes' constant of the same name (wherein π equals 3.14159…) to construct the simple yet complex demands of the score. The score structure encompasses a stream of the first 2594 decimal places of the apparently infinite number of decimal places of π. Pisaro begins, then, with 1 (avoiding the first integer, 3), creating each of the fifteen pieces from a certain sequential string of

decimals until reaching the two-thousand, five hundred and fourth decimal place. The table below shows each piece with the decimal places of π used, the number of units which thus result, and the length of each piece. For example, the first piece starts, as noted, at the first given decimal place, a 1, until reaching the six-hundred and fiftieth decimal place, the second piece at the six-hundred and fifty-first place until it reaches the nine-hundred and nineteenth, and so on and so forth. There is no obvious reason for why the piece should be divided into the particular lengths it is although, axiomatically, each piece has a different duration according to the quantities of their decimal numbers. The longest is the first piece entitled *1–650*, which is 54'10" long, and the shortest is the tenth entitled *1814–1873*, which is 5'00" long. Each piece is allocated a specific pitch, and only that pitch is to sound within it (15 different tones are assigned for the 15 pieces). Thus, in the first piece, only one pitch will be heard for just over fifty-four minutes.

Table 6: *pi (1-2594)*

Piece order	Tone	Decimal places	Number of units	Duration
1	E4	1–650	650	54'10"
2	C#4	651–919	269	22'25"
3	G1	920–994	75	6'15"
4	F#7	995–1075	81	6'45"
5	G5	1076–1246	171	14'15"
6	F3	1247–1455	209	17'25"
7	G2	1456–1544	89	7'25"
8	Bb0	1545–1669	125	10'25"
9	A6	1670–1813	144	12'00"
10	Bb4	1814–1873	60	5'00"
11	Eb4	1874–1971	98	8'10"
12	Ab2	1972–2351	380	31'40"
13	C6	2352–2420	69	5'45"
14	A5	2421–2530	110	9'10"
15	Bb7	2531–2594	64	5'20"

Pisaro provides instructions to transform the numbers after the decimal point of π into sounding material. For example, the first ten number of the first piece are: 1, 4, 1,

5, 9, 2, 6, 5, 3, 5. Each of these becomes the number of sounding elements (always in the first piece E4) in a 10/8 bar, played at quaver=120, giving the bar a duration of 5 seconds. 1 means that the first quaver should sound, followed by 9 beats of rest; 4 that the first four quavers should sound, followed by six beats of rest. There will always be at least *one* beat of rest, since zero indicates a five-second rest, rather than, as might be imagined, *ten* sounding beats. Imagined using the gestalt approach which has appeared on several occasions thus far, the first fifty seconds might be rewritten in the following ten-by-ten grid:

Table 7: the first ten decimals from the first piece: *1–650*

Unit	Gestalt analysis
1	1000000000
4	1111000000
1	1000000000
5	1111100000
9	1111111110
2	1100000000
6	1111110000
5	1111100000
3	1110000000
5	1111100000

Additionally, the performer needs to keep the volume of each sounding pitch as soft and equal as possible; there is no need for any emphasis or tone grouping. Richard Glover asserts that Pisaro 'allows the groupings to arise purely out of the numbers, rather than the performer's interpretational decisions',[236] a performer who must 'immediately perceive each single numeral's position amongst the others, removing any unique individual characteristics'.[237]

[236] Richard Glover, 'Michael Pisaro's pi and numerical representation', *CeReNeM Journal* 1 (2010), pp. 1–3 (p. 2).

[237] Glover, 'The Compositional Use of Numerals in Music Notation', in *Music and Numbers 2010 Conference Proceedings* (Kent: Canterbury Christchurch University, 2010), p. 1.

These units provide a medium to create sounds and silences without any personal or emotional interest in each unit's value, only playing the units one after the another in succession until the piece has no more units, which indicates its end: even the change of pitch does not change the essential blankness of the piece's surface and, in order not to go awry, the pianist has little option but, simply, to regard and deliver the process *as* a process, though that necessitates to a certain 'in the moment-ness': the performer must be *present* in a way which seems antithetical to the absence of 'performed' material in the piece, but—without this presence which allows the treatment of each fresh number as, precisely, virgin—error and drift are sure to creep in, Finally, the sustain pedal is held throughout each piece and released after it is accomplished. In case the performer chooses to play more than one piece arranged in any grouping (e.g., the tenth piece followed by the fourth), the composer recommends applying a 2'30" pause between each piece with the pedal released. Then, the performer needs to depress the sustain pedal again to play the next piece as a new individual event.

In preparing the collection of pieces, I took each given pitch and practised the hand, finger, and upper body motions. This approach helps me play the repeated tones without any physical stress even for the pieces of longer duration, though sustaining a single pitch in this way even for the shorter pieces of five to six minutes or so involves important considerations of this kind. This is particularly crucial, nevertheless, because more relaxed gestures help me sustain my concentration when playing for the duration of a longer piece, especially, for instance, the near hour-long first piece. Having the wrong posture might build progressive tension, which would be most acutely felt during the longer pieces that are played far from the middle of the piano and require using the upper body to lean in front of certain keys (e.g., the eighth piece's given pitch is Bb0, while that of the fourth piece is F#7: both require leaning the upper body

throughout the whole performance. One could of course move the piano stool, but this seems contrary to the stillness that is implied when multiple pieces are chained together). Thus, I worked on associating each tone with a particular hand, finger, and upper body position in relation to wherever the key is located. I adjusted my posture to be fully relaxed and to avoid any possible repetitive injuries or upper body issues.

Moreover, choosing the proper finger for the whole performance is essential, as each finger gesture might affect the execution of the key. The performer has multiple options for playing these repeated units. First, one might play the same key with different fingers in each repetition, such as playing unit number six as 3,2,1,3,2,1, or 4,3,2,1,2,1, and so on with the other units. Secondly, the same key can be played with different hands. Thirdly, the key can be played with only one hand and one finger (index or middle finger) throughout the whole performance. The first option is not suitable because each finger change adds a beat emphasis, which seems antithetical to Pisaro's apparent sense of the piece (in that each unit needs to be equal and even, as flat as possible), and the second option is challenging with keys far from the centre of the piano (although, as noted above, there are *other* solutions to this issue, but ones that seemed opposed to the general stasis that is, to my mind, integral to the piece, and even more so when pieces are played in sequence), such that the performer will find it difficult to shift their hand from key to key with each repetition. Thus, I chose to practise and perform the pieces with only one finger (either the left hand or the right, depending on the key's location), to give as much equality between pitches as possible with every attack. Of course, the approach selected will vary from pianist to pianist. However, the main purpose of this decision is to play the same sound without expressing or emphasising any articulation or rhythmic accentuation, while still being able to play delicately, to make an equal, even, and soft sound during the piece performance.

One issue I faced while playing the pieces of long duration, besides keeping proper body and hand gesture, was the possibility of loss or lack of concentration. I worked to apply Tenney's temporal gestalt units, not only to break down the elements theoretically, as shown above, but also in order to enhance my concentration on these various durations of sound and silence. As suggested above, units need to be played, each time, even over the long term, with an active and fresh mind, using Pisaro's approach of 'forgetting' each unit as soon as it is played: according to Gottschalk, Pisaro uses 'inattentive gaps' to put describe a state 'where one is constantly "forgetting" what one just heard. I've come to enjoy the experience of hearing a piece for a third or fourth (or fiftieth) time and hearing new things in it. this still happens to me with these piece'.[238] This allows the pianist to start a new unit with a fresh mind. Thus, Pisaro 'actively encourage[s] a state where one is constantly "forgetting" what one just heard'.[239] Dealing with units as individual events is vital in assuring a sort of flatness throughout the execution of the whole piece, even if the flatness that results has, as a result, a very particular texture.

Furthermore, from Tenney's temporal gestalt analysis, the table mentioned above indicates how the sound and the silence in each unit are divided into certain percentages. However, unit zero, where the silence appears as a non-linear sound that does not have any beginning, but only a starting time (silences made from infinite, timeless noises that do not have a beginning or ending, but they are there) appears to give each unit a *certain* percentage of indeterminate sounds.

With Tenney's gestalt theory and Pisaro's forgetting, the performer needs to think of each unit as an independent entity that does not grow from the past units or

[238] Gottschalk, p. 145.

[239] Schleicher, 'Michael Pisaro: A Conspiracy Against the Ordinary', *Interviews and Features* (2012), <www.brainwashed.com> [accessed 23 May 2018].

affect the future ones, even if the same unit is repeated again and again in succession.[240] Therefore, the performer need not, indeed should not, relate, count, or connect any previous units with the following ones, but only carefully play what the piece presents in its *present*, thus non-chronological time.[241] The 2'30" silent pause between pieces emphasises this idea of separation further, keeping each piece as an individual event, made up of individual events. I approached this long pause by simply holding a stopwatch to count the time and welcoming any sound from the live performance situation as potential and acceptable elements of the outcomes of the whole larger piece, *pi*. Releasing the pedal during these silences amplifies the ambient sound in a sense. However, during recording, I simply recorded each track on its own, with no extended pause.

akasa

Pisaro's solo piano piece *Akasa,* which was composed in 1994, makes central the use of a range of piano harmonics, achieved by stopping the string at particular, specified harmonic nodes. As such, the piece requires access to the piano's interior to reach the following strings: C3, F3, G3, A3 and D4. Each string is used for the production of between three and six partials. Moreover, the composer has aided the performer by providing an additional sheet that has a set of five tabs. These must be cut into five thin strips by following the dotted lines and then attaching them to the immediate left of each played string inside the piano, which is to say at B2, E3, F#3, G#3 and C#4. The paper strips serve as a guide to the location of the nodes, which enables the performer to stop each overtone where signified, especially helpful for the higher, more fragile partials. Of course, this also provides the performer with the flexibility to modify the

[240] Tenney and Polansky, 205–241, (pp. 206–7).

[241] Gottschalk, p. 145.

positions slightly by adjusting the strips either higher or lower to find the purest overtones. One simple reason for doing this is that, as Pisaro states, 'piano designs vary greatly; even with a single producer, it cannot be assumed that all grand pianos will work equally well, though most should be at least adequate'.[242]

These keyed notes are accorded small noteheads, while the sounding overtones are notated as diamond-shaped notes; notes which are simply to be played conventionally on the keys receive standard noteheads. Where a partial is somewhat distant from the tempered note provided to stand for it—which is to say in the case of the seventh, eleventh, and thirteenth partials, 31 cents lower, 51 cents higher, and 41 cents higher respectively that the indicated tempered note—Pisaro adds the numbers 7, 11, and 13 to the diamond note head, presumably as an *aide memoire*.

The piece's total duration is about eleven minutes. It consists of ninety-seven bars and is divided into two large sections, with a division of a double bar after bar thirty-eight, which appears to mark a pause, though one notes that there is *also* a double bar *before* bar thirty-eight. Though there are numerous repeats in the piece and bars of different durations, the proportions involved suggest very strongly that Pisaro began with a simple golden section ratio: thirty-eight divided by the total number of bars, ninety-eight, is 0.38776, which is surely too close to 0.382 for one to imagine it to have resulted by chance. The precise golden section—in counting bars only—would be 37.436, which might account for the whole of bar thirty-seven acting as a sort of moment of pause.

Each large section contains several phrases, each having different and variable time signatures. There are also eight silent bars within the piece: bars 9, 17, 52, 60, 76, 90, 93 and 95. Correspondingly, the piece contains three modes of performance: almost

[242] Ibid.

exclusive overtones, almost exclusive standard piano playing and, finally, the intermingling of both styles. Each needs a specific choreographic style and effort, which, of course, the performer must prepare in advance. Breaks in the texture often map directly onto the changes of performing mode: even if that may have been a compositional decision, this allows the performer to rest and thus avoid physical stress and strain—remembering that a great deal of the time the performer has no option but to be bent over the body of the instrument to reach the strings—while simultaneously allowing silence to act as another sound source. Pisaro specifically notes that the performer should 'especially during the rehearsal process […] feel free to lengthen the notated pauses to allow oneself to stand or sit and rest (the last of these may also be used in performance if necessary)'.[243]

The whole dynamic is extremely soft (*pppp*). In some cases, the performer might use amplification if certain overtones are unclear, though Pisaro's instructions clearly imply that this is not the composer's preferred solution. Amplified or not, the performer needs to maintain an audible yet soft sound during the entire piece. Further, the last bar demands a *diminuendo a niente*. The overall tempo should be at or around quaver = 66. Pisaro's note that this should be *circa* 66 takes on an additional dimension alongside his more general performance direction: 'play as if balancing a glass sphere'.[244] Finally, the sustain pedal should be held down with a heavy object until the piece is finished, which both allows the performer to indicate the end of the piece and, of course, means that the performer can lean inside the piano without having to depress the pedal with his/her foot, which would add significantly to the physical strain.

While rehearsing, I worked to internalise, almost to the point of instinct, the locations of overtones inside the piano (significantly, I used the same piano for all my

[243] Ibid.

[244] Pisaro, 'Akasa', [accessed 23 September 2018].

work on the piece); this allowed me to access them with less effort during the performance and ensured that I could concentrate above all on the production of an extremely soft dynamic. Thus, I began by focusing more on practising how lightly I could strike the five keys which have stopped strings within the piece, but *without* stopping any strings. Understanding a single key's mechanism aided me in equalising the sonic results for different keys, assigning each a more or less individual body and hand gesture, based on the requirements I had learned through this process. I then searched for the overtone series, conducting a series of experiments balancing lightly stopping the strings with progressively lighter key strikes, ultimately discovering what seemed an optimal balance between a light hammer strike and delicate stopping of the string.

I prepared the piece at a tempo of quaver = 57 which is, admittedly, some way below Pisaro's suggested marking, but allows more time to ensure clarity, precision, and accuracy. Though I was initially concerned by the distance between 'my' tempo and Pisaro's, I ultimately found my 'permission' in the sole commercial recording of the piece, Reinier van Houdt's. Houdt worked on the piece with Pisaro in advance of making his recording and has a tempo even slightly slower than mine, around 55 bpm. His recording liberated me to choose a tempo that helped me address the piece's extended technique with the least possible stress and the fewest possible flaws, ensuring that each overtone could be played more exactly, a tempo which was, too, suitable for the choreography I had devised.

This choreography was developed through practising the piece extremely slowly at first (around 30 bpm), which assisted me in internalising or physically memorising the necessary bodily movements and finger gestures assigned for each note, bar, phrase, and section (and prepared, too, my stage performance). Subsequently, I found a synergy or a sort of complementarity between my physical motions and the

sound, creating a more seemingly balanced movement which made for a reduction in physical stress while maintaining the desired sonic qualities of the piece.

Since almost all of the keyed notes in the piece are in a tight range, between G and D below the treble staff, for the most part, the fingers of my right hand were assigned to the white keys of that interval of a fifth, with the harmonics taken consistently by the left. Of course, there are three possible ways to undertake the actions of the piece: first, playing the keys with the right hand while the other hand stops the string, as I chose; second, the opposite; or, third, a mixture between the two. To explain my preference, in bar 31, for example, I began by assigning the fingers of the right hand to the five keys, as discussed above, with the left side of my body stretched towards and into the piano, supporting and balancing the left hand. I started playing the fundamental key G3 with my right hand, producing the overtone G4 by stopping the string with my left hand, then played the much lower D2—here simply with my left hand—by leaning my upper body towards the note, aiming as ever for a light, balanced touch, followed by crossing the left hand over the right to reach for the higher octave note F#6 (because the right hand remains in a fixed position to play the next fundamental note from the group of five, A3, *and* to retain a physical centre for my actions), the left hand then returning to take the upper partial, A5. Finally, an F5 and F6 octave is played with the right hand, releasing it from its fixed position. Leaning my upper body is vital to controlling the softness of each key and string to give each note its full attention. I nevertheless endeavour to apply only the smallest possible actions.

As shown above, the piece not only asks the performer to play the sounds but also to *move* in particular ways, constrained by the piece's requirements. The performer must articulate these actions through *sufficient* movements but avoiding any expressive or expansive motions, remaining faithful to the score's apparently non-matrixed

character. By ‘sufficient movement’, I understand simply the totality of movements necessary in order to satisfy the score’s demands at the tempo given by the metronome. The performer must, then, follow the piece with discipline and *improve* the quality of these movements—which is probably to say to minimise their expressive content—with great stamina, especially with the longest movements of phrasing. I found myself in rehearsing the piece conceiving of my motions as like a sort of dance, imbuing the motions themselves with a sort of symbolic significance, even if I was not able to define with any precision *what* they signified: I was, to stress, *faithful* but incapable of pinning down the specifics of to *what* I was being faithful, but was, assuredly, dogmatic—which is to say, militant—about it. However, during live performance, I extended the silent breaks both to rest and to refresh my concentration, simultaneously hoping engaging the audience with the performance’s environment as another source of music: no action is required, but only staying open to silence (performer and the audience). During the recording session, however, I played the piece with exact silences as indicated in the score, reflecting the necessarily more ‘fixed’ character of the fixed medium.

Appendix II: CD Recordings

CD Pack 1: [A collection consisting of]

CD 1

1- *akasa* (1994), 11′31″
2- *C. Wolff* (2014), 05′44″
3- *distance (1)* (1996), 09′30″
4- *fade* (2000), 19′06″
5- *fields have Ears*: for piano and tape (2008), 20′13″

CD 2

1- *floating, drifting* (2001), 30′00″
2- *half-Sleep Beings* (2013), 06′43″
3- *Les Jours Aubépine* (2012), 10′03″

CD Pack 2: [*pi (1-2594)* for piano]

Pisaro asks the 2'30" of silence is placed between each of the larger tracks given here if any of them are to be played in succession. The listener can, of course, choose to undertake this by simply pausing playback for an appropriate period. Equally, on CD 4 a short track of ambience is provided for the same purpose. Moreover, a copy of the complete work, incorporating the silences, is provided on a pen drive.

CD 1

1- *pi 1—650* (1998), 55′21″
2- *pi 651—919* (1998), 23′02″

CD 2

1- *pi 920—994* (1998), 07′05″
2- *pi 995—1075* (1998), 07′04″
3- *pi 1076—1246* (1998), 14′52″
4- *pi 1247—1455* (1998), 18′10″
5- *pi 1456—1544* (1998), 08′42″
6- *pi 1545—1669* (1998), 11′05″
7- *pi 1670—1813* (1998), 12′14″

CD 3

1- *pi 1814—1873* (1998), 05′33″
2- *pi 1874—1971* (1998), 10′03″
3- *pi 1972—2351* (1998), 32′23″
4- *pi 2352—2420* (1998), 07′12″
5- *pi 2421—2530* (1998), 09′45″
6- *pi 2531—2594* (1998), 05′24″

CD 4

1. Ambient sounds 02′30″

CD Pack 3: [*time, presence, movement*: piano]

CD 1 has the complete 14 pages played as individual tracks. This CD may be played in random order as the score outlines. The listener can randomise the order of the 14 pages, though they are presented for convenience in 'score order' here. The score also calls for a selection to be randomly made of how many (a number which could be as high as fourteen or as low as zero) pages should be excluded and replaced by the equivalent period of silence: CD 2 provides a five-minute recording of ambient noise for this purpose.

CD 1

1. *time, presence, movement*: piano/1 (1997), 05′00″
2. *time, presence, movement*: piano/2 (1997), 05′00″
3. *time, presence, movement*: piano/3 (1997), 05′00″
4. *time, presence, movement*: piano/4 (1997), 05′00″
5. *time, presence, movement*: piano/5 (1997), 05′00″
6. *time, presence, movement*: piano/6 (1997), 05′00″
7. *time, presence, movement*: piano/7 (1997), 05′00″
8. *time, presence, movement*: piano/8 (1997), 05′00″
9. *time, presence, movement*: piano/9 (1997), 05′00″
10. *time, presence, movement*: piano/10 (1997), 05′00″
11. *time, presence, movement*: piano/11 (1997), 05′00″
12. *time, presence, movement*: piano/12 (1997), 05′00″
13. *time, presence, movement*: piano/13 (1997), 05′00″
14. *time, presence, movement*: piano/14 (1997), 05′00″

CD 2

1. Ambient sounds 05′00″

Appendix III: *fields have ears (1)*

fields have ears (1) set-up: Field and piano Recording Editing Process

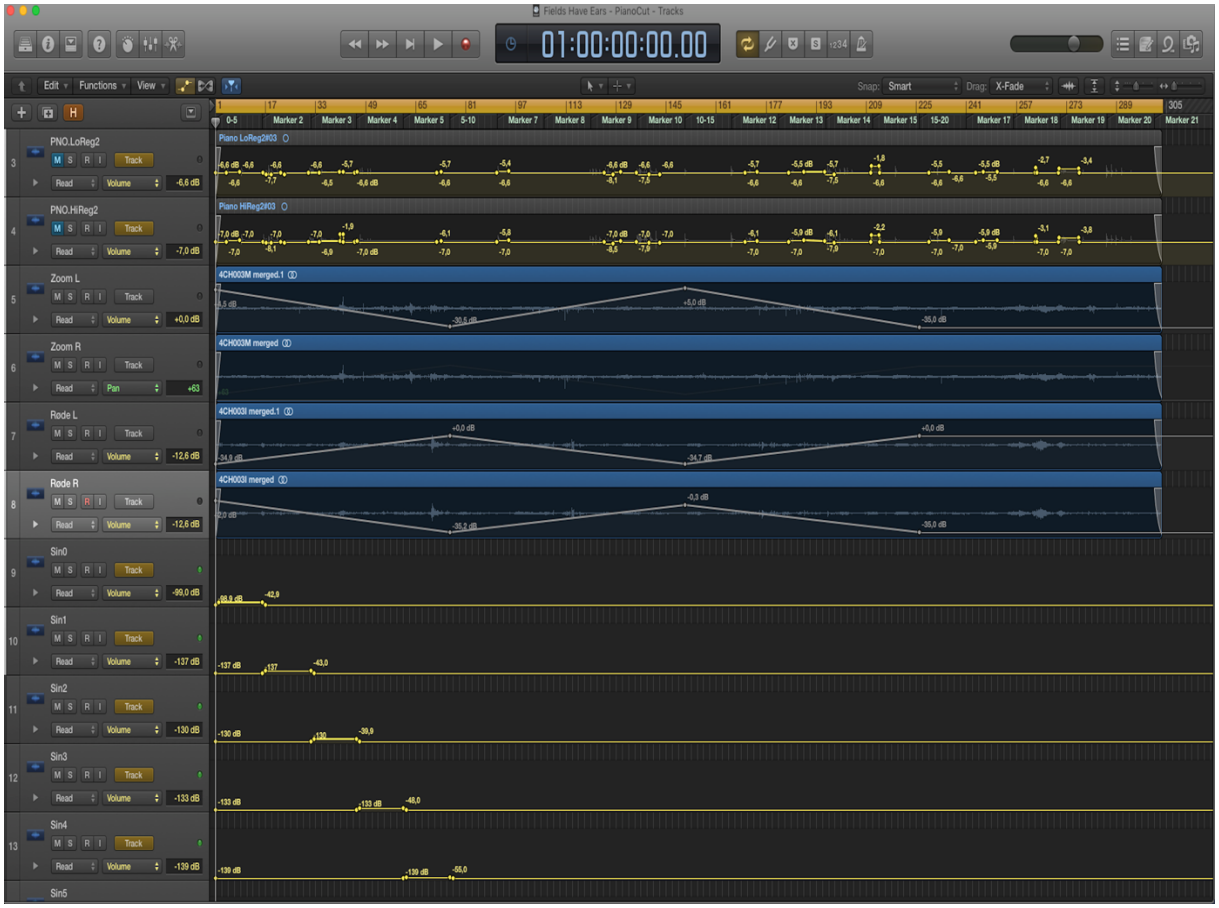

Figure 6: Piano and field recordings mixing

fields have ears (1) set-up: Editing the Sinewaves

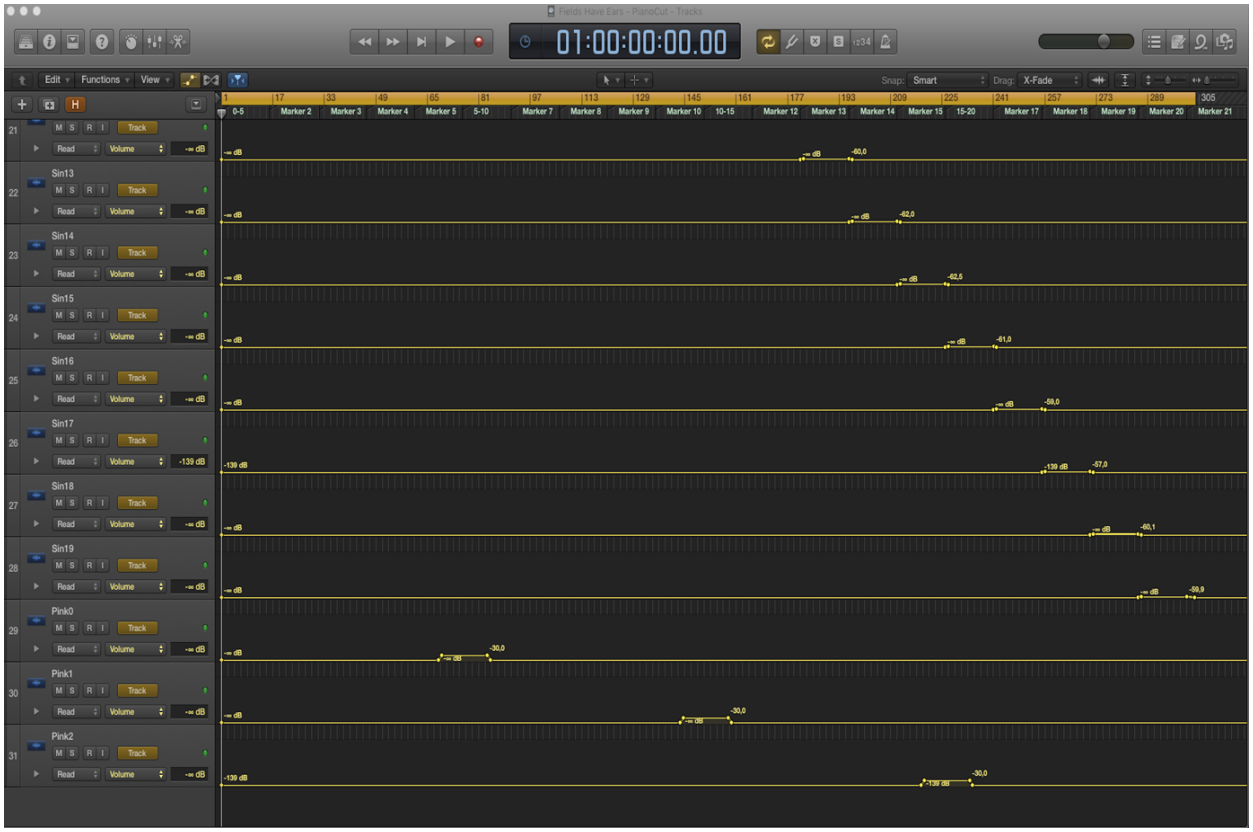

Figure 7: Sine waves and pink noises: part one

Figure 8: Sine waves: part two