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From sign to sound: Interpreting piano notation in post-2000 music

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ABSTRACT

This study is rooted in the performance of contemporary music. I explore the issues of notation and its interpretation in piano music after 2000. I aim to explore the significance of the freedom of discretion offered to or claimed by performers in their interpretative decisions.

This research is an original investigation to approach notation and related performing issues through my roles as researcher, performer, practitioner and listener. In order to know the perspectives regarding notation from contemporary composers and performers, I conducted interview sessions with six prominent musicians and their names are identified. I evaluate and discuss their thoughts in my Interview analysis and case study.

The music for my case study and recital programme is deliberately selected to suit my purpose - to approach the notation and its interpretation. In the case study *Black Earth* by the composer Fazil Say, I examine his notation and compare the performing versions of the composer himself and another pianist. My recital programme consists of *Two thoughts about the piano* by Elliott Carter, *Day break shadows flee* by Judith Weir and *Z/K* by Michael Finnissy, which present three different approaches to notation. I explore the interpretative possibilities and raise related questions for further discussion.

This thesis is divided into five chapters which are: 1. Introduction, 2. Literature Review, 3. Interview Analysis, 4. Case Study and 5. Conclusion and Reflection. Even though this thesis is focused on piano music, the generated questions and perspectives could apply to other instruments and fields in contemporary music research. I summarize my findings in the final chapter and seek for better engagement in contemporary music performance. Lastly, I intend to avoid a firm conclusion but to encourage further exploration in this area.

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Interesting notation innovations have been emerging since the middle of the 20th century. New music techniques and philosophies have challenged traditional notations significantly, offering the potential for notational expansion. A number of scholars have attempted to document and categorize these notation innovations. For example, The Index Project organised by the International Conference on New Musical Notation in 1974 sought for "notational standardization"[1]. While some composers adopt new notations such as graphic drawings and texts, others continue using conventional notation and forms.

Professional musicians have years of training in how to read a score effectively and perform it accurately, fostering the ability to be intuitive (Behrman 1965, Reid 2002). Reid (pp.102-112) calls it "informed intuition" and suggests making use of analysis when this inbuilt sense collapses. In the majority of cases, the composer pre-writes the music and then passes it to the performer to transfer into a sound product. However, performers' decisions on the interpretation of notations can be affected by various considerations, such as the composer's background, the work's title and its publication date.

Performance study as an academic "discipline" is widely recognised (Dunsby 1995, pp.17-28). Furthermore, the concept of performance itself, and the way to perform new music, receive continuous attention. For many performers who are learning new music, there are a variety of obstacles to transferring notation into sound. These obstacles might be new notation such as drawings and texts, or challenging technical demands. On the other hand, such novelties could prompt musicians to discover new possibilities of acoustics and interpretations. Levy (1995. p.168) thus describes new notation as an "empowering" tool. The one significant feature of new music is its originality for both composers and performers. This originality presents a space of freedom, which can affect all aspects of the theoretical and practical issues in learning new music. However, how much this freedom works in music has rarely been scholarly addressed.

Personally, I doubt whether composers could notate every thought on paper just as I doubt whether performers could play every detail in their score. Performers work on the score for most of their learning time, thus the score is frequently expected to be a perfect guiding tool which reveals everything the composer expects. Moreover, performers are expected to receive any updates when the composer's idea develops, even after publication. Along with close examination of the score, another effective option is to approach the composer directly. We certainly cannot ask Chopin how to play his *rubato*, but we can ask living composers how to play their music and can expect feedback from them. In order to discover more about this aspect I interviewed six UK prominent musicians - three composers and three performers - to obtain their comments on how to approach notation and interpretation of new music in post 2000.

Even though the performance study of new music receives attention, the subject of interpretative freedom on notation remains rarely discussed. Therefore my research is an investigation into the notation and interpretation issues of performing piano music in post-2000. I aim to explore freedom

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[1] The conference was held in Ghent, 1974. Stone, K. (1980). *Music Notation in the Twentieth Century: A Practical Guidebook*. pp.332-337. Appendix II, W.W. Norton&Company

of discretion in interpretation, whether offered to or claimed by performers, and to find out how this influences our interpretative decisions. The questions I seek answers for are:

- How much interpretative freedom do we contemporary performers have?
- How much does the individual performer do in adhering strictly, or modifying, the composer's writing according to the score?
- How does the difference between notational perspectives of composers and performers influence my own performance decisions?
- What are the challenges of exploring freedom of interpretative discretion?

The notational ambiguities which make the interpretative decision difficult are discussed on a practical basis. My intention is not to select or award any particular advice on interpretation, but to attempt to demonstrate and discuss the varied approaches of the composers and performers who participated in this research.

Even though this study's main focus is on piano music in post- 2000, it is not restricted to piano music. A number of composers work for different instruments but use similar techniques in some of their music. Also the interpretation issues apply to all instruments. I am trained as a professional pianist, therefore any pianistic discussion is naturally relevant to me whether on the choices of repertoire or the experience of practice. Thus the discussion of solo piano repertoire will remain central to this thesis. Though the role of piano in chamber and concerto music is different, nevertheless the interpretative matter affects all genres.

This thesis considers music which is 'notated'. Therefore free improvisation and computer synthesised music are excluded from this discussion. In Chapter Four I discuss four contemporary pieces for solo piano. First I present a case study of Fazil Say's *Black Earth.* My purpose here is to contrast two performing versions of this work, focusing on how the performers decided to interpret the same notation. I then examine the three pieces I plan to play in my recital programme. These are *Intermittences* by Elliott Carter (2005), *Day Break Shadows Flee* by Judith Weir (2014) and *Z/K* by Michael Finnissy (2012). They represent three different approaches to notation. Carter's piece contains comparatively more modern notation such as the diamond notes. Weir's piece presents a more conventional notation and structure, for instance, using standard pitches and symmetrical layout. Finnissy's *Z/K* particularly raises the question of freedom, as the score avoids precise advice such as bar lines or dynamics, and thus offers the performer substantially more discretion than the other two pieces in the programme. When I perform these pieces, I hope to demonstrate the interpretative decisions I explored in my study.

Before discussing these four pieces, I explore the current knowledge in this field in my Literature Review in Chapter Two, and I present the result of my interviews with contemporary musicians in Chapter Three. Central to my thesis is my interview analysis and repertoire discussion as outlined above. Chapter Five is my conclusion and reflection, where I evaluate my findings and raise questions for further discussion. Example of scores mentioned in interviews and transcriptions of those interviews are provided in the Appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Notation is the essential point to initiate a musical interpretation. In other words, the sound is produced according to the instructions. It is a form of transcription of the composer's abstract idea and it provides the connection between composers and performers. Rebelo (2010 pp.17-20) concludes that notation has three fundamental functions: 1. to be documented accurately by the composer to create sound; 2. to give instruction to the performer to produce sound by means of communication; 3. to be "a mode of creation in itself". Historically, C.P.E Bach (1949) and Daniel Gottlob Türk (1982) advised reading the notation carefully and playing exactly what the notation indicates, by means of precision. The notation they referred to, from bar lines to fingering, is to modern eyes fundamental. On the other hand, these 18th century treatises reflect a contrast with how much more expansion of notation we have nowadays, all continuing to strive for perfect representation of required sound.

It is widely accepted that since the 1950s, the categories of notation have been expanded significantly. Stone (1980, preface) states that "conventional notation soon proved insufficient for dealing adequately with the new musical techniques and philosophies." Experimental composers such as John Cage and Morton Feldman, who chose to invent new notation, rapidly changed the functions and forms of conventional notation. Composers were enthusiastic to explore any non-standard structures of notation.

Scholars then attempted to examine and classify new notations. Karkoschka (1972), Risatti (1975), Sauer (2009), and Feist (2017) have collected new notations over 50 recent years, including those notations which appeared frequently and those which have disappeared. Some scholars aim to trace a connection from traditional to new notation. Others consider that innovative notation is not directly related to tradition but related to innovative concepts, for instance, the use of prescriptive and descriptive notation (Seeger 1958, Kanno 2007). Whatever their rationale, new notations continue to receive attention.

Performers are invited and expected to respond to these innovations creatively. Greater freedom of interpretation is offered to performers than ever before. The perception of piano performance has been developed with a variety of ways of creating sound. Therefore Stone (1980, Intro, p.xvi) concludes:

> The other stylistic trend rejected precision [in contrast with traditional notation]. Instead, it introduced deliberate ambiguity, varying degrees of indeterminacy, choices between alternatives, improvisation, and the utilization of extraneous, unpredictable sounds and circumstances. All these required radically new notation, even to the abandonment of conventional symbols and procedures altogether, in favour of 'implicit graphics', because such graphics assure the greatest possible interpretative freedom by drawing heavily on the performers' contributive imagination and ingenuity. Naturally, this trend not only called for new notional signs, but for an entirely new attitude toward notation as such.

Composers start inventing notation to suit their increasing musical needs. Therefore, new notation usually accompanies new techniques. For instance, Henry Cowell's string piano introduced the exploration of extended techniques, subsequently followed by his pupil Cage (Dullea 2011 p.11). In his *The Banshee*, Cowell invents the notation and suggests its manner of playing inside the piano.The letters of alphabet are used to represent different physical approaches along with literal instruction. It is a visibly complex notation which fuses letter-codes, glissandos, tremolos and texts. Cowell further notates use of the damper pedal throughout. Whether to use a wedge or rubber inserted under the pedal, or to require a second performer to sit in front of the keyboard, is decided by the performer. That Cowell's whole page of literal instruction helps performers to make each decision on the interpretation, is unquestioned. However, the difference of internal construction of various types of piano generates additional consideration. Therefore to some extent, the techniques used for interpretation of new notation is left to the performer's discretion.

Composers' innovative exploration increases the categories of notation. The notational potentials and possibilities have been expanded more than ever before. The phenomenon of two extremes of notation receives discussion—the trends to complexity and to simplicity (Griffiths 1995, Duncan 2010, Taruskin 2010). Griffiths (1995 p.312)) summarises six forms of musical complexity. He lists factors which would cause dense notation: (1) complexities of sound density, (2) complexities of compositional element relationship, (3) complexities of reference to other compositions, traditions and histories, (4) complexities of interpretation, (5) complexities of expression, (6) and complexities of complexities, by which I assume he encompasses all previous factors together. Recent examples from Brian Ferneyhough's *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* (1981) and Michael Finnissy's *English Country Tunes* (1990) have complex and difficult-to-read score. Complex notation could visibly reflect the intellectual and abundant intentions of a composer's music. Such composers tend to seek a multi-layered texture and innovative ways of creating sound. Very often this is accompanied by challenging technical demands such as extended techniques and inserted objects (Toop 1988). Moreover, contemporary composers suggest that complex notation means more than its appearance. For instance, Finnissy responds to Toop (Toop 1988, p.5) by saying, "'It horrifies me that people say the music is complex. It isn't, except in a very superficial detailed kind of way". Similarly, Dench (Toop 1988, p.5) describes complex notation as "a kind of hyper-intellectual teasing-out of the skin of the music.[…] one's experience enriches, and yes, I think that results in more complicated pieces".

However, complex notation receives criticism as being unnecessary and unbalanced. Silverman (1996. p.34) criticizes complex notation:

> More than can be played: more that can be imagined. And not only notes: multiple staves, diagonal and perpendicular lines, crescendo-hairpins, dotted lines and tremolo-wobbles, arrows, tiny tabulators, charts and diagrams, all kinds of signs, tables and verbal instructions. […] Much more can be notated than can be conceived.

Based on the composing experience of open-form music [much more associated with improvisation], Freeman (2011) claims that the increased density of score is a result of dissatisfaction with the performer's interpretation. Freeman (2011. p.15) continues his point by claiming that "High notational density is usually impractical; unconventional, open-ended scores predominate." Moreover, Duncan (2010 p.141) claims it "seeks to control every musical domain". Both Silverman's and Freeman's statements suggest that the process of notational refinement cannot be equated to notational increase. They also reflect the view that it is by no means proven that the density of notation affects music as a whole.

The opposite extreme is simplicity (Griffiths 1995, p.312). Composers such as Steve Reich, Howard Skempton, and Arvo Pärt use minimum materials to create maximum effects. Their music, for instance Pärt's *Fur Alina* (1976), requires the performer to evaluate the freedom and play within the peaceful and introspective context.

Simple notation is never easy to play in a simple way. Moreover, simple notation does not imply that the composer offers more freedom. Even a simple notation is likely to generate complex and ambiguous interpretation. Heyde (2007, pp.71-95)) finds that simple notation generates interpretative difficulty. Conversely, Duncan (2010, pp.136-172) argues that the more detailed the notation provided by the composer, the more likely the space for a performer's personal choices is reduced or ended. Simplicity may also lead to another consequence, a failure to interpret the minimal information provided. At this point simplicity requires even more creative preparation before initiating any practical action. Simple notation prompts the performer to engage more with hidden aspects of the score. In some cases, the performer has to deal with varied aspects of uncertainty and unpredictability. Moreover, it is comparatively rare that a piece comes with defined complexity or simplicity. Most works are written with varieties of notational forms.

Notation provides communication between composers and performers using a specific-written language. It is not the only method to convey the composer's ideas, as merely providing written instructions is insufficient for musical realisation (Schwartz and Godfrey1993). For instance, a close working relationship can form an essential supplement for understanding composers' intentions. Collaborative models have been explored and proved to have positive and effective results (John-Steiner 2000, Merrick 2004, Roe 2007, Hayden and Windsor 2007, Kanga 2014). The thoughts of the composer can be clarified during the process. Earlier composers and performers worked together, such as Nikolay Rubinstein with Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Marguerite Long with Claude Debussy, Paul Wittgenstein with Maurice Ravel, David Tudor with John Cage and Oliver Messiaen with Yvonne Loriod. Webern's well-known pupil Peter Stadlen published Webern's solo piano work *Piano Variations Op.27* in a facsimile with Webern's own indications for performance interpretation. According to Stadlen's notes (1936), Webern "was in habit, while standing next to me and discussing a passage, to complement his remarks with casually pencilled entries". In his *Piano Variations,* Webern notated in a spare manner and tended to avoid tonality. Without Stadlen's edition, this piece would become even harder to interpret. Similarly, Hill (2002 pp.129-143) describes his own learning experience with Messiaen, who "wanted the rhythm and phrasing to be supple[…] 'like an etude'". Moreover, Fitch and Heyde (2007) recognise that through clarification of notation, the collaborative process can help to decode the motivation of the composer's choice. Dullea (2011) states that working with composers helps to discover the most reliable interpretative solution. These experiments proved that collaboration between composers and performers not only contributes to new compositions, but also positively stimulates musical creativity. Conversely, sparse collaboration and communication could lead to comprehensive and interpretative problems (MacRitchie, Zicari and Blom 2018).

Composers and performers both have an integral role in music creation and the performer should also be regarded as the generator of music creativity (Martin, L1993, Martin, S 1998). For performers, it is a challenge to transfer a composer's thought into sound and it raises risks (Kontarsky and Vernon 1972). Therefore, personal consideration of decision needs evaluation. Godlovitch (1998, p.8) comments that "Interpretation seems primarily linked with a musician's concern about achieving certain determinate acoustic effects and the best means to do so". Similarly, Cone (1968 p.34) points out that "Every valid interpretation thus represents, not an approximation of some ideal, but a choice". Moreover, Reid (2002 p.102) states that "The indeterminacy inherent in Western musical notation means that the decoding of the score requires considerable interpretative input and insight from the performer". These statements suggest that decisions on the interpretation of notation are associated with personal preference. Cardew (1961 p.21) advocates using performer's own "language". For instance, in his giant work *Treatise* (1963), Cardew did not give any instructions for notation and instruments, leaving the performer entirely free to decide its interpretation for 193 pages of abstract graphic notations. The many possibilities of the score can not only inspire the performer's creativity, but also motivate the performer to evaluate different approaches to the music. Nevertheless, the decision on the interpretation of notation raise ambiguity. Nyman (1999 pp.210-211) claims that a composer's music is his intellectual product with compositional rules and when the score is passed to the performer, it becomes the sole concern of the performer. Therefore the musical outcome becomes a surprise,

due to the various performing styles of performers and the specific process of preparation in each case.

Few researchers have addressed the freedom of interpretative decision-making but instead focus mainly on the analysis of notational details. Performers are trained to learn the model of notation in terms of shape, duration and location. They are encouraged to approach its interpretation in an accurate and standardized way. However, notation itself is problematic. Its inherent ambiguity affects performers' understanding of composers' intentions. Even though Smith (Sauer 2009, p.11) claims that "To standardise notation is to standardise patterns of thought and the parameters of creativity*",* the performer's decision on interpretation cannot always be standardized. Therefore, Howat (1995 pp.3-20) encourages performers "to acknowledge and accept our subjectivity" and "re-edit" the notation using our own decision. Hill (1975) is one of the pioneer pianists to address this problem by examining Xenakis's *Evryali*. He considers the music is presented with physically impossible material. Many passages are written with extremely opposite directions; four staves are used instead of two staves; brackets are frequently provided to give an alternative choice as many notes are difficult to reach. Those elements are not compositionally new, but Xanakis applies them within his innovative arborescence context. He finds that all those notations indicate that there are different extents of compromise to be considered when making a decision. Hill (1975 pp.17–22) points out:

> Nevertheless, it would be wrong to imagine that the performance of Xenakis's music does not involve the process of decision-making by the player. […] in any given passage one must make decisions according to a scale of accuracy priorities: a scale that distinguishes between what can and cannot be clearly heard, what is of primary importance to the sense of the music and what is subordinate.

Hill's statement also suggests that a process of evaluation is necessary. Performers need to realise the boundary that how far they could achieve without going against the composer's intention. Moreover, Ferneyhough (2003 p.373) states that decision-making is "more about how to create one's own insights when immersed in the complex ambiguity of the art object". His view suggests that the inherent ambiguity of notation could also be applied to its interpretation. Ferneyhough's score is one of those which involves complex texture including woven clefs, tremendous dynamic changes, shifted registers and almost endless pitches. His explicit instructions suggest that the performer needs to give close consideration to notation, for instance, reading notes and analysing unusual text. This process could occupy the majority of a performer's learning time. Detailed notation can help the performer to detect the composer's compositional ideas efficiently and play according to its guidance. However, there is a risk that focusing mostly on precise reading of notation can lead to losing musical creativity. Therefore, over-relying on notation does not necessarily contribute to effective and creative decision-making. Furthermore, Thomas (2007 pp. 132-137) finds that "compositional intention and performance possibilities" determine the space of performer's decision. He points out that the performer has the freedom to explore the notational decision under certain circumstances, for instance, when comprehending the composer's preference and context. However, the weakness of their statement is that it rarely evaluates how much freedom could work in musical realisation.

Making decisions on interpretation is an objective requirement of all performers even if they are unaware of it. It should play an essential part in performers' daily practice. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the issue nowadays. Therefore the Interview analysis in the next chapter will discuss this aspect from the different points of view of six professional participants.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

My interviews were designed to stimulate a discussion-based conversation. I tended to avoid the question-answer stereotype, but to encourage interviewees to express their genuine approach to music. The interview transcriptions are as accurate as possible, with some word order changes and deletions of hesitations and spoken slang. The questions were sent to the interviewees before the formal interviewing in order to provide time for them to generate ideas and prepare for the discussion. For composers, I would want to know their attitudes to notational freedom and how they would use it to control their music. For performers, I particularly paid attention to the questions of interpretative freedom. In addition, I would want to know whether and why collaboration forms an effective communication in their perspectives. I summarised their agreement, disagreement and neutrality and then commented on these from my personal point of view in the end of this chapter. I raised questions on some of the answers which tended to be debatable and ambiguous. I used some of information from the interviews in examining the case study. I raised more questions during the exploration of Fazil Say's *Black Earth* and my recital programme.

Composers —Jenny Jackson, James Joslin and Elena Chiu

Notation

In today's music, composers use various methods to notate their work. The three composers I interviewed, use a combination of conventional and modern notation. They are all agreed that music should serve a purpose no matter what style of notation they choose to use. Jenny and Elena use more traditional notation than James, who introduces more innovative notation such as applying cut-up pieces from photos, newspapers and magazines as well as broken texts and graphic lines. However, James's score still has traditional elements in terms of standard pitches, staves and rhythms. He states that he intends to train the performer to work on the new music by putting unfamiliar elements in a familiar context.

Approach to notation

Today's composers still use the score to convey their musical thoughts to other people. Composers keep exploring and testing notation to better convey their intentions. I ask which method of notation in their perspective works more efficiently for the performer, for instance, do they prefer to provide more or less information on the score? Jenny and James prefer to give more information on the score, while Elena chooses less. Both Jenny and Elena predict situations where the performer might feel reluctant to deal with too much notation. Jenny states that she would like to control the outcome without making it too difficult for the performer to practice and rehearse. Elena suggests that a small amount of accurate and precise notation is a better choice.

Intentions beyond the notation

I wonder whether the intentions and inspirations behind the score play an important role in creating new music. All three composers agree with this assumption. Jenny describes it as the equivalent of "baggage" which you carry throughout the whole process of music making. Elena would write her musical intentions literally at the front of the score, for instance before the musical text. But she doubts whether the performer would bother to read it rather than the score itself. James illustrates his *Cadaquésan Landscape and Memories, Dreams, Reflections* as an example. He explains that the meaning of the title is notated as clearly as possible to the performer. James states that if he wants the performer to play in a certain way, the notation should be precise. But he does not intend

to control which way to play his music, thus he suggests the most significant thing is to “suggest the image in my head”.

Realising notation into sound

Many composes have a clear idea of how their music sounds. And that determines the notation used by the composer to express their music. Therefore, notation should serve the purpose of delivering a precise message to the performer. I wonder how composers convey their idea clearly and accurately through notation. I do not intend to judge which kind of notation expresses ideas better than others, because each composer has their own familiar way of notating music.

James states the most important thing he tries to convey is the music’s possibilities. He says, “I think if you try to control everything then it becomes difficult”. He considers that the notation cannot generate the musical whole as notation is part of music making and is versatile. Elena states that the most important thing she tries to convey to performers is her composing purpose. In order to demonstrate it accurately, she attempts to work with performers in rehearsals. She considers that rehearsals have a significant role in learning and communicate her pieces. Jenny says “the expression, the character and the general kind of effect of the piece” are the most important thing she intends to convey to the performer.

Does the performer need information beyond the score?

As a performer myself, I would expect the score contains full information. Therefore, do we need extra information beyond the score to learn new music, for instance reading contextual articles and searching recordings? Surprisingly, the three composers all agree that the performer does not need to seek outside information beyond the score.

Elena indicates that even though the composer may want to write extra information to help performers, they probably would not read it. She considers the practical experience of rehearsal is the more helpful and feasible way in today’s fast and busy life. Jenny states that she is satisfied with the information provided on the score as she considers that she has already worked out everything for the performer, though she is willing to ease the process of practice and rehearsal. James takes the same point that everything needed is supposed to be written in the score.

The collaboration between composer and performer

The nature of the working relationship between composer and performer is constantly explored and updated. The three composers all say that they work with performers and are impressed with the experience. Jenny considers this collaboration is a “fun” and “natural” experience which could discover new things for both composer and performer in terms of personality and style. She suggests not to always work with the same performers to avoid the limitation of music creation and possibility. She states that she intends to create a dramatic sound without too difficult notation. This is due to her consideration of performance feasibility and her practical working experience in Sheffield.

Elena indicates that the majority of her compositions are “tailor-made”, which implies that she had a pre-connection with the performer before initiating each piece. She demonstrates that her understanding of the performer’s personality and performing style is more valuable than writing a perfect score. However, she suggests that the composer should not impose too many ideas about interpretation because the collaboration should encourage inspiration for both the composer and the performer. As she is also a concert pianist, she comments that as a performer, she finds it very beneficial to work with composers.

James’s perspective is inherently coherent with Jenny and Elena. He describes the collaboration as a meeting ground where the composer and performer could discuss and discover the same music goal. He also thinks that it is worth considering that too much communication might reduce

space for imagination and creation. In addition, he would value feedback from the performer after collaboration.

The three composers all indicate that they would be willing to know the performer before they start to compose the music. James says that it is significant to know the person's interest in the piece in order to create a "middle ground that satisfies both sides". He considers that if he is commissioned by someone, he would like to know their thoughts about the piece because it is also their music. The way of contact is not restricted to face-to-face meeting. The internet, email and Skype can also be used. Jenny states that the knowing of a person would help the inspiration of the music. Elena says that she would like to know a performer's "abilities and strengths" rather than their personality because their personal character and performing style do not affect her own idea or the work.

Performer's influence on notation

I wonder how communication with performers would change a composer's way of notating music. The three composers all agree that performers have significant influence on the process of composing. They say that they would evaluate the performer's suggestions and change any ambiguous points according to performers' needs. Jenny gives a practical example of a rehearsal in Amsterdam several years ago:

> There was a harp and piano in the ensemble and I wanted the harp and piano to sound very simple to each other. It is a very delicate piece. But I wrote a quite difficult part for the pianist to play inside the piano. Then the pianist said to me 'look, I just cannot see the conductor while playing the strings'. So I suggested to play the pitches at any point. The outcome was not that different but it was much easier for the pianist to play.

Jenny illustrates that collaboration can result in an outcome that is not significantly different from the original plan, but which which helps the performer to play with more confidence. Similarly, James always develops his idea with collaboration during the composing process. He states that it is important to know the performer's thoughts and feedback about the piece.

Elena says that as a performer herself, her attitude is slightly different. She would consider the music from the sides of both composer and performer. She particularly points out the communication between herself and performers is vital to engage with her music.

The three composers' statements confirm that a negotiating process between the composer and the performer is a positive way to help to achieve the outcome effectively and efficiently.

Freedom in interpreting notation?

The three composers all agree that they offer freedom to performers but to different extents. All of them would expect the performer to play exactly what the notation indicates. James says, "I would expect the performer to play what I notate basically". He would indicate the frame of the freedom which he allows for as "limitation is liberation". He would also make a note to emphasise the places where freedom needs to be considered. Elena states that she wants the performer to keep to the original notation unless she points out the change. Jenny considers that the freedom can be divided into different layers and should be treated accordingly. She criticises that it is even "rude and offensive" if the performer changes her notation at their own discretion.

Even though precise notation may have been provided, a performer could misunderstand its meaning. James states that he constantly thinks about this issue. He considers that much of his notation is unusual thus he would write guidance for the performer where he thinks it is ambiguous. Jenny states that performers do misunderstand her notation when she works with them. This is one of the reasons that she attempts to find an easy way for them. She has already considered this issues during the process of composing. Elena says that she does not put too much attention

on this issue as she is satisfied with her writings on the score. She would prefer to deal with any problems that might arise in rehearsal.

Performer — Philip Thomas, Zubin Kanga, and Belle Chen

The preparation for new music

The possibilities of composition are infinite. This also applies to performance interpretation. The three pianists all express that they would initiate some research before starting to learn a new piece. Belle states that whatever kinds of notation the composer uses, the intention beyond the piece is the vital aspect to prepare in the music. Thus she would contact the living composer to collect such information to understand the inspiration of the piece. She would also search if any other performers play the same piece in order to evaluate how they approach it and how they document their thoughts.

Zubin states that he would consider the “priorities” from the composer and a “priority” from himself. The composer’s “priorities” include the intention, inspiration and character of the piece. And the performer’s “priority” is to take these “priorities” into account before practically learning the piece. He says that he would practise it in a normal way such as working out the fingering and body position depending on the requirement.

Philip says that he would consider what the score suggests to him. He also thinks about the influence that composer has received. He suggests situating the composer in a tradition because every composer has a tradition.

Notation

The three pianists discuss the pieces they are currently working on and the meaningful notations that concern them. Belle states she is working on *Piano Sonata* (1996) from Scottish composer Sally Beamish and she feels that it is necessary to contact Sally for background information. She also learns pieces by Turkish composer Fazil Say, Croatian composer Ivan Bozicevic and London-based composer Vasiliki Legaki. The unusual notation for her is the *Mechanicals* from another interviewee - the London-based composer James Joslin - which involves large numbers of cut-out pictures from magazines, newspapers, journals and posters. As Belle describes. “It feels like there is no notation but the performer has to perform this information”, which implies the possibility of creation.

Zubin states that he works not only on piano pieces but also on multimedia music. His long list of repertoire includes works by Nicole Lizée, Johannes Kreidler, Neil Luck, Adam de la Cour, Patrick Nunn and Kate Moore. He also engages with experimental and minimalist style works written by Tim Parkinson, Andrew Hamilton and Laurence Crane and so on. He considers that music involving electronic devices has special notation, which requires more effort to cope with. He explains, “Some composers write this out as graphic notation, others as a simplified version in standard notation, and others still leave out any notation, but simply use a click track and time markings on the score”. He recommends gaining practical experience in order to play “consistently” and “accurately”. He also illustrates several sorts of notation that he would pay more attention to, for example the consecutive accidentals and where “the composer prescribes the distribution of hands in a monophonic passage”. Where the composer has not notated, he would arrange his way of playing to be the most feasible.

Philip says he is recently working on music by Canadian composer Martin Arnold who has been influenced by different types of music such as jazz, folk and improvised music. Philip states that he

would evaluate the significance of the composer's influences and adjust his way of performing accordingly. He would also consider his own performing tradition and how he can bring to the music with new perspective.

Approach to notation

Zubin illustrates his approach to *Z/K* as an example. He commissioned *Z/K* from Michael Finnissy and gave its world premiere in 2012. Zubin says, "The score did not have any expression markings or dynamics, and most of the tempi were also left to the performer's discretion. This was Finnissy's way of drawing the performer into the work". I assume Zubin suggests that the score itself already presents certain freedom for the performer to make an interpretative decision. Zubin indicates that Finnissy offers him the freedom of exploring different versions of interpretation in the composer's workshop. However, Zubin considers that the more information provided on the score does not mean the more accuracy contributed to its interpretation. On the contrary, it can be "very challenging and frustrating". For other pieces, Zubin states he would also contact living composers and performers for more information. He would try to find many versions of recording from other performers to obtain inspiration outside the score.

Philip states that "Christian Wolff says the score is one element of conversation". He explains that the notation could act as a meeting ground which connects the notation and intention, the composer and the performer. Philip considers the notation that appeared on the score is to some extent enough because the composer should notate precisely what he wants the performer to play. If the composer requires a specific character or technique, they should provide the notation accordingly. Philip keeps highlighting his willingness to be musically creative and innovative. He says that he treats the each performance as an experiment, whereby he could discover the interpretive options in different performances.

Belle states she would carry out a contextual research of the piece because she considers the composer writes notation with meanings. She indicates that she would prefer less information provided on the score, for instance, descriptive text or additional guidance. She says that she respects the score, but she has the freedom to decide any choices of interpretation at the front of a score.

Realising notation into sound

It is the performer's privilege to eventually transfer the notation into a sound product. It is also crucial for the performer to make an interpretative decision. The decision might be affected by many factors, for instance, whether the performer feels too busy on the notes, or the written notification is unclear. Zubin suggests performers should avoid obeying completely what the composer says. He states that he always suggests changing things through communicating with composers in the workshop. He says that for some reasons, the score might not reflect the composer's original intention. For example, the printing issue in the publication could lead to a different appearance. He considers, "In all these cases, a great amount of research into sources, performers and performance practice is required to be informed enough to make one's decision".

Philip states that there are different kinds of freedom of making decision. He refers to Michael Finnissy and Brian Ferneyhough. He considers that many people feel their freedom of choice is restricted just because Finnissy and Ferneyhough write complex and detailed notation. Actually, he considers that complex notation does not mean limitation, and that simple notation is not equal to freedom. Philip regards the notation as an opportunity of creation. He points out that performers should always obtain inspiration from different forms and densities of notation. The form, such as graphic notation, can even generate more imagination for him. Philip thinks that performers are always free to make any choices.

Belle states she would retain the freedom to decide interpretation. For living composers, she always would want to collaborate with the composer in order to keep the idea updated.

Recordings and performing versions

Recording is a significant issue in performance research. Many performers would usually look for recordings of the music in the learning process. The availability of recordings is generally less for new music than for older music. There are several reasons for this shortage, for instance the recency of work and the lack of time to develop a performing tradition, as well as the time it takes for a new work to become known. Therefore, if there is no recording available, how do we make an interpretative decision? The three performers all express a positive attitude if there is no recording available.

Philip states one of the advantages is that he would not be affected by other people's interpretation. He states that when he receives a composer's new work, he would ask to see some of their other scores because he prefers to work in that music context. He states that he has experiences of tackling new music and he is not willing to be influenced by other performers' interpretation. However, he presumes the fresh learner of new music could seek help from other people's recordings because many of the contemporary scores might look unusual.

Zubin says the creativity is more significant when there is little material available. He says that "having more information and recordings does not make one less free, just as having less information does not necessarily mean greater freedoms can be taken". I agree with his opinion. When performers rely on other performers' recordings for inspiration, there is a risk that their own creativity is not cultivated.

Belle considers there are no disadvantages to a lack of recordings. This means if you give the premiere performance, people will appreciate both the new music and your interpretation. She believes that collaboration with the composer can work better than seeking recordings.

The collaboration between composer and performer

The three performers all indicate that they had experience of collaboration with contemporary composers. Zubin indicates that he always attempts to work with composers. He says, "I've had many long-term working relationships with composers, including Michael Finnissy, Kate Moore Adam de la Cour, Neil Luck, Daniel Rojas, Elliott Gyger, David Gorton, Rosalind Page, all of whom have written multiple works for me". His statement indicates that he has experience of working with composer which also implies that collaboration forms part of his decision-making. He states that the performer could have different roles in collaboration at the different stages of process.

Philip states that he would choose not to work with the composer during the process of writing. He prefers to follow the traditional way of waiting for the score to be completed before acting on it. He says, "I prefer not to work with the composer in a long term and sophisticated way". What concerns him is how he can bring his idea into the piece and make it unique. He prefers to name this composer-performer working relationship as a meeting ground rather than a collaboration.

Belle considers there are two kinds of collaboration. One is to work together while the piece is written and another is to work together after the piece has been written. She usually collaborates in the second way. She states that she always expresses her feeling and experience to the composer. She states that though she could hear many thoughts from the composer, the composer cannot impose these on her. She indicates that there is no disadvantage with collaboration.

Interpretation and Authorisation

Performers need to demonstrate their interpretation eventually and it might take a long process to reach this goal. Contemporary performers generally have experiences of working with contemporary composers. Therefore, I would assume this direct collaboration could lead to an interpretation which is to some extent authorised. I would want to know whether the performer remains faithful to the composer's intention, and at the same time interprets precisely**.** I asked the three pianists how they evaluate this issue.

Zubin says, “on works that I have commissioned, developed and premiered, I think my interpretation is more authoritative as the works are often tailored to me. At least in the early history of the work”. This statement suggests that he claims the authority in his interpretation. However, he humbly expresses that he would not presume to be an authority for other contemporary music.

Philip states that he would not consider the issue of authorisation. He states that the signifiant thing is how to interpret the same music with different approaches. He refers to Peter Hill who used to work with Messiaen and his wife Yvonne Loriod. The two pianists worked closely with Messiaen, so whose interpretation is more authoritative? He states that he frequently works with Christian Wolf but he does not consider himself as authoritative. The knowing of Wolf could help him to approach the music and become convincing in detail. However, he does not intend to became a model to be imitated. He additionally gives a third example of working with Michael Finnissy with the same point of view[2]. Moreover, Philip advocates approaching to interpretation with creation.

Belle holds the same perspective as Philip: she does not consider authorisation as an issue. She thinks it is not a simple conclusion that you qualify your interpretation as authorisation by working with a composer. She says, “I think it is a difficult question because the context of authority is depending on certain composer. How do I know my interpretation is authoritative or not authoritative?”.

Freedom in interpreting notation

How much freedom could we performers have in contemporary music is the significant question in my research. In most cases, performers work on the materials provided by the composer. I wonder how density of notation leads performers to consider their freedom is either allowed or limited.

Zubin indicates it is always associated with the collaboration. The composer and the performer could negotiate this issue during that process. However, he continues that neither the composer nor the performer could represent an integrated outcome. He states that the composer’s notation is “an illumination of the core priorities of their score and this can only be helpful for me in making interpretative decisions”. Thus he considers it is important to discuss and update ideas with the composer in order to achieve the ideal sound.

Philip sees the collaboration as a meeting ground. He says, “I think about how the composer influences me and what I can bring to their music”. He points out that the performer could influence the work by inputting his own perspective. He suggests that the performer should try as many possibilities as they can, as he himself usually does.

Belle states that she always holds the right to be free to make any choices of decision. She respects the composer, thus she prefers to negotiate the detail of freedom in rehearsal.

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[2] See Appendix. Interview transcription. Philip Thomas.

Conclusion

First of all, the three composers express different standards of control. They all agree the virtue of respecting their score. James's music has a strong sense of indeterminacy, under the influence of indeterminate music and Dadaist style. He offers the most freedom to performers and he expects the different kinds of surprise that the performer could bring back to him. However, Jenny's perspective reflects that she prefers to control the music by designed notation. She considers that more detail should be provided in oder to obtain more control of the result. Additionally, her different layers of notation generate different levels of control of music. In her *[S]pan* for mixed ensemble*,* Jenny writes detailed notation to express her control and performer's freedom. For instance, she provides seven boxes of notes, and says "play these boxes in any order". The seven boxes contain different materials and the overall timing is determined as 3'10". Jenny provides the freedom for the performer to rearrange the boxes using the material she prepared. No matter how the performer exercises this option of interpretation, they cannot extend the duration more than 3'10". Therefore Jenny controls the freedom of interpretative choices at this point. Elena holds a similar attitude with Jenny, by stating that the performer cannot change things without her permission. Even though Jenny and Elena demonstrate that they allow certain interpretive freedom, I consider the extent of free decision for performers is not very prominent in their music.

Some people assume that composers can use notation to control their music. At this point of view, James prefers to provide more information without control. He offers freedom and trust to the performer. Meanwhile he expects respect and inspiration from the performer. In contrast, Jenny suggests that the more information she provides means more control of her piece. She refers to her *[S]pan* as an example of how she controls the music by using different types of notation. She particularly mentions that conventional notation could help the performer to engage with the music more smoothly and consistently. At this point, I assume she also feels more confident to express certain ideas by using conventional notation. She states that the notation should be clearly designed in order to help people to understand your intention. Along with the arrangement of pitches, rhythms and staves, she writes word instructions within the text where needed. For instance, "The duration is approximate. The overall piece should be managed by the players to produce dramatic and energetic performance".

Jenny states that, "If you look at Brian Ferneyhough's scores, they are so precise. For me, I would say it is far too difficult to read. When you listen to his music, you still do not know how it is notated, do you?" I assume her point here is that she locates herself in a place as a listener and tries to infer from the listener's perspective. I assume she intends to express the idea that even though performers could figure out how it should sound, they would not know the notation better than the composer. There is another possibility that she might think Ferneyhough writes too many details to digest. It is also an arguable point whether the outcome could become an independent product. It is true that from the audience's point of view that many of them would not know what has been notated without seeing a score. However I consider there are connections linking the score and the outcome, especially when the composer would like to control the outcome and the performer interprets simultaneously with the same goal.

It is the composer's privilege to convey his perspective to performers using all sorts of notation. I wondered what kind of idea the composer considers most valuable to pass to the performer to help them better engage with the music. The priority for James is the musical possibility. James's notation consists of many unusual and abstract elements. Because of the influence of indeterminacy and other modern styles, it is not surprising that much of his musical intention is expressed through new notations. I agree that new notation can be invented for new ideas of sound. And if a composer would want a new sound to happen, he should work out how to notate it. For instance, in Cage's famous *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*, he created two separate note-shapes for fingers and knuckles for different parts of the piano. In my view, he did this because he needed to decide a way of notating the drum-like sound on the lid of piano,

therefore a new notation inevitably became a choice. Elena's priority is her composing purpose. I understand her preference for gathering people in the rehearsal. This way, composers and performers can communicate directly to avoid misunderstanding, additionally saving time and energy. To Jenny, the music character is the most important message to convey to the performer.

Philip finds different attitudes when people appreciate new music compared with classical music. With new music, people would pay more attention to the composer and the composition because they usually do not have a familiar context for what the composer has offered them. With earlier music, people tend to focus on the performer and the performance because they are familiar with the music so they would like to know how the performer interpret it with different perspectives.

I question whether the freedom of notation suggests a freedom of interpretation. I found that the three composers allow a varied extent of freedom on interpretation. One example is from Cage's *4'33*, in which any sounds could be generated except sounds from the instrument itself. According to the score, the overall timing is 4'33" and the timing for each movement is determined. In one live performance available from David Tudor[3], a watch is clearly presented. Tudor constantly referred to the watch during his performance. The watch suggests a precise counting, however, Tudor must have interpreted the instruction to exclude the time to close and open the lid three times, because his total timing exceeds 4'33". It reflects Tudor's discretion in interpretative the performance of the work, possibly also his response to sounds of the audience and the environment. According to Cage (2009 p. preface), "the work may be performed by any instrumentalist or combination of instrumentalists and last any length of time*"*, literally, this instruction appears to give great freedom of decision to the performer. However, in some aspects the performer is not absolutely free. For instance, the timing counted on the watch cannot be changed or adjusted. Therefore, the space for the performer to interpret is reduced to the interval of each movement. Additionally, the performer is not the only participant in interpretation of the music. The audience and the acoustic surround also contribute to differences in each performance.

The three pianists all highlight the importance of the background of the music. It should be investigated with extra effort before initiating any physical practice. Belle and Zubin consider that intention and contextual information need to be examined, while Philip thinks the influence the composer has received is worth valuing. I assume Philip's point of view could generate several issues. Firstly, a composer might have different styles in different periods which could be changing all the time. This is harder to summarise in one style or one tradition. Secondly, it could lead to misreading. For instance, if the score appears similar to Chopin, do I need to play like Chopin? Also if a composer writes in a way similar to Feldman, it does not necessarily mean he is influenced by Feldman. Instead, he might have a different attitude or manner of notating the music. However, I agree with Philip's highlighting of the impact of tradition upon the composer. Philip's suggestion requires more theoretical research and practical engagement because of the large and varied contexts of tradition. I assume the performing tradition he refers to is the tradition people have already established. He has pointed out earlier that every composer has a tradition, and I assume it also applies to the performer.

There are situations where a composer, Fazil Say and Elena Chiu for instance, also works as a performer. I disagree that those composer-performers could have more comprehensive contribution to interpretative decisions of the music than composers who are not specialist players of a certain instrument. However, I agree with Zubin's point of view, the sound imaged in the composer's head might be different from what the performer could achieve.

The three composers all agree that it is unnecessary for performers to seek information outside the score. They all indicate that the entire information performers should know is indicated on the score. On this point, I assume the three composers are not only confident with their writing, but also appreciative of the significant role that practical rehearsals with performers can play in sharing

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[3] Accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HypmW4Yd7SY on 03.05.2018

understanding of their music directly. However, the three performers all state that they would seek information beyond the score to enhance their understanding of the music. Zubin states that, “Ferneyhough once said that the score really needs to do what is required of it. I think notation expresses the ideology of its own process of creation”. Zubin further illustrates the example of working on Charlie Sdraulig’s *Collector*. He says the notation is intended to illustrate the tiny sound playing on the surface of the keyboard. Thus he considers if Sdraulig applies another kind of notation, the result would be changed. Moreover, Philip states,

> In some way, I say yes, the notation is enough if I act extremely about it. But I do not actually think that because we should think about what the composer tries to do and go beyond the score. All the things combine with the notation to make something much more complex than just reading notates and instructions.

Belle’s approach to notation is very practical in general. For instance, she says “if the composer writes *staccato* here, I would think about what is the actual thing he wants”. Compared with Zubin and Philip, she examines the specific detail directly. In my perspective, I agree with the three composers that the whole information should be indicated in the score. Meanwhile, I also agree with Philip’s view, because we could read the score as literally finished, but psychologically we should not consider the score is completed.

The sourcing of recordings plays an important role in discovering music interpretation. Zubin and Belle indicate that they would prefer to look for recordings available to them to obtain extra information such as various versions of interpretation and inspiration. Philip indicates that recordings produced from other people might affect his own decision and creation, thus I assume he tends to avoid this material. Philip highlights his rich experience associated with new music and his collaboration with composers. Thus I assume he depends on the confidence and independence he has built in dealing with new music. I assume it also reflects the culture in contemporary music in which many performers consider the freedom and creation are more important than tradition.

All three performers expect the freedom of decision. This freedom could be informed and adjusted according to the score and contextual information. Creative thinking is particularly mentioned and suggested for the whole process of practice. As a performer myself, I agree with the three performers’ perspective. Both Philip and James express the idea that freedom is limitation. Philip gives the example of *Resistance*, written by Christian Wolf, to express his understanding of freedom. This piece has no tempo setting, then it becomes a kind of freedom for him. However, he needs to listen to the ensemble to determine when to start playing. So it is a limitation. Therefore it is always a combination of freedom and limitation.

The three composers agree that a working collaboration between composer and performer is significant to explore their music. The process of collaboration could not only help the composers and performers to better engage with new music, but also build confidence and trust. Moreover, they apparently prefer to work with performers. The form of collaboration is not restricted to workshop and rehearsal. Actually, formal and informal talking, meeting, email, Skype and internet could be applied. The three composers all agree that the performer’s comments have influence on the music and are willing to amend certain details in response to that.

From the performer’s points of view, only Philip states that he prefer not to work with composers before and during the learning process. He tends to work on his own method. I assume he highlights his own perspective of the music in order to facilitate communication with equal status. However, he states that he still has connection with composers’ private life by means of knowing the person. Therefore, he names the collaboration as a meeting ground. Zubin probably obtains the richest experience of working collaboration among the three performers. I agree with his point that the role of performer could be shifted during different stages of collaboration. For example, I assume the performer’s role could be changed to a listener or a suggester. Belle states that she usually works with composers when the score is complete. She considers there is no disadvantage

in this form of collaboration. Meanwhile, Zubin and Belle indicate that the process of collaboration could clarify how much freedom they have to make an interpretative decision. The three performers all agree that the simplicity or the density of notation does not affect their freedom of choice. It is one of the advantages of collaboration that it could help them clarify ambiguous issues in interpretation, and additionally it might raise their performance to authoritative level. However, only Zubin believes his interpretation could be authoritative, and merely under specific conditions. Philip and Belle indicate that the outcome of collaboration does not mean authorisation.

I consider the information obtained from the six professional musicians are valuable. Therefore I continue the discussion about notation and its interpretative decision-making by examining one case study and three recital pieces in next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
CASE STUDY

Fazil Say—Black Earth

I chose Fazil Say's *Black Earth* as my case study. This piece for solo piano was published in 2007. Fazil Say is internationally renowned for his pianistic virtuosity as well as compositional promotion of Turkish traditional instrument and folk lyrics. *Black Earth* has attracted international attention by its infusion of folk music and jazz, underpinned by its romantic and improvised setting. Therefore it is frequently performed in varied concerts and events around the world. Belle Chen is an active performer who is enthusiastic about new music. As one of my interviewees, I became curious about how she reads the same score as I am reading, and conveys her musical perspective through her particular decision.

In the composition aspect, this piece has a unique musical language and consists of exotic factors, extended techniques and conventional notation. Therefore I intend to highlight its fusion of new compositional elements and standard notation. In the performance aspect, I intend to compare the interpretative decision made between the composer himself and Belle Chen. However, this piece is not chosen to cover the whole range of current techniques. Likewise, Belle cannot present the complete range of interpretation. Moreover, it is not a model of interpretation.

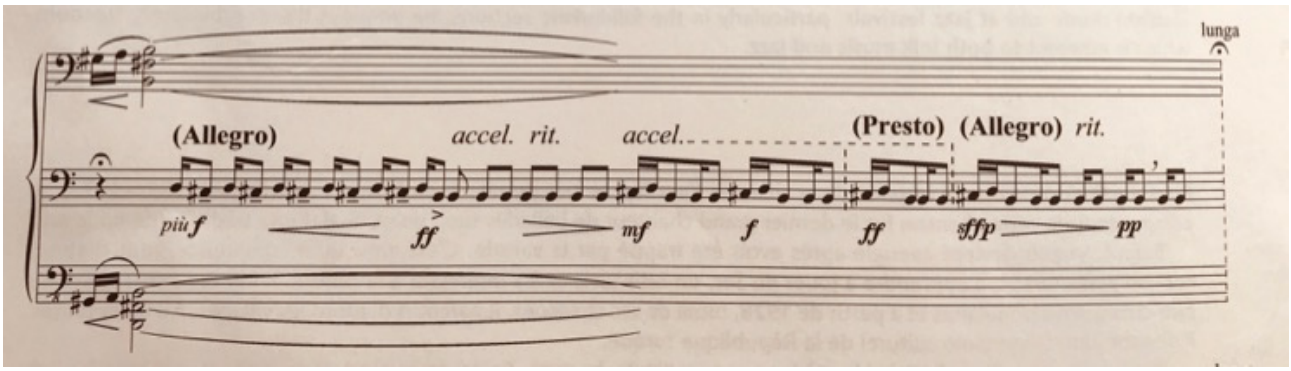
The piece is dedicated to Aşik Veysel who was a traditional Turkish balladier. The score begins with a preface, written in German, English and French. I assume the composer contributed the original text which is significant for introducing and framing the background of the piece. It says that the inspiration for *Black Earth* came from *Kara Toprak,* which is a Turkish lyric composed by Aşik Veysel, the dedicatee. This lyric depicts a grey and gloomy atmosphere and is frequently interpreted on guitar in contemporary performance. It evokes a sense of loss and loneliness. Say tends to use this recurring lyric as the theme to link the whole piece. He writes in the preface that the performer should operate the inner strings in the piano to mimic the sound of *Saz,* which is a traditional Turkish string instrument. It is notated in the preface "particularly in the folkloristic section, he employs the improvisatory freedom which is inherent to both folk music and jazz"*.*

The score is a mixture of three-stave and two-stave notation. It moves from freely notated passages which use the strings inside the piano, to conventional notation on the keyboard. The form could be divided into three sections: A-B-A recap. Say provides a large number of dynamic and articulation marks. In section A, *Lento* is marked in the opening expression. There is no time signature indicated in this section, so it is the most free and improvised passages in the piece. It begins with a meditative tune, and then the chords gradually enter to build the harmony. From bar 2, the piano strings are introduced for the *Kara Toprak* lyric. In a footnote, Say writes the instruction "Bağlama effect: To obtain a 'con sordino' sound, press the strings with the left hand, while playing the notes with the right hand". He writes *prepared* to indicate the place where the performer should prepare their left hand to depress the nominated strings. The accurate location of strings needs to be identified before placing the hands on the strings. The identified strings are concentrated around middle C area. However, in order to recognise which string is intended and minimise the searching time during performance, many performers like to prepare the strings with cut-stickers, preferably with different colours.

Henry Cowell is the pioneer composer in the use of inside piano , for instance, in his *Banshee* and *Aeolian Harp.* Say explores the technique, where one hand depresses the prepared string while the other remains on the keyboard. Here Say writes a *f* along with *drammatico*. For a more effective result, I would suggest to try to use the *sostenuto* pedal to sustain the harmony. The performer should avoid blurring the harmony with the prepared strings. Thus the *sostenuto* pedal would help to clarify the background harmony. However, Say does not write a *sostenuto* mark, thus it is the performer's discretion to work out a solution respectfully.

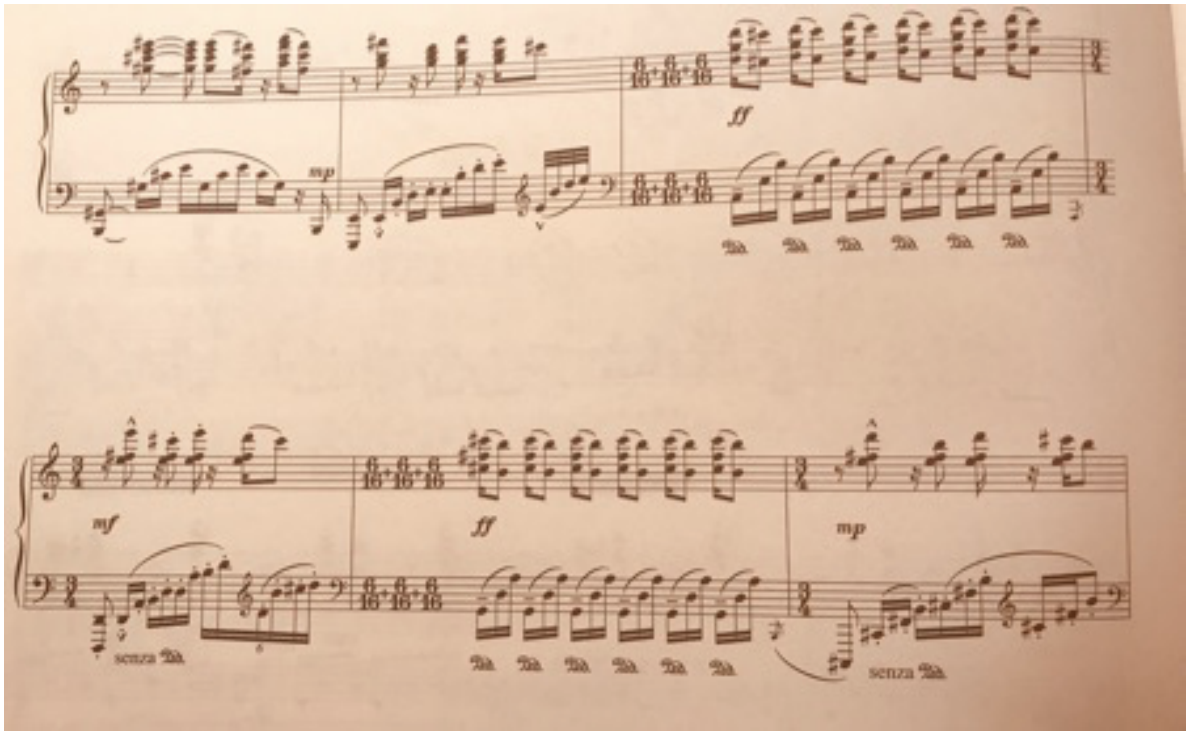
Say writes intensive expression and dynamic notation for prepared strings. There is no doubt that he would like the performer to play the strings with emotion. For example (see Example 1), the dynamic tension is from *f-ff, ff-mf*, and then *ff* again, finally finished with *pp.* Along with the dynamic marking is *Allegro-Presto-Allegro-rit*, all these dramatic effects happening in one bar. Even though Say marks *Lento,* there is a great music continuity inside the bar. The performer should arrange the timing of entering dynamic fluctuation in accordance with the expression mark. Because the playing method is significantly different between the strings and the keyboard, it also requires the performer to prepare physically and psychologically in a short time. There are several accent markings on the downbeat, thus I consider it needs extra pressure to depress the strings.

Example 1, bar 3



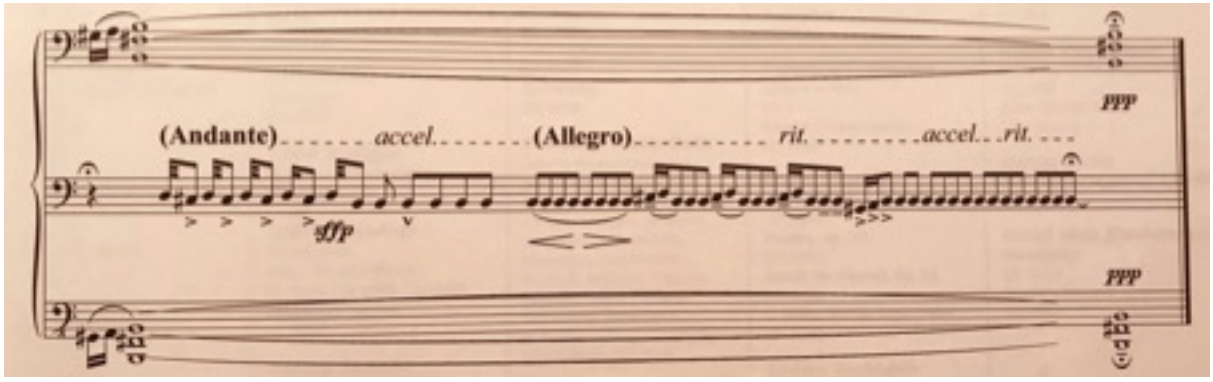
Section B is from page 3 to page 9. Say indicates *Largo doloroso,* which deliberately creates a sentimental atmosphere. The music enters with quietness, but a block of six recurring chords keeps producing a hesitant and sorrowful ambiance. The texture of the music is developed when he notates *Allegro assai— Drammatico,* and the atmosphere becomes agitated. Say uses frequent *f* and *ff* along with *cresc* to emphasis the tension of music continuity. The climax is reached when the block of six recurring chords appears again. It is a reminiscence of the previous sadness but in a passionate way. Here he writes an irregular meter 6/16+6/16+6/16 (see Example 2). I assume he intends to enhance the music tension to a higher degree. At this point, he writes sustained pedal marks for each chord in order to achieve and retain the fervent character.

Example 2, bar 48-53



The material returns to section A as a recapitulation following the intensive expression of section B. Say indicates *Largo doloroso* to transfer the hand position to prepared strings. He also deliberately writes *prepared* which guides the performer to manipulate the strings in the same way as at the beginning. I consider this material suggests the performer could design different approaches to make the interpretation diversified. After the transition passages, the *Kara Topeka* lyric appears again in *Largo.* Say writes *accel…rit…accel…rit* along with *Andante* and *Allegro* to suggest the possibility of *rubato* (see Example 3). It is worth mentioning the dynamic mark *sffp* under the duplet, which appears close to the *p,* suggesting the decreasing of volume before the note B which follows. It is highly technical for both hands in different positions. The performer should predict its potential effect when making a performing decision. The music ends with a *ppp,* leaving the audience immersed in the dramatic atmosphere.

Example 3, bar 85



The score convinces me that Say is deliberately precise. He intends to write substantive notation for the performer to read and understand as accurately as possible. On the *Kara Toprak* theme (see example 1), I can see he attempts to indicate each subtle nuance. The constant dynamic changes are intended to describe the features of the original lyric. Most performers who are not familiar with the Turkish Bağlama would want to obtain more information about the instrumental effects directly from the composer. To avoid such lengthy procedure, Say chooses a notational way which probably suits the performer better. It efficiently saves the performer both time and energy by suggesting Bağlama interpretation within the score. I assume it has advantages to those performers who pick up the piece quickly and have limited time to prepare a performance in a short period.

The *Kara Toprak* theme is carefully organised to connect the entire piece. I consider it also implies a transition of Turkish music. Thus the interpretation of the theme associated with the piano strings is significant. It needs to not only build the character of the traditional Bağlama effect, but also to reflect the performer's interpretative decision. When the strings are pressed, the sound becomes veiled to mimic the Bağlama. The preface indicates that "particularly in the folkloristic section, [Say] employs the improvisatory freedom which is inherent to both folk music and jazz", which suggests that the theme should be played with a sense of flow and imagination. This offers the performer a chance to personalise the theme in a creative way though the expression marks are emphasised by the composer. I raised the question, do we performers need to seek information about Turkish music when we learn the music? If so, how much knowledge is necessary?

Say himself has performed this piece in various concerts and events. I consider the recordings of these performances as an important learning medium. Generally, Say applies more improvisation in live performances than in his recording (CD) published in 2008. This CD is one of the earliest performances available. Even though he does not indicate tempo, I could hear the theme is deliberately organised. The rhythm is carefully counted and the flow of melody is steady. The dynamic nuance is more obviously distinct than his live performances. I assume this is to some extent due to recording studio effects which can enhance the expression. Therefore, *Black Earth* lasts 5'31" in CD. However, the majority of live performances exceed that time, usually up to 6'30". I consider the most significant reason is his free interpretation and improvisation are recognised in live performances.

In section A, Say particularly writes *lunga* with a *fermata* at the end of each stave (see Example 1). I consider this arrangement represents the breath of the phrase when the bar line is absent. In Say's latest live performances on Youtube[4] in 2017, the time is extended by nearly one minute more from his CD. We can clearly see Say breathes at each *lunga.* Moreover, he does not put any stickers on strings for convenience. Instead he operates keyboard and strings smoothly and naturally as if there is no positional barrier. Therefore, this type of free interpretation contributes to a longer time than a studio recording for CD.

There are two issues to consider. Firstly, Say applies more freedom. The theme continues with more sense of musical flow. Meanwhile, his act of breath is visible. I consider this to be significant in the interpreting of the theme. The act of breath in music could not only facilitate the engagement between the performer and the music, but also encourage the mutual communication between the performer and the audience. In the 2017 live performance, I could perceive that Say has more control of freedom in interpretation of the theme than his CD. Say deliberately pauses and flows through the breath in order to create a folk-like atmosphere. In other words, he still controls the music as a performer.

Secondly, how long is the *lunga* supposed to be? Also, because it is associated with the piano strings, when do we prepare ourselves for that? The question about freedom starts from the beginning of the piece. According to the preface comment "particularly in the folkloristic sections, he employs the improvisatory freedom"*,* there is no doubt that Say provides the option of freedom for performers to decide the interpretative choice.

In section A, the left hand returns to the keyboard and remains for the entire section. Say interprets this section with full of character and expression both in CD and in live performances. The *Kara Toprak* theme returns and is developed, now shifted to the keyboard. Thus it is much more feasible for the performer to achieve a dramatic feature. This section is the most dramatic and emotional part of the piece. A sense of *rubato* can be traced in his live performances. However, there is no notation written about this on the score.

In the CD, I could infer Say tends to play as precisely and accurately as possible according to his notation. I could hear he carefully organises the tempo with a sense of freedom, at the same time trying to avoid disrupting the music continuity. The dynamic expression is deliberately arranged and achieved within expectation. However, in his 2017 live performance, for example, the freedom of improvising and *rubato* are obvious. Even though time signature and bar lines are indicated in the section, Say does not control the tempo in strict time. Instead, he follows the music and lets it continue and speak for itself. Meanwhile, the dynamic expression is stretched. I assume this performance is not just an interpretation by the composer of the music, as it includes the improvisation of a performer. On the other hand, the length of time might be affected by the presence of audience. Playing with response from an audience is intrinsically different from playing in a studio. Therefore, it is understandable that Say would want to adjust his performance to unique live circumstances. It also needs to be considered that Say's idea of interpretation has been developed over a long period of time.

I also consider the question of authorisation in new music which applies to many living composers and performers. Many people might assume that Say holds the authoritative version because he is the creator of the music. People might also assume the composer is freer with his own music than his score suggests. If Say develops his ideas and plays differently from the score, people might still agree with that because he owns the music. To some extent, it is true. The fact is, we performers work on the information provided on the score. We have a vital difference of attitude from the creator. Many performers would therefore seek for a safe zone to avoid potential criticism. However, I consider that when composers perform their own music this does not necessarily mean that the music is written with only one interpretative option. Here, Say particularly writes

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[4] Accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYtybgToH2Q on 15.06.2018

improvisatory freedom which positively encourages performers to design one or more kinds of interpretation to their own satisfaction.

Another question raised is whether Say's free notation suggests an interpretation freedom. He uses a combination of free and standard notation. Does this imply that the performer has the same privilege to make a decision in response to that? Or can it be assumed that it is a method of suggesting what the composer considers to be most coherent and suitable? He does not write his own improvisation nor provide relevant instruction other than the *improvisatory freedom* in the preface. However, his available audio documents suggest his free interpretation to different extents.

Belle Chen, one of my interviewees, recorded her own live interpretation in 2016[5]. In this performance, she gives a short introduction, mentioning the imitation of the Turkish instrument. Belle finishes the music at 6'08". There are two points to note. Firstly, in my point of view, the biggest difference from Say's performance is that she interprets the music just how I would interpret a classical period piece. I consider Say inputs his understanding of *Bağlama* and Turkish music into his performance, so the music evokes the exotic feeling. In the interview, Belle indicates that she has had collaboration with Say. However, she presents a different version of interpretation from his. Moreover, her interpretative decision reflects her statement, "I respect what the composer writes, but I am always free to make a choice".

Secondly, Belle organises the music in a compact way which significantly facilitates its continuity. She manages the tempo steadily even at the *Kara Toprak* theme. To some extent, the improvisation is less traceable. But in section B, she still presents *rubato* which naturally speeds and flows with shape of phrases. Here the freedom of expression is recognised. For instance, she adjusts the volume of dynamic in the climax passage (see Example 2). Say writes *ff* from the beginning of the bar until the next bar. In his 2017 live performance, he plays exactly as he indicated on the score, but Belle chooses to increase the volume from *p* to *ff*. It creates a different kind of acoustic effect. However, it also could be assumed at her live performance she was improvising on the spot.

Thirdly, in Say's live performances, he uses techniques such as vibrating the strings, and occasionally depressing the string heavily. However, he does not write nor describe these extended techniques on the score. From his introduction in the preface and his live performances, I could see that he intends to mimic the *Bağlama* as closely as possible by applying his knowledge of this Turkish traditional instrument. This raises the question of whether we performers need to search other sources in order to know how to play the *Kara Toprak* theme? How much information outside the score do we need to know? Or, if we rely solely on the score, how much interpretative freedom may we have?

Black Earth also presents a challenge about how much to improvise on a notated score. Belle is like many performers who work mainly on what is written on the score. Decisions we make not only contribute to the sound we plan to achieve, but also reflect the nature of how we perceive the information in front of us. Even when much background information is available, for every piece of piano music we try to achieve the best sound experience. Philip says in his interview that "notation has much more suggestive possibilities". I consider the essential task for performers is how to think creatively both in the score and outside the score. Then this could help the performer to establish with confidence how much freedom and improvisation are appropriate.

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[5] Access at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRJGn7EiB2Y on 15.06.2018

Music for Recital

My three selected piano pieces, *Intermittences* (2005) from *Two thoughts about the piano* by Elliott Carter, *Day break shadows flee* (2014) by Judith Weir and *Z/K* (2012) by Michael Finnissy represent different notational and musical approaches.

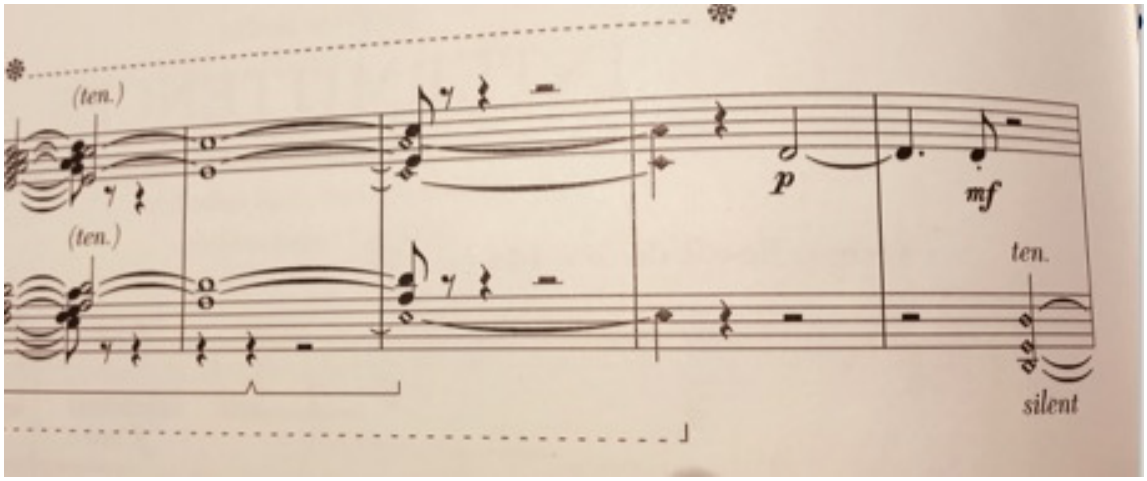
In his preface, Carter says:

> The many meanings silences can express in musical discourse challenged me to use some of them in Intermittences. This title was suggested by 'Intermittences du coeur', and of the chapters in Marcel Proust's novel. It is a short work that also uses many different piano sounds to convey its expressive meanings.

This statement mentions his intention of using the *silent* mark. However, Carter actually writes *silent* only in the first two pages and, *press silently* on the last page. The *silent* is usually located underneath a chord on left hand (see Example 4). Additionally, the relevant notes on the chord take a hollow-diamond shape. There is no doubt that Carter intends to guide the performer to depress the keys without sound. I assume he intends to point out that the harmony should be available but hidden. It clearly refers to Carter's "many meanings silences".

In the performance perspective, the silence needs to be prepared. It raises the question of how much freedom I could have here. I found there are two factors which could influence my decision. The first factor is the time signature which has determined the counted rhythm. The second factor is the symmetrical bar lines which offer little space to be rhythmically flowed. Additionally, the right hand can be regarded as an assistance to help the silent-playing. I evaluate the finger speed and weight I put on the keyboard in order to achieve the hidden harmony. I still need to listen to the harmony and to image the sonority played with right hand. It also helps the audience to notice my timing initiating and finishing the phrase. I realise that varieties of piano conditions may easily lead performers to fail just on this detail. Thus it is important for the performer to obtain plenty of time to familiarise with the instrument and make a decision about its execution.

Example 4, bar 18-22



Another feature is the expression mark *tempo flessibile.* Even though many new music has a flexible tempo, I consider this measurement needs more attention. Following the *tempo flessibile,* Carter indicates that the tempo is in 4/4 and a crochet equals 144 beats. At this point, I assume we still need to count the rhythm as we normally play. However, I consider the *flessibile* suggests the opposite of a precise tempo which could generate other rhythmic possibilities. Therefore, I assume Carter offers freedom of discretion on the speed of flowing the music but in a rhythmic frame.

The *silence* passages and the standard passages alternate. I notice the colour and character of harmony are prominent during this alternation. Carter particularly writes “Timing depends on resonance of Pianoforte”. To me, this implies that the condition of the instrument is worth evaluating. Therefore in this piece, I assume the judgements on tempo must be to some extent tentative until the performer knows their instrument. I would suggest it is important to arrange and to test the instrument before performance in order to be familiar with its acoustics and mechanism. Before that, a fixed or prepared tempo is not appropriate. I also need to consider how to transmit the sound to the audience in the performance venue. Performers are required to act with sensitivity not only to the instrument itself, but also to the surrounding public environment - its space and its acoustic.

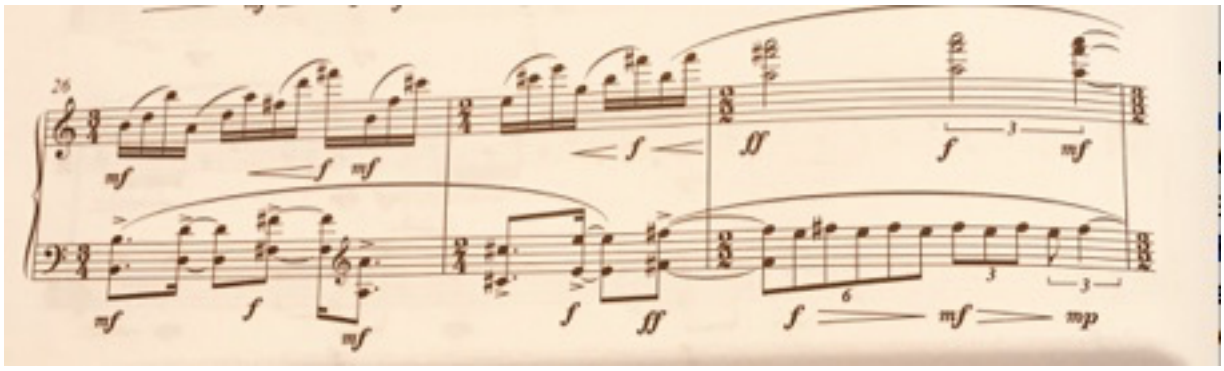
As in many contemporary piano works, progression of chords, fast changing dynamic and groups of rapid notes are included. I found the major challenge of playing this piece is how to coordinate its dissonance and technique in *tempo flessibile.* So far, I have different performing experiences on different pianos. To some extent, I play with what the acoustic returns to me. Therefore I should, each time, design a tempo which best suits the piano and location.

My second selected piano piece is *Day Break Shadows Flee* by Judith Weir. Weir provides substantial information on the score. In the preface, she writes,

> Day Break Shadows Flee, written for Benjamin Grosvenor, is a Two-Part Invention, a piano solo composition in which the two hands work in close co-ordination but independently. My intention was generally to avoid using thick chords (although octaves and other clear sonorities are included) while allowing both the right and left-hand lines to be free, mobile and expressive. The treble and bass sector of the keyboard are clearly contrasted and often widely separated. In atmosphere and expression the music is another kind of two-part invention, contrasting bright, upward-arching phrases (heard at the opening and evoking the arrival of light at the beginning of the day) with veiled, mysterious scurryings, suggesting the stranger, more nervous life lived at night and in the early morning.

Weir applies standard notation in this music. According to her “the two hands work in close co-ordination but independently”, which implies that each hand has its own separate interpretation within the context. She expresses her intention “generally to avoid using thick chords” which I assume she designs particularly for depicting the transparent and vivid character of sunlight. It enables each hand to express its own part precisely without the feeling of heaviness. The scheme of melody and rhythm has a traditional relationship, which is symmetrically straightforward. The rhythm is frequently changed but remains symmetrical. For example, from bar 26 to bar 29, she writes four time signatures which are 3/4, 2/4, 2/2 and 3/2 (see Example 5). However, the texture remains smooth and the changing metres is almost traceless in actual performance. Ultimately, the rhythm functions mainly as a signal of beats. It is a significant feature of Weir’s prolonged lyricism and the continuity of music tension in this music.

Example 5, bar 26-28



By her statement “In atmosphere and expression the music is another kind of two-part invention”, I assume she intends to emphasise again the independence of two hands by highlighting the expressive character this achieves. Weir especially mentions “contrasting bright” which I assume it suggests that a different versions of interpretation needs to be prepared for each hand. Very often the two hands have different feature of colour, dynamics and articulations (see also Example 5). In order to achieve this effect, I deliberately practise each hand and try to avoid uniting the two.

Weir writes pedal indication at the beginning as “throughout, as necessary”. About this point, Weir comments in her website on why she did not input any pedal markings, “pedalling seems a flowing, natural extension of his finger technique, rather like vibrato for a string player, and not something I could impose”[6]. She regards pedalling as a personal preference and thus she does not try to control it by notating beforehand. Her view also reflects the question of the limitations on our freedom, even though the composer gives the chance to free yourself on certain points. Weir continues, “But I found the biggest scope for advice lay simply in adding pauses and breaths between sections – tiny gaps and breaks too small to notate”[7]. Very often the task given to the performer is not only understanding the composer’s intention, but also realising the composer’s intention of freedom. Here Weir tries to explain her flexible attitude. Thus I would consider the freedom in her meaning does have its limitation. Furthermore, at the end of this statement she encourages a performer to meet the living composer for seeking a better solution. I consider that collaboration with the composer is an efficient way to resolve all performing issues. The three performers I interviewed all express its advantages and their own willingness to work with composers.

The compatibility of conventional familiarity and contemporary novelty is raised—how to play a piece of new music which has traditional form. Its title suggests it is a piece that needs imagination. Weir writes plenty of dynamic and expression marking to represent different environmental changes. Three tempo changes suggest imagery that changes with the time of day. The opening passage has a similar sonority to Debussy’s *Clair de lune* with soft octave lines. Then the music gradually develops with coloristic intervals, and later initiates another section which requires animated expression. Fast-note groups and changing dynamics provide the excitement and busy atmosphere of middle of the day. This piece ends with *pp*, which I assume is Weir’s intention to finish the day quietly and peacefully. Weir creates a picture of a whole day. It encourages me to

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[6] Judith Weir’s official website, accessed at http://www.judithweir.com/single-post/2014/09/04/Day-Break-Shadows-Flee on 05.03.2018

[7] Ibid

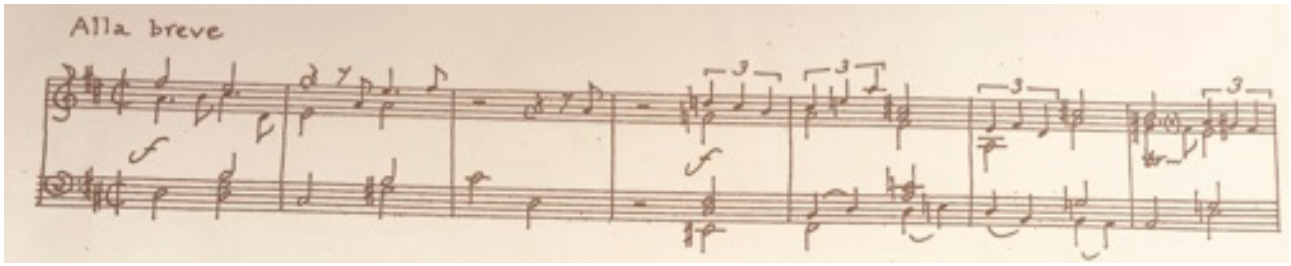
think of different possible approaches to the music which suit both the instrument and performance arena.

It is interesting to compare Weir's approach with Carter and Say. Weir writes the most detailed notation, does it thus inhibit the performer's creativity? I particularly brought this question to the interview. I obtained the responses that three performers all agree that substantial information like Weir's does not necessarily mean their creativity is limited. For instance, Belle indicates "I respect what the composer writes, but I am alway free to make a choice". Meanwhile, Zubin says 'I certainly do not think that the composer's word is final.[…] and this can only be helpful for me in making interpretative decisions". On this point, I would suggest to avoid over-focusing on the notation. There is plenty of other contextual information that could also contribute to completion of the music. I consider Weir's intensive notation plays an important role which enables me to communicate with her through the score.

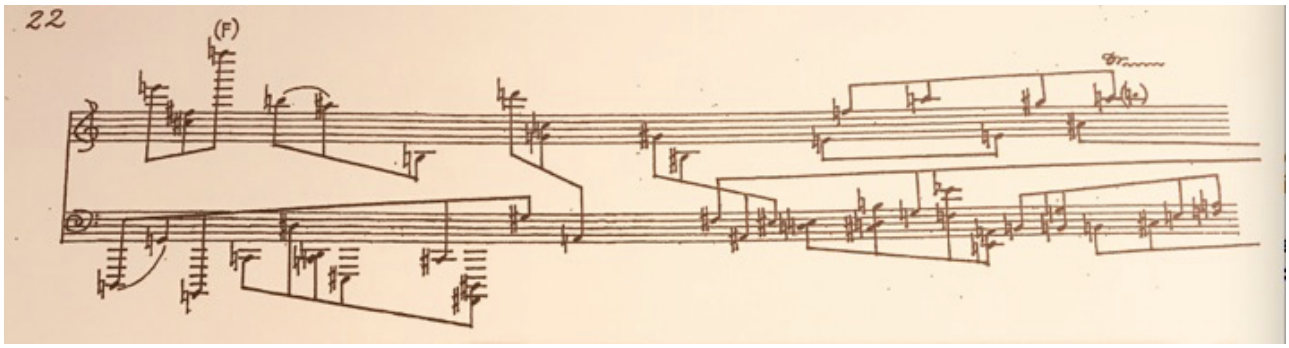
The third piece is *Z/K* by Michael Finnissy. This piece is the 'freest' music in the recital because it has the least notation on the score. There is no time signature indicated except in the middle section where Finnissy writes 2/2 (see Example 6). The bar lines suggest its character by using down and off beat. I assume Finnissy intends to guide the performer to comply with the exact detail.

However, the next section presents the opposite direction (see Example 7). Finnissy writes *senza misura* which precisely suggests to play in a free time. In contrast with example 6, no bar lines are indicated. I consider this implies that Finnissy provides freedom for the performer to organise the phrase. In example 7, the notes are spanned into two extremes and both hands cooperate independently but relatedly. Thus without the presence of tempo and bar lines, it is left to the performer to work out how much freedom is appropriate in the phrase. Overall, the bar lines are irregular and are changed with the music's progress. I assume this is a clue which Finnissy devises deliberately in order to introduce the character of each section. Thus the decision of tempo in each section is my first task.

Example 6, bar 40-46



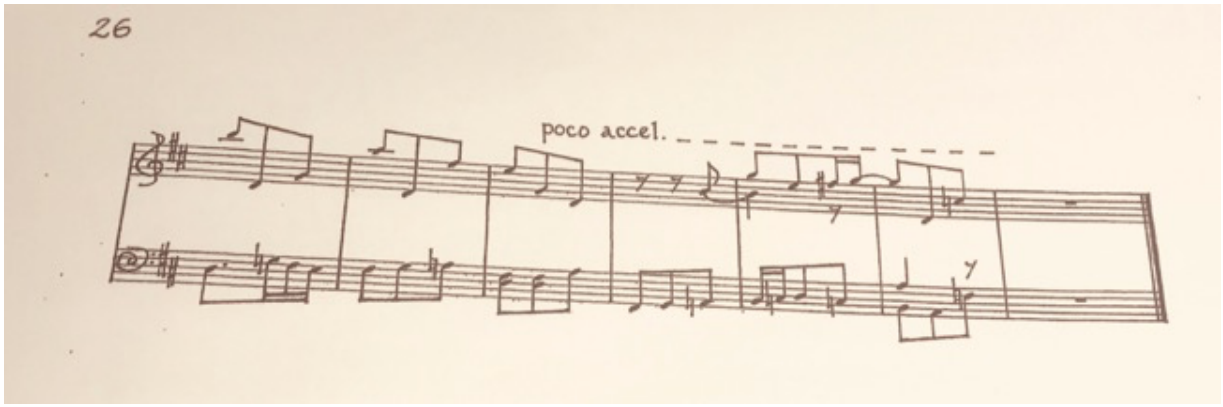
Example 7, bar 172



Finnissy provides an expression mark at the beginning of each section, for instance *Andante sempre piano* in the first section and *Largo* in the second section. These expression marks could help the performer to identify different sections and make an interpretive decision according to that. Finnissy avoids writing extensive dynamic marks on the score. However, other essential information is given such as *non legato e mezzo piano* and *poco accel.* I assume that, along with the flexible tempo, this is another example where freedom of discretion is left to the performer. It generates many interpretative options, such as how to design the phrase with characteristic expression and to what extent can the tempo be free without affecting the continuity of the music. The sections without bar lines last two to three pages. Thus I need to decide where to start and end each phrase. I consider the dynamic expression plays a significant role in designing a phrase. I often explore different shapes of phrase and test them with diverse dynamics. The decision on expression is my second task with this piece. This is another freedom Finnissy offers to the performer.

I feel this piece ends with a sense of infinite. Finnissy writes a standard notation for the last three pages where the bar lines are precisely and symmetrically presented. To me, the texture suggests a strong similarity of Gigue in Baroque period. I can see the music speaks for itself, even without the tempo and expression marking. Finnissy writes *poco accel* for the last several bars (see Example 8). The structure remains fundamentally consistent. I consider the *poco accel* indicated here is worth examining because it could generate many possibilities. For instance, psychologically, the music is continuing. It creates an atmosphere of Baroque-like dance. Or, it functions as a preparation for the new character of future music. Secondly, in the practical aspect, it is challenge to interpret in such a short distance. Very often, I feel the music ends before I notice the rhythmic change. Thirdly, the different conditions of pianos might delay the feedback of sound. All these points lead to the decision becoming more complex in consequence. I wonder why Finnissy locates *poco accel* at this place but I suppose he has his reason. On the other hand, it prompts me to think creatively and be able to discover more potentials of interpretation. It reflects the freedom given by Finnissy which encourages the performer to explore the piece with different perspectives.

Example 8, bar 258-163



Finnissy dedicates this piece to pianist Zubin Kanga. In the interview session, Zubin discusses his collaboration experience with Finnissy and comments “he encouraged me to explore all the many dynamic and expression options for any given passage, and to also feel free to change my approach every time I played the work”. This statement suggests that many versions of interpretation are recommended. It also reflects Finnissy’s open attitude in accepting various types of interpretation and personalities. The freedom of decision is obvious on the score. I agree with Zubin’s practice which stimulates you to think creatively. Additionally, it cultivates the ability to discover music within the contemporary context. *Z/K* is the ‘freest’ score I currently work on. The score itself generates many possibilities. It helps me to think creatively and enthusiastically to make my decisions about interpretation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Reflection

This study is an original investigation of notation and related performing issues in the contemporary music context. My roles as researcher, performer, practitioner and listener continued to develop during the study. I focused on the central question: how much freedom a performer could have to make an interpretative decision. Through the process of investigation, my original questions have been developed and expanded.

My recital programme was determined and prepared during the process of research. I learned the repertoire in my normal way as a practitioner, at the same time I was constantly reflecting on the questions I asked. This experience of preparation has developed my perspective on performance interpretation. The pieces I chose is aimed to present different types of notation that can be encountered in new music. Fazil Say's *Black Earth* combines variable notation from standard keyboard to piano strings. The two pieces *Intermittences* and *Caténaires* by Elliott Carter illustrate the fusing of new ideas in a standard form. Judith Weir uses completely conventional notation in her *Day Break Shadows Flee.* Michael Finnissy's *Z/K* uses sparing notation with tiny expression and tempo markings. Along with the pieces I examined, composers I interviewed provided other examples of notation (see Appendix 2). The types of notation they illustrate included graphic, linear, narrative and improvised notation. My intention is to highlight the perspective of interpretative decision on the notation, rather than to list ranges of existing notation. I aim to explore the scores as examples of notation issues that performers such as my interviewees and myself need to consider when approaching the music.

The discussion I encouraged with the interviewees reflects the nature of diversity in contemporary music culture. From the performer's point of view, I questioned how they evaluate their freedom of interpretative decision. Moreover, I asked whether new music requires more effort to prepare as the variety of notation suggests different possibilities of interpretation, for instance, tackling technical demands and understanding unusual notation. From the composer's perspective, I realised that freedom has a boundary. I use the word 'Frame' to suggest the scope of how far the performer could achieve freedom. It is an analogy equivalent to the frame around a picture.

The three composers I interviewed all indicate that their scores are provided in completed form. I am surprised that composers all agree it is unnecessary for performers to seek further information beyond the score, because the three performers I interviewed all say the opposite. They would prefer to seek extra knowledge, particularly contextual information, when preparing new music. This seems to suggest that the composer and the performer still retain different roles in new music, unless the composer also works as a performer. Therefore, composers convey their intentions through the score and performers work on the information provided. This situation remains the same as with most earlier compositions except perhaps in situations where musicians work music together.

I raise the question of whether free notation suggests a free interpretation? In *Black Earth*, Say creates an exotic atmosphere by imitating the sound of the Turkish instrument *Bağlama*. His free notation, which switches from piano strings to keyboard, suggests many interpretative possibilities. Both Say himself and Belle present some different approaches to interpretation. Moreover, free notation could be used for purely practical reasons rather than encouraging improvisation. For

instance, it could make performers feel less pressure to play inside piano and reduce nervousness when using unfamiliar techniques. Therefore, sometimes notation may be allowed to not speak for itself as much as usual. Say's various performing versions in recorded and live performances reflect his constantly developing ideas. Thus I would assume the score published in 2007 is only one of the interpretative versions which he had in mind at that period. The improvisation aspect is still a significant feature in his performances. This view is supported by Say's instruction *Quasi improvvisazione*, which suggests the freedom to explore interpretative decision.

This connects with another question, how much freedom does the composer offer? Should we performers completely obey what is written on the score, or could we modify it to certain extent to suit our needs? The three composers I interviewed all say that they do not wish the performer to change things unless permission is granted, but at the same time, they say they allow some space for interpretative freedom. I consider this to be a contradiction, so I assume they are speaking of two approaches. One approach is diverse formats to control freedom applied by the composer. For instance, in Jenny's *[S]pan* for mixed ensemble*,* the option for reorganising the order of boxes using the prepared material is the performer's discretion. Thus it could be deemed an obvious example of complete freedom of interpretive choice allowed by the composer. However, because there are more than two choices for the performer, it also implies that Jenny has pre-explored the extent for freedom of interpretation. The material in each box suggests that its musical interpretation has been deliberately identified by the composer. Therefore the extent of interpretative freedom is measured. In another word, the composer is controlling the interpretation through notation.

The other approach is the diversity of outcomes permitted by the composer. Jenny intends to control both the freedom and outcome, while James allows the most freedom of interpretation among my interviewees. In his *Cadaquésan Landscape,* he makes it clear where freedom and limitation apply. The lengthy instructions and programme note contain important contextual information particularly on the aspect of instrumental setting. In the interview, James indicates that he would prefer to give more information to the performer in order to suggest the interpretation, rather than imposing his interpretation. Thus the use of two metronomes and the music box is entirely determined by the performer. He writes comments such as "Perform the above notes with free durations (though in the correct order and only once) within approximately 60 seconds until the following metronome pattern emerges". The words "free duration within approximately 60 seconds*"* still suggest a frame that limits freedom of interpretation. It reflects that the composer could control the outcome through notation.

I consider the frame might have different meanings in classical music, for instance, the frame of the *rubato* or the frame of the *Adagio.* The performer should play it exactly, using established knowledge and performing tradition. However, in new music, many composers would not restrict the performer on these details. For instance, in Elena's *O Still, Small Voice of Calm,* she writes "duration and frequency of each trill can vary depending on the performer's choice*."* Jenny writes similar instructions in her *[S]pan,* such as "occasionally, go against the Brass & WW dynamic surge, as much as possible". These notations suggest a wider frame of freedom.

I attempt to explore this frame of freedom in my recital programme. The most extreme case I am working on so far is *Z/K* by Finnissy. Compared with the standard notation of *Day Break Shadows Flee* by Weir, the notation of *Z/K* implies that the frame has multi-options. For instance, there are two approaches to tempo. Where tempo is indicated by the composer, I choose to respect it strictly. Where tempo is not indicated in the score, I have my interpretative discretion. In the middle section, Finnissy writes *Alla breve.* The bar lines are precisely and symmetrical located.[8] The material has a classical appearance. Thus I assume the frame of interpretative freedom could not be extended to allow me to change the detail, particularly in the aspect of rhythm. Here I decide to

[8] See Example 6

count the phrases exactly in time in response to the score. I also intend to differentiate this from the non-tempo material, which forms the majority of the score.

My approach to the non-tempo material is to try to avoid a single conclusion. Finnissy only provides markings such as *Andante semipro piano* and *Largo.* The sections where *senza misura* appear suggest a free decision in tempo. The bar lines are irregularly arranged, and there are whole pages without them.[9] I regard this as a puzzle hidden in the notation. It sometimes disappears in the text, or appears with standard beats, creating a Baroque-like atmosphere, particularly in the last three pages. It could also be viewed as a psychological pause rather than actual stopping. There are passages where Finnissy writes the pitch in a particular way. For instance, he writes the double sharp *x* on C to indicate the note D. However, there are very few dynamic markings written on the page. As with *Black Earth,* does this free notation suggest a free interpretation?

I found the free notation in Finnissy's score does give me the freedom to explore the potentials. For instance, I could make several decisions at one time. I am able to test and change my decisions on different pianos and locations. Occasionally, I improvise on certain passages. I aim to respond to what is written on the score, because the score indicates its spaces for free decision. To me, the frame is comparatively large. I should try to negotiate and explore the frame in order to discover more interpretative possibilities.

During the process of learning *Z/K*, I found that the notation could suggest the way of interpretation. It depends on how much freedom the composer intends to give. The notation forms the frame of freedom to show how much flexibility the performer could introduce to the music. Thus it is crucial for the performer to realise the scope of the frame and make interpretative decisions accordingly. If the information on the score suggests a larger scope of frame, it implies that multiple versions of interpretation could be explored. The performer needs to think creatively to discover its possibilities and impossibilities. Therefore any decisions made for it are worth encouraging. I also realise the frame could be adjusted depending on how I decide the interpretation each time I play. In the interview, Zubin says that Finnissy encouraged him to explore the variety of interpretation. Thus I consider the performer's own decision could influence the scope of freedom.

Unlike the great freedom of notation in *Z/K*, I found a different kind of frame in *Day Break Shadows Flee* by Judith Weir. The appearance of her score is standard and conventional. To me, the notation is very precisely presented. Weir writes almost every detail in terms of tempo, articulation and dynamic expression. Comparing this with the very sparse information provided by Finnissy, it raises the question of whether too much information inhibits the performer's creativity. The three performers I interviewed all agreed that they would not be affected by the density of notation. However, I found it affects me in several aspects. Firstly, my options of interpretation are reduced. The detailed notation already suggests an actual sound intended by the composer. Secondly, it implies that there is not much space for free interpretation and improvisation. Thirdly, I assume the conventional notation suggests a similarity to classical music, thus to some extent I should examine it with my sense of classical tradition. They all shape the frame of freedom. However, I found that my creative thinking is not affected. I realise the frame of freedom in *Day Break Shadows Flee* is smaller than in *Z/K*, but the notation still inspires me with new ideas and prompts me to find out more.

Even though I consider that notation could suggest interpretation, it does not restrict itself to one solution. It depends on how the composer builds the frame and sets up its relative notation. From the performer's point of view, the three pianists I interviewed all state that the performer has the freedom to make an interpretative decision. I found that the diversity of notation types affects

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[9] See Example 7

neither their decision, nor their creativity. For instance, Philip indicates that unusual notation even encourages him to think in a more creative way. Zubin says that the performer “should not be a slave to these intentions”. I realise that the appearance of notation is not the prime factor for the performer to take into account when approaching the music. Instead, the notation functions as an inspiring agent to encourage the performer to discover the many interpretative possibilities. It also reflects that performers could generate their individual attitude towards the frame depending on how they approach the music.

I consider the performer’s decision could not only influence the frame, but also influence the music itself. For instance, in *Z/K*, I intend to explore the same passages with two different approaches. One approach is to highlight its dynamic expression, while in the other I focus on the rhythmic flow. These two different outcomes are clearly distinguished from each other in the sound produced. I also explore more options, for instance, stretching the space of silence and re-shaping the phrase. The music is already influenced from the moment when we start to approach it with our own focuses and intentions.

I consider there is a compromise between full freedom and strict limitation allowed in the score. In his *Caténaires,* Carter writes “The distribution of the notes between the hands can be modified to suit the performer”. I see this as a typical example of a composer giving a precise suggestion on interpretation, and at the same time offering freedom to the performer’s discretion. I assume that because this piece consists of a non-stop chain of notes, this sort of material has already determined its scope of interpretation. Here the dynamic markings are deliberately provided in order to highlight the accent, the colour and the character. These notations suggest certain ways of interpretation to me as a performer. I found that whether I fully or partly comply with the notation, neither the continuity nor the general character of the music are affected. I found that dynamic markings in particular help me to shape the phrase and layer the texture. Following these notations, I could exchange the position of both hands to flow with the music and to ease my body movement. Here I consider Carter’s interpretative suggestion is supportive. However, this is not the only interpretation which the score implies. The score reflects one kind of interpretation that Carter intended to write at that period, and the notation is designed according to that intention. The freedom I explore in this piece is mainly on the dynamic tension and hand position. Following Carter’s words, I am able to explore different gestures of both hands in different registers, and practise them with different dynamic expression.

I realise that extreme decisions about its notation could be regarded as departing from a score. For instance, in *Caténaires,* I am able to explore the many possibilities of hand position and dynamics, but I consider I am not able to change the tempo and relative music continuity, because the changing tempo might not only break the flowing atmosphere, but also affect the context of music. Another example is in *Z/K*. I consider I am able to explore the interpretation in every aspect in terms of tempo, expression, articulation, phrasing, silence and harmony, and particularly, pedalling. I found the decision on pedalling is the most discretionary and subjective part. I changed the way of using pedal according to different pianos and events. The prerequisite for this free decision is the absence of notation on the score. When the score includes time signature and bar lines, I consider I should comply with the composer’s notation. Thus the notation suggests the frame of freedom within which I can decide its interpretation.

I found an interesting point of contrast in the interview. The three composers all state that it is unnecessary for the performer to seek further information beyond the score, while the three performers all say that they like to search extra information outside the score. The idea of writing detailed notation is common to the three composers and moreover, they would want to write all the information the performer should know. I consider it is a positive attitude that many contemporary composers are willing to give consideration to the performer’s ability and feasibility. Personally, just like the three composers, I would expect the score to be presented with complete information. However, on the performance aspect, I assume the reason why performers always attempt to find supplementary knowledge to enhance their understanding is that the information provided on the score is not the musical whole. For instance, when considering composers like Chopin and

Beethoven, performers would usually think about the performing tradition and literature relating to their times. Moreover, the same notation could generate different meanings for different performers. Therefore, it becomes a constant struggle of pursuing a better performance whether it is a new music or earlier music. Another example is in *Black Earth*; how much do we need to know about the *Bağlama* in order to mimic this string instrument when playing inside the piano? Would it be helpful to listen to several folk recordings? What kind of contextual information and how much of it will satisfy the performer? On this point, I consider it requires more creative thinking and practical experience in exploring the score. It would be worth interviewing more musicians for detailed perspectives.

Many performers claim that they prefer less information because it inhibits the freedom to make an interpretative decision. The three performers I interviewed all agreed that the performer should consider the notation creatively and independently. Creativity has formed part of their process of approaching the music, and they therefore have a personalised approach to it. Notation is significant, but its density should not become the prime factor to affect their creativity or interpretative decision.

Performers usually spend years to develop performing techniques, to expand the repertoire, and to strengthen the ability to perform publicly. Performance is the moment when a composer's intention and writings are transferred into a sound product. In most cases, this achievement is appreciated by the composer, the performer and the audience. I consider the performer's role and their responsibility. In the interview, Philip points out "many performers do not realise that their playing could change the way we hear music". Therefore the performer needs to be aware that their decision could further change the effect of the music for the audience.

Some contemporary composers also work as a performer. Thus I consider the different roles of being a composer and being a performer could suggest different approaches to the music. In *Black Earth*, I found the score does not indicate as much possibility of free improvisation as the composer himself uses in live performances. However, I understand that as a performer, ideas about interpretation can be developed during the process of learning and exploring at all times. Thus it is not irrational that Say's decision of interpretation appears differently from his score. I believe this also reflects that Say has explored the possibilities in his own score and presented each performance as a practical experiment. I would question whether Say's dual role of composer- performer could suggest that his performance interpretation is authoritative. Perhaps in performance he is utilising the interpretative freedom he has allowed in his composition. Many people still claim that the composer has the most correct and accurate idea on the interpretation because the music is their creation. Some composers do attempt to write the most precise notation to convey their thoughts, as Jenny said in the interview. However, some composers would just encourage the performer to explore the score using their own approach, for instance, Finnissy's *Z/K* and the examples listed by James. In their interviews, Zubin and Belle both say that they would search for recorded material for the purpose of referencing. This suggests that the question of whether any interpretation is authoritative is not significant to them. I assume they accept that creativity is the priority and the performer has the freedom to choose their interpretation.

The interviewees all state that a working collaboration relationship between composer and performer plays an important role in interpreting new music. Mutual communication is encouraged and some of them the experience of collaboration is, moreover, a long term working method. The frame of freedom and its potential for individual decision could be explored within the collaboration process. The three composers all express their willingness to work with performers, particularly in reference to rehearsals and meetings. At performers, Zubin and Belle tend to work with composers at different stages of preparing the music. However, Philip expresses his preference to prepare on his own. He tends to avoid communicating with the composer during the learning process as this might affect his decision making. Nevertheless, he states that he still has connection with the composer, for instance, by knowing his personal character and listening to his other compositions.

Considering this point of view, I suspect the reason why many performers approach composers is to know the safe zone of the composer's wishes. I would suggest avoiding this because it inhibits the performer's creativity of thinking and negotiating.

I found my investigation on notation has changed some of my previous perspectives. Firstly, I consider that that between pre-2000 and post-2000 there is no difference in the significance of notation used. Whether there are dense or plain forms of notation does not change the reality of the task of interpreting sign as sound for performance. Moreover, the notation does not affect our appreciation of music aesthetically. Secondly, new notation keeps being invented to meet the needs of contemporary composers. At the same time, earlier notation still remains for new compositional and musical purpose. Therefore, performers need to explore and practise all types of notation whether new or not. Thirdly, as notation is a medium which stimulates many potential interpretative possibilities, I would suggest responding to notation creatively.

I consider the decision we performers make on interpretation reflects how we understand the meaning of notation. I notice that many performers have classical music training, thus conventional notation is more comprehensible to them. They might have a clear understanding of older kinds of score and make their interpretative decision subconsciously. When they encounter the many unusual notations in new music, they may hesitate to make a decision due to the many complex elements. Thus Philip suggests seeking outside materials such as recordings for help. Also James indicates that he would want to "train the musician to deal with the unfamiliar". I find that I also hesitate to make decisions when I feel the notation is unique. I realise that this kind of notation takes me outside my comfort zone of dealing with familiar notation. I therefore tend to avoid approaching the notation with the same method I use for earlier music. Psychologically, this could help me to reduce the anxiety during the process of exploration.

In summary, this study is my original investigation on the subject of notation and its interpretative issues. I explored questions of freedom in performing contemporary piano music. I also raised related questions and highlighted their significance in the contemporary context. I consider the information obtained from interviews with six musicians to be essential, but further exploration needs to be conducted by increasing the number of informants and broadening the scope of research. Thus I leave my conclusion open. I hope this thesis could contribute to further research in this field.

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Appendix 1

Interview transcription —James Joslin

- ***Can you tell me what is your style of notation?*** *(For example, do you use traditional notation, a mixture of new and traditional notation, or completely new notation?)*

I have my recent staff here. I have uploaded the pdf version of *Mechanicals* and *Cut-Ups* on Issuu and Youtube. They are available to everyone. For my recent works, the example is *Mechanicals* composed in 2017. It is a piece for harp and narration for 1 or 2 performers. It has traditional notation and photo cut-up elements. The different shapes of photo are from magazines and newspapers. So it is a mixture of traditional notation and unusual elements as well as instructions. Obviously, it is not a completely standardised notation but I do not think it is a problem for musicians who can read traditional notation. It still has room for them to read and interpret. For example, they can feel how the pictures influence them. This also can train the musician to deal with the unfamiliar. This *Mechanicals* lasts from four to seven minutes according to the different settings and qualities of the metronome. There is a bit of indeterminacy involved. The pictures of my reflection is probably strange but it is still recognisable. The score still has staves and pitches so musicians can understand the relevant points.

- ***How much do you think the information you write on the score can give the performer a good understanding of your work?***
  Do you prefer to give performers more information or less information on the score? How often do you feel completely satisfied with the information you provide on a new score?

I would give more information rather than less. I give them instructions but I do not restrict their performance. In other words, I offer ideas. Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* did something similar to this or looks similar on the page. There are lots of types of notation. I knew about Dada style and visualised art, so I explored them in the music. When I wrote the score, I thought this is something new. Because I think it is nice and colourful, so it is unnecessary to be a musician to appreciate it. I treat the score as an object of beauty rather than a simply structure. When the piece is premiered, the score becomes an image that people can get it as well. I hope it informs musicians because I write instructions for them. They can read through it and explore it. That is what I think about my notation generally. I do not set limitation because I hope the performer can create something unexpected. Of course I hope the performer respects the score but you do not have to play exactly what it says.

- ***In learning to perform your music, is it more necessary for performers to know the intentions and inspirations behind the score than when learning older music?*** *(If yes, how important is that knowledge?)*

Yes. For example, I did a premiere on the *Cadaqués Landscape* and *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Because I think the concept is weird so I explained it as good as possible. I also changed some of the text because the performer emailed me about the unclear things. I found that if I really want something happened in a definite way, I should make it very clear. Generally speaking, I have a sound in my head but I would expect the performer to look at the score and find something different. Another example is from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* for voice and 1, 2 or 3 instruments composed in 2015. I had a rehearsal with the performers and they did run through.

Afterwards I said that is not what I expect the sound like. But I did not mean badly. They said to me ‘sorry, what should we do?’. But what I thought is they are amazing because they find something I did not imagine at all. I have something specific in my head when I am composing. That is existed in my head but the performer just find it differently. Also I do not say much about what kind of technique the performer chooses to play. The only way I would say is to suggest the image in my head.

- ***What is the most important thing in your music that you try to convey to the performer?***
  If expression, special thoughts, or technique are difficult to convey on the score, how would you convey these to the performer?

The most important thing is the possibility. The notation is a way to try to get the performer to do something on their imagination. It allows possibilities for them to explore. I trust performers because they spend yeas and years to learn and practice their instruments. I feel I help them to explore the instrument. I think if you try to control everything then it becomes difficult. Also it is hard if you want notation to be everything, because it is difficult to turn the sound into page and turn into sound again.

- ***Do you expect performers to seek information outside the notation of your score?***
  (If yes, what kind of supplementary information are you willing to provide to help them learn your music?)

Not really. I quite like everything needed is in the score. This is how I visualise the score.

- ***Working with a performer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with performers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a performer? (If yes, how did you value that experience?)
  What advantages and disadvantages do you see in a composer-performer collaboration?

Yes, I love working with performers because I learn so much. We have a meeting ground to work together. Many performers are enthusiastic about what the composer’s feeling about their performance. I do have an idea in my head but also I would like to see how the performer feels about that. I think there are so many advantages. The only disadvantage is probably to much commutation limits the possibility of creation. For example, I might stop to do certain thing or they might feel they cannot do certain thing. Performers did say, for example ‘my hands is not big enough’, but that is good feedback.

- ***If you write a new piece for a particular performer, how much do you want to know about them?*** *(For example, their personality, performing style, etc.)*
  How would you go about finding out?

If somebody contacts me through email or website, I always go to find out the person. If I need to write a piece for them, I want to know their interests. I hope to find a middle ground that satisfies both sides. It helps to get the further performances as well. If I write a piece that a performer hates and does not perform again, that is a shame. It is good to know each other. So far, nobody asks me to write a piece without meeting. Actually we do not need to meet face by face. We can communicate by email or Skype. I feel It is also their piece, so it is important to know what they are thinking.

- ***Could you be influenced by working with a performer?*** *(For example by acting on their comment or suggestion? Would you be willing to change things that they don't like or feel unable to play?)*

Yes, there are definitely influences. I have my ideas open and wait for the right performer to come along. I pick one of their ideas and develop it based on the person. The piece always changes through the compositional process.

- ***How much freedom do you offer to the performer?*** *(Do you want them to adhere strictly to the score, or might they modify to some extent?)*
  Are there any things you wouldn't want a performer to modify, such as articulation, pedal, tempo, etc?

I think I offer them freedom while showing them some limitation. I always find that to some extent, limitation is liberation. If somebody wants to commission a piece by saying 'write whatever instrument you want or can be influenced by anything', it is too much for me and I cannot write anything about it. If somebody wants something about 'time' or 'a violin piece', then I could have a focus idea to develop. So limitation is liberation.

I would expect the performer to play what I notate basically. I think it depends on some pieces. Sometime if I feel this point is important, I would highlight it and make sure they can understand it. I enjoy this process.

- ***Have you ever anticipated misreadings of your intention?*** *(If yes, how do you attempt to avoid them?)*

I am always thinking this when I am writing because the notation is unusual. I always write an instruction or a note where I think it is difficult for the performer. I am always anticipating where the performer might think unusual. I do not think I have a difficult situation to communicate with performers. I am just worried if I write too complicated things, the performer might not have time to do it well.

Interview transcription — Jenny Jackson

- ***Can you tell me what is your style of notation?*** *(For example, do you use traditional notation, a mixture of new and traditional notation, or completely new notation?)*

I think I use everything because I choose the notation to get the result I need. I realise if I want to have more control, I need to give more details. And no matter what kind of notation it is. I think the reason I write a piece of music is I want the music to be what I want it to be. For example, in [*S]pan* for mixed ensemble, I get control through the actual pitches but not much over the duration. The most important thing is how the pitches past to the next, so performers need to decide how long they want to play. I also control the shape of the piece but I give possibility. I suppose this is an example which combines different notation to give different levels of control.

- ***How much do you think the information you write on the score can give the performer a good understanding of your work?***
  Do you prefer to give performers more information or less information on the score? How often do you feel completely satisfied with the information you provide on a new score?

I think I ask the performer to work on the piece, so I need to give the guidance. It is the process that I want to get the outcome. I quite like to give performers a lot of information, so they can choose to do things. It is better to give more information. But I am conscious that nobody wants to read pages of guidance before they start to play. So I always work hard to find the easiest way to get that musical result. I think it is really important to put the performance direction for the performer, especially for a less confident performer who is nervous or scare to play difficult passages. I try to find a nicest way to help them. For example, in my string quartet I would control over the ranges of pitch in general. Of course each instrument is independent and it has its pitch range. I use complete conventional notation because I want complete control. I think this piece is more interesting in exploring its timber possibility. If you really want things to happen, you need to notate in certain ways for people to understand your intention. I still use the stave. I get control of the texture through vertical modulation. I wrote the instruction, such as 'the duration is approximate. The overall piece should be managed by the players to produce dramatic and energetic performance', and the like. So in order to achieve the character of this music, the players need to think about how to play in a dramatic way and the tension between the music.

I always go for the easiest way to coordinate with performers, in order to minimise the rehearsal time and to reduce the stress. If you look at Brian Ferneyhough's scores, they are so precise. For me, I would say it is far too difficult to read. When you listen to his music, you still do not know how it is notated, do you? For the audience's perspective, they do not know what is the score neither.

I do not want to lose the control of the musical outcome. So it is a question of balance that I could get that outcome without being too difficult for performers to achieve. By the way, I do not give the score to audience because I feel it is a secret. I think it is a magic, so just listen to it! But as a composer, I am always interested to see the score in order to know how the sound is achieved.

I think I am usually satisfied with the information I put on the score.

- ***In learning to perform your music, is it more necessary for performers to know the intentions and inspirations behind the score than when learning older music?*** *(If yes, how important is that knowledge?)*

Yes. When you play a piece of music you know, you bring a lot of baggages with you because you know how it should sound like. But if you play a piece you have not seen before, you may feel 'what is it or how to do it?'.

- ***What is the most important thing in your music that you try to convey to the performer?***
  If expression, special thoughts, or technique are difficult to convey on the score, how would you convey these to the performer?

I think I try to convey the expression, the character and the general kind of effect of the piece. My title also expresses that. I am always interested in dramatic expression. So for me, the character is important.

- ***Do you expect performers to seek information outside the notation of your score?*** *(If yes, what kind of supplementary information are you willing to provide to help them learn your music?)*

No. I think I write down the instruction in the score. You do not need to look beyond that. As I said before, I always try to find the easiest way for the performers to play my music.

- ***Working with a performer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with performers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a performer? (If yes, how did you value that experience?)
  What advantages and disadvantages do you see in a composer-performer collaboration?

I think it is really fun to do that. You can discover things you cannot imagine. It is really important. It should be a natural thing that you and performers can involve. Also it is nice to know someone's performing style.

I suppose there is no disadvantage. The only thing is if you only work with one person, you would end up with certain way. And perhaps you could not discover other possibilities. I and my group of composers write music not only for ourselves but also for other musicians in Sheffield. Very often we need to write a piece quickly and pass it to the performer for a short rehearsal time. I think this also forms some of my notation because I cannot expect the performer to spend a lot of time to practice it. So I try to find another way to create a complex sound. I also put methods to help them to learn some parts of the music.

- ***If you write a new piece for a particular performer, how much do you want to know about them?*** *(For example, their personality, performing style, etc.)*
  How would you go about finding out?

Yes. For example, if I plan to write a joke piece for pianist Philip Thomas, I would not write the same thing to someone else I do not know. I would like to make a positive point to the performance, so it is important to know the person.

- ***Could you be influenced by working with a performer? (****For example by acting on their comment or suggestion? Would you be willing to change things that they don't like or feel unable to play?)*

Definitely. I would hear suggestions from the performer. For example, if this is impossible to play or it takes too much time to practice. I also try to play as much instruments as I can to get the sense of the instrument. I have an example for this. I wrote a piece for an ensemble in Amsterdam yeas ago. There was a harp and piano in the ensemble and I wanted the harp and piano to sound very simple to each other. It is a very delicate piece. But I wrote a quite difficult part for the pianist to play inside the piano. Then the pianists said to me 'look, I just cannot see the conductor while playing the strings' . So I suggested to play the pitches at any point. The outcome was not that different but it was much easier for the pianist to play.

- ***How much freedom do you offer to the performer?*** *(Do you want them to adhere strictly to the score, or might they modify to some extent?)*
  Are there any things you wouldn't want a performer to modify, such as articulation, pedal, tempo, etc?

I think the freedom varies, depending on what the outcome is. It has priorities, for example, freedom of pitch or freedom of duration. I have really thought through everything and I have made a decision for reasons. If you suddenly change the articulation or something, for example, the place you play quietly when I write dramatically. It would be rude and offensive!

- ***Have you ever anticipated misreadings of your intention?*** *(If yes, how do you attempt to avoid them?)*

I think yes is the answer. I am getting better and better by working with people to find out the likely things they do not understand. I have a general sense of how to make the performers to understand my music. But in any way, I hope they will ask me.

Interview transcription — Elena Chiu

- ***Can you tell me what is your style of notation?*** *(For example, do you use traditional notation, a mixture of new and traditional notation, or completely new notation?)*

Most of time, I use conventional notation along with some sort of 'rare' signs. They might not be newly invented notation.

- ***How much do you think the information you write on the score can give the performer a good understanding of your work?***
  Do you prefer to give performers more information or less information on the score? How often do you feel completely satisfied with the information you provide on a new score?

Most of time, the response from performers is positive. For example, they think the instructions are clearly written. I prefer to give them short but precise information. Because I think when there are too many words on the page, nobody would read it.

- ***In learning to perform your music, is it more necessary for performers to know the intentions and inspirations behind the score than when learning older music?*** *(If yes, how important is that knowledge?)*

Yes. I think ideally, performers would read my literal instruction before rehearsal. But I doubt whether each of them would really do it. Usually, performers just grab a part of score and then play what they see on the score.

- ***What is the most important thing in your music that you try to convey to the performer?***
  If expression, special thoughts, or technique are difficult to convey on the score, how would you convey these to the performer?

The most important thing in my music is the purpose to serve my music, and how to execute the ideas from the score. As you see in contemporary music, each piece has its specific idea. For example, a work based on melodic development, and the textural development moulds a piece of music is two opposite directions.

Attending rehearsal is one of the most crucial parts in making my music. Usually, performers are able to engage more with a new work after meeting the composer. I think a piece of music involves interaction between the performer and the composer.

- ***Do you expect performers to seek information outside the notation of your score? (****If yes, what kind of supplementary information are you willing to provide to help them learn your music?)*

No. It would be wonderful if performers can do the research. But in reality, most performers do not have an 'extra time' for it. Everyone is busy with their lives, so they just have the opportunity to look at the score and then play it. I think it is more about experience on dealing with contemporary music scores and rehearsals.

- ***Working with a performer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with performers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a performer? (If yes, how did you value that experience?)
  What advantages and disadvantages do you see in a composer-performer collaboration?

Yes, I prefer to work with performers. Most of the pieces I have written so far are tailor-made to a specific performing force. When you know which groups of musician are going to perform, you will understand their needs more than what kind of music should be written to achieve the best result at a performance.

I think there are lots of advantages. The only disadvantage is maybe less room for pure imagination from the performer, if the composer instructs the performer at each step. As a piano performer myself, I believe it is a privilege to be able to have hands on experience with the composer. In any way, they are valuable experiences.

- ***If you write a new piece for a particular performer, how much do you want to know about them?*** *(For example, their personality, performing style, etc.)*
  How would you go about finding out?

I always want to understand as much as I could about the performing body before I write. Usually, what I care most are their musical abilities and strengths. Then I would hope to write something that speaks my voice through the music. Then I will just let them interpret it. However, their personal character or stylistic aesthetics would not affect the way I compose.

- ***Could you be influenced by working with a performer?*** *(For example by acting on their comment or suggestion? Would you be willing to change things that they don't like or feel unable to play?)*

As a performer myself alongside working as a composer, I care a lot about other performers too. I always imagine myself performing it. I believe music should be easy to play and effective in sound. Occasionally, performers or conductors like to change minor things in the score. I of course give them the liberty to amend my score after discussion, if the suggestion could make the piece better.

- ***How much freedom do you offer to the performer?*** *(Do you want them to adhere strictly to the score, or might they modify to some extent?)*
  Are there any things you wouldn't want a performer to modify, such as articulation, pedal, tempo, etc?

I do allow freedom on the interpretation of sound. Also sometimes, I amend the score after hearing a rehearsal in order to make the music even more pleasing.

I hope performers would not change the information on my score unless I tell them to do so.

- ***Have you ever anticipated misreadings of your intention?*** *(If yes, how do you attempt to avoid them?)*

Not too often. I believe my instructions on the score are clear for most of time. Usually, the 'misreadings' can be fixed after attending the first rehearsal — it is usually about making the exact sound I had in mind which came out not as similar in the first hearing.

Interview transcription — Philip Thomas

- ***Every piece of music was 'new' once. As a performer of today's 'new' music, how do you prepare to learn it?*** *(For example, do you start from reading the notes, articulation, tempo, etc, or some other ways?)*

Regarding your questions, I would like to talk some general thoughts about new music. It is very hard to generalise any kinds of music, especially new music. There are so many different composers, notations and practices. You could say the 1950s particularly have the whole range of notation from the very complex notation of early Stockhausen, to the graphical nation of Earl Brown, Morton Feldman and late Cage. I think certainly Cage has opened up the whole bunch of things. A lot of composers would say that Cage gave their permission to write music in certain ways. I think that is still true for today. There are some composers still very interested in writing alternative notations and methods. And there are composers who write extensions of traditional notation or take the notation on very unusual ways. So music notation is keeping increasing complexity.

I guess for the performer who is interested in new music, you have to be fairly adaptable. I think my response to the notation itself is what the notation suggests to me and what is the influence upon the composer. For example, is this composer influenced by Morton Feldman, or Michael Finnissy? What is the context of their writing? This forms the way I approach the notation. I would locate that composer in a tradition because there is no composer working in vacuum. There is always an influence. And there is a lot of traditions being developed all the time.

- ***What are the contemporary pieces you have performed/practiced recently?*** *Do you find a notation that is difficult? (Why is difficult for you? For example, do you find it confusing or misleading, etc)*

I am looking at some new pieces by Canadian composer Martin Arnold. He collects various influences from Jazz, folk, medieval and improvised music. So I am thinking how does that influence affect the way I play this music and how notation speaks for itself. I am also thinking about my own performance tradition and what I might bring to the music. I like to play the music which might surprise the composer and make them think slightly differently about their own music.

When we talk about performing the old music such as Beethoven or Schumann, we tend to talk a lot about the performance itself. You can find lots of these information on newspapers, journals, CDs, performance notes and general reviews at that time. And with the new music, we tend to talk

more about the composition. One important reason is because we know much about the old music, so the more interesting thing is what the performer could bring to it. While the reviews about contemporary music, the general focus of discussion is upon the music because we do not know what the composer is doing for that.

- ***Today's composers write music with various intentions and styles, how much do you think the information written on the score can give you a good understanding of a new, contemporary work?*** *(For example, do you prefer more information or less information on the score? can you give me an example of a score that satisfied you, or a score that you found insufficiently informative, what are the critical elements to you?)*

Christian Wolff says the score is one element of conversation. I would love to think that we can engage with the score and make something new. I do not particularly think how the music notated is a reason to play the music. It is not about the notation necessarily, because it is hard to separate the notation from intention. I play a lot of music which is unusually notated. But you can also be very odd and provocative using conventional notation. Notation has the purpose. It is really about what the composer wants to do. For example, I like pitch and there is no better way to notate actual pitch than using traditional notation.

In some way, I say yes, the notation is enough if I act extremely about it. But I do not actually think that because we should think about what the composer tries to do and go beyond the score. All the things combine with the notation to make something much more complex than just reading notates and instructions. And this goes the same whether it is pitch notation, graphic notation or text notation. There is not only one option for any performances. Performance is always in one moment. The choice I have made is also based upon the acoustic and pressure in the atmosphere. I would like to keep my option open at all the time. I would like the performance to be a sense of question in order to test and explore.

- ***How do you approach a contemporary piece which has no recordings or literature.*** *In these cases, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages to you?*

In some way, I think there are various advantages. For example, I do not have to play like someone else. But as I said before, It is hard to imagine that any composers or any music do not have some kinds of tradition. On the whole, I play the music from the people I know. I am lucky about that because I do not need to play someone's music I do not know. Thus I am always involved in the tradition because I know their music. I might personally do not know the person but I know their music. So I always have a context. Very often when a composer sends me a music to play, I do not ask them for a recording of that piece, instead I ask them to send me some other music. Because I want to hear what he is interested in. If I have a recording of that music, all I am hearing is how somebody plays that music. What is more interesting is how I make a decision on that piano piece. I have familiarity with playing new music. But for a new student who picks up a piece by Finnissy, I would suggest to listen to recordings for help.

I am interested in recordings of new music which compromises radical things into familiar. Very often the new music is very strange and makes you feel uncomfortable. So we tend to play a way that makes you comfortable. By the way, there is plenty of composers who want their music to be played just like the 19th century music. I intend to not to play this kind of pieces.

- ***Do you play exactly what is written on the score?*** *(For example, do you feel freedom or restriction in this respect? How much do you feel you can shape the piece without going against the composer's intention?)*

Different music have different kinds of freedom. Let's say an example of Michael Finnissy and

Brian Ferneyhough. Their scores are incredibly complex and seems everything notated. So the cliche responds to that is 'my freedom is limited'. But my response to that is notation has much more suggestive possibilities. Notation directs my thinking and provokes me to be more creative rather than limiting my creativity. When I have a graphic score with squiggles or circles, the possibility is infinite. That helps me to find something I do not know. But I still have to do something. The complex notation does not necessarily mean limitation. It can really inspire your creativity. Also the graphic score does not mean freedom. It might reduce you to play things you already know. I think the freedom is always in music. You negotiate and exercise with that freedom. At the same time, you always have freedom to say you do not want to play or do not like this music. So the performer needs to find the creativity in response to the score. There are loads of creativities when you play the music no matter how complex notation is. You always free to make any choices.

I am quite interested in some music which you have freedom in limitation. There is a piece for piano and ensemble which I gave première last week by Christian Wolf called *Resistance*. The example of freedom here is no rhythm and clef attached to these notes. Possibly, I can play either in treble or bass clef. I need to listen to other people's playing in order to choose when to play. I can choose when to play on each note because there is no tempo. So it is all about listening. I think different possibilities when I am preparing. I might practice in different clefs or tempos. In performance, I am going to listen and then make a spontaneous decision. I like the options which are available to me. There is no recording of this piece and my recording will come out in November. This piece is a typical example of Wolf which contains freedoms and limitations.

Composers always try to find the best way to get the outcome they want. In complex notation, people often ask me about the accuracy. Obviously, I try to be accurate. But accuracy is not the purpose of music. Complex notation makes you feel the music is different. Also complexity is not the end for itself, because it really can inspire the performer to create something lively.

- ***Working with a contemporary composer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with composers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a composer? (If yes, did you value that experience? Did this experience change your original decision of interpretation?)
  What advantage and disadvantage do you see in a performer-composer collocation?

Yes I do work with composers. But I tend to not to work with the composer while they are writing the piece. I feel I am quite traditional and I like to keep things separately. Maybe because I trust the composer, so I believe they can do a good job. Also I think if I ask them questions, they might change the music. So I prefer not to work with a composer in a long term and sophisticated way. I am much more interested to see what they have done in music and what I might do in relation to that. It is a meeting ground. I can be true to myself and do not need to be changed by what they do. So I would think this is a meeting ground rather than collaboration.

I know a lot of composers and performers do collaborate. I just prefer to do my work and let the composer do their work. They trust me and I trust them. I am not against collaboration, I just not prefer to do so. I think if I deal with it, I probably need to compromise my ideas a bit.

- ***How authoritative do you think your interpretation of contemporary music is?***
  Do you follow the features of any other contemporary performers' interpretation? (For example, the one who inspires you most, and if so, what particular features?)

I do not think my performance to be authoritative, not the slightest. I think what the interesting thing is how different performers play the same music differently. For example, Sheffield has a strong culture of Messiaen because of Peter Hill. We think Peter Hill's performances are more

authoritative than others because he worked with Messiaen and knew Messiaen in person. But is it as same authoritative as Messiaen's wife Yvonne Loriod? I would say they are two different authorities. Two pianists can study with the same composer and come up with two different ways of playing. I work closely with Christian Wolf and record a lot of his music, but I can not think my performance is authoritative. But my meeting with him and my knowledge of his music have shaped my ideas. I hope it might be useful for people but I would not want other people to copy what I have done.

Here is another example. There is a piece written for me by Michael Finnissy couple years ago. There is a semibreve on the first page of the score. I rehearsed this piece with Michael and I counted four beats. Michael later said to me that those notes do not really mean semibreve, they are just long notes and just hold them for a long time. So I did that and that is on my recording. Now I can imagine if somebody hears my recording and sees the score, they might say that Thomas holds those notes for too long because the score says semibreve. So I suppose I could say that I have the authority that they do not mean semibreve, they mean a long sound. But you could still hold for four beats because the composer does not write anything on the score. I think if the composer want specifically not to be four beats, he should write it. I guess maybe this is part of Finnissy's composing tradition. In fact, it is an interesting issue because it has lots of openness about it. It encourages different possibilities and it is suggestive in multiple ways. It is also true to Debussy or Bach.

- ***Do you think the composer can inhibit your own interpretation by giving you too much or too little information in the score?*** *(If yes, how do you cope with that?)*

No. There is a meeting ground between me and the composer. I am interested in what the composer is doing and how that affects the way I play. I think about how the composer influences me and what I can bring to their music. I think I always try to find a meeting ground that I could stretch myself and develop my own technique. I also hope to bring something fresh to the music. Furthermore, I think many performers do not realise that their playing could change the way we hear music.

I love to think there are so many different ways of playing. The music we hear is a meeting ground of composer and performer. It is also a combination of all the influences from that composer and the ways of how the composer creates the score, and also how the performer responses to the score.

Interview transcription — Zubin Kanga

- ***Every piece of music was 'new' once. As a performer of today's 'new' music, how do you prepare to learn it?*** *(For example, do you start from reading the notes, articulation, tempo, etc, or some other ways?)*

Before starting any piece, it is important to work out what the composer's priorities are. What is the process of composition? What is unique about the piece? How does it differ from other pieces I might have played? From this I can decide my priority for practicing.

As a general rule, I find that the more virtuosic new piano music involves working out how one needs to move around the piano. So slow practice, working out fingerings and hand distribution and how this relates to the body is often the first step. But there are exceptions to all these rules.

- ***What are the contemporary pieces you have performed/practiced recently?***
  Do you find a notation that is difficult? (Why is difficult for you? For example, do you find it confusing or misleading, etc)

Recently, my solo work has focused on works for piano and multimedia. In my most recent tour, this included works by Nicole Lizée, Johannes Kreidler, Neil Luck, Adam de la Cour, Patrick Nunn and Kate Moore. Other programmes featured experimental/minimalist works by European composers, such as Tim Parkinson, Andrew Hamilton and Laurence Crane and a programme of Baroque and contemporary keyboard works, with the new works written by George Benjamin, Michael Finnissy, Morgan Hayes, Thomas Adés, among others. These all have their own different challenges.

The works with multimedia often require some methods for syncing with this virtual chamber partner. Some composers write this out as graphic notation, others as a simplified version in standard notation, and others still leave out any notation, but simply use a click track and time markings on the score. All these have advantages and disadvantages, but all require some experience to be able to play consistently and accurately with the electronics.

On the question of notation, there are many little things that younger composers usually do annoy me. For example, octave transposition clefs are rather hard to read. Sometimes, very complex works with many accidentals become very difficult to decipher if accidentals apply throughout a long bar. Another pet peeve is where the composer prescribes the distribution of hands in a monophonic passage, unless the composer is a very good pianist, this often requires me to rewrite the passage.

- ***Today's composers write music with various intentions and styles, how much do you think the information written on the score can give you a good understanding of a new, contemporary work?*** *(For example, do you prefer more information or less information on the score? Can you give me an example of a score that satisfied you, or a score that you found insufficiently informative, what are the critical elements to you?)*

Ferneyhough once said that the score really needs to do what is required of it. I think notation expresses the ideology of its own process of creation. One very good example is the piece Michael Finnissy wrote for me, *Z/K*. The score did not have any expression markings or dynamics, and most of the tempi were also left to the performer's discretion. This was Finnissy's way of drawing the performer into the work. In our workshops together, he encouraged me to explore all the many dynamic and expression options for any given passage, and to also feel free to change my approach every time I played the work.

Sometimes, an extreme density of information can be very challenging and frustrating to internalise, but a good composer applies this density for a good reason, often playing with the psychology of the performer. Charlie Sdraulig's piece *Collector*, used a new form of choreographic notation, paired with a complex game structure. That took me many months to learn and never truly mastered it. The result is a very quiet intense piece using the sounds from the surfaces of the keys: the extreme effort for almost no sounds is intentional. Another easier notation would result in a very different piece.

Third example is *Not Music Yet* by David Young. This piece is notated as a watercolour painting, functioning as a graphic score. Young gives specific instructions on the way that each colour should be played in turn, and how the score should be interpreted as time-space notation, with two options for the specific overall timing. In this case, it is the combination of the wildly free notation, the strict conditions of interpretation, and Young's own approach to workshopping, all opening up options for me about how to deal with this paradoxical notation that makes this an extraordinary work.

For any score, old or new, I try to find as many recordings as possible by as many performers. I also attempt to contact the composer and any pianists who have performed their work. In contemporary music, there is not a critical mass of performers to allow performance practice to be transmitted in the way traditional practices are. But technology can allow these lines of communication to be open, no matter where the composers and performers are in the world.

- ***How do you approach a contemporary piece which has no recordings or literature.***
  In these cases, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages to you?

The performer has to always deal with the material available to them. If there is very little, this is a challenge and an opportunity. Creative input is always required in formulating an interpretation, so having more information and recordings does not make one less free, just as having less information does not necessarily mean greater freedoms can be taken.

- ***Do you play exactly what is written on the score?***
  (For example, do you feel freedom or restriction in this respect? How much do you feel you can shape the piece without going against the composer' s intention?

This is really dependent on context. When workshopping pieces with composers, I often suggest changes for notational, technical or aesthetic reasons. This is even more the case when working with student composers, where these recommendations play a vital educative role.

But for existing pieces, this is always an active question. For a very good or canonical composer, one feels the need to trust the composer, even when a passage might seem technically problematic, and often the solution is present but requires work to find. There is no point in playing a piece if you are not going to take the composer's intentions seriously, but at the same time, one should not be a slave to these intentions. And in many cases, the score does not reflect the composer's intentions. For example, there are mistakes that publishers have not corrected, or details left out, and details that have been filled in very late (sometimes at a publisher's suggestion) which are not part of the composer's original vision. In all these cases, a great amount of research into sources, performers and performance practice is required to be informed enough to make one's decision.

- ***Working with a contemporary composer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with composers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a composer? (If yes, did you value that experience? Did this experience change your original decision of interpretation?)
  What advantage and disadvantage do you see in a performer-composer collocation?

Collaboration with composers was the subject of my PhD. I always prefer to work closely with living composers, than any other type of performing work. I have had many long-term working relationships with composers, including Michael Finnissy, Kate Moore, Adam de la Cour, Neil Luck, Daniel Rojas, Elliott Gyger, David Gorton, Rosalind Page, all of whom have written multiple works for me. And there are many single major projects I have done with composers. I have now premiered 80 new works. The second part about changing my interpretation is too large and contextual to answer here because it took me a whole PhD to start to get to the answer.

Composer-performer collaboration has always happened in music. It is a modernist myth that these roles are separate, with clearly defined duties. It is not about deciding the pros or cons of collaboration, but about deciding the type of relationship the collaboration is going to be.

- ***How authoritative do you think your interpretation of contemporary music is?*** *Do you follow the features of any other contemporary performers' interpretation? (For example, the one who inspires you most, and if so, what particular features?)*

Again this is highly contextual. I can not really say how authoritative my performances of existing repertoire are. I have a career because other people think well of my playing, but where I sit among the current contemporary pianists is not for me to say. But on works that I have commissioned, developed and premiered, I think my interpretation is more authoritative as the works are often tailored to me. At least in the early history of the work.

There are many new music pianists and traditional pianists who inspire me. I love David Tudor's intensity and the deep thought that went into all his work. I also love Paul Jacob's passion, Roger Woodward's demonic energy and Yvonne Loriod's authority and power. Of pianists who play canonical repertoire, there are many great pianists who I love, for example Arthur Schnabel, Ignaz Friedman, Alfred Cortot, Samson François and Glenn Gould.

Of current pianists and peers, Rolf Hind was my teacher, and I have always loved the zen coolness with which he tackles even the most virtuosic scores. Xenia Pestova is a really inspiring player who performs a wide range of repertoire. Michael Kieran Harvey remains a big inspiration in his championing of Australian music. Nicolas Hodges has worked with many of the current leading composers in Europe on major works. Philip Thomas has combined his research and pianism in some excellent major projects. Sebastian Berweck is a great inspiration as a pianist working with electronics. Adam Tendler is a leading pianist of Cage and late-20th century American music. Vicky Chow is a powerhouse performer, and I love the new works with electronics she is commissioned. Richard Outlay is a wonderfully subtle player. Mark Knoop is a pianist involved with many of the most innovative composers in Europe and has brought many major works to fruition.

I am also inspired by other instrumentalists and singers: Percussionists Claire Edwardes, Serge Vuille, Eugene Ughetti, Mathias Schack-Arnott, Joby Burgess, singers Jane Sheldon, Jess Aszodi and Juliet Fraser, cellists Neil Heyde and Severine Ballon, violinist Mira Benjamin, conductor Roland Peelman, saxophonist Josh Hyde, and many others.

- ***Do you think the composer can inhibit your own interpretation by giving you too much or too little information in the score?*** *(If yes, how do you cope with that?)*

No. This is always an issue in collaboration, but the problem exists with canonical repertoire too. For example, there are debates about this in the HIP movement about the Beethoven's metronome marks. For every work, it is a negotiation between a composer's and performer's artistic vision, mediated by the score and by a lot of other context such as other works in the field, or other performances of works by that composer. I certainly do not think that the composer's word is final, and often argue with composers over interpretation, but in most cases, they provide an illumination of the core priorities of their score, and this can only be helpful for me in making interpretative decisions. We both want the work to succeed. So it is usually in our interests to find an interpretive approach that we are both happy with and find artistically sound.

Interview transcription — Belle Chen

- ***Every piece of music was 'new' once. As a performer of today's 'new' music, how do you prepare to learn it?*** *(For example, do you start from reading the notes, articulation, tempo, etc, or some other ways?)*

Music score is written in various ways. Some people write in notes and some people write in graphic. I think beyond the actual score, the most important thing to me is to understand the composer's intension. So for example, if the composer is alive, I prefer to contact them and talk to them. I would try to get the idea of the story that inspires the pieces. Then afterwards I would look at what is actually written on the score. I think that makes more sense. I think I always approach to the composer through email or an agent if they are alive. If the music has been played by someone else before, I will look at their information, for example, the programme notes, reviews and interviews related to that piece. So I will do my research at first.

- ***What are the contemporary pieces you have performed/practiced recently?*** *Do you find a notation that is difficult? (Why is difficult for you? For example, do you find it confusing or misleading, etc)*

Quite a few. Recently I have been playing *Piano Sonata* (1996) by Scottish composer Sally Beamish. I contacted her but we never met. I first know her when I was doing a specific programme with my colleagues. I feel I need to contact Sally to learn the piece because the actual music is quite vivd. And I want to understand why she writes it. That piece is classical writing but the language is modern. I also have been looking at pieces by Turkish composer Fazil Say, Croatian composer Ivan Bozicevic and London-based composer Vasiliki Legaki. I also play music from fresh graduated composers.

I think when I have a score, I would expect everything is written on the score but there are certain miracle possibilities. Also the composer has his own way of writing, so contact the composer and know his intention can help to clarify what certain notation means. I think the most unusual notation for me is a piece called *Mechanicals* by James Joslin. Basically everything is cut off and placed into pictures. It feels like there is no notation but the performer has to perform this information. It is really cool.

- ***Today's composers write music with various intentions and styles. How much do you think the information written on the score can give you a good understanding of a new, contemporary work?*** *(For example, do you prefer more information or less information on the score? can you give me an example of a score that satisfied you, or a score that you found insufficiently informative, what are the critical elements to you?)*

I will do my research first of all. If the score has a lot of information, that means the composer writes specific things. For example, if the composer writes *staccato* here, I would think about what is the actual thing he wants. I think composer always has a clue to work. I will do my research, for example, the title of the piece and the composer's background.

I would prefer less information provided on the score. As a performer, we have the right to put ourself into interpretation. I will basically do what is written on the score.

- ***How do you approach a contemporary piece which has no recordings or literature.*** *In these cases, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages to you?*

I do not think any disadvantages of these. People would normally listen to how you play the music and how the piece could speak for itself. If I am able to work with the composer, the importance is not about whether the composer like or dislike my interpretation. It is all about the musical outcome of our collaboration.

- ***Do you play exactly what is written on the score?***
  (For example, do you feel freedom or restriction in this respect? How much do you feel you can shape the piece without going against the composer's intention?)

I think this question is also related to your last question. Because I think they share the same point. It is about decision of interpretation. If the composer has passed, I feel I have some freedom to interpret. If the composer is living, usually my experience is to work with the composer. As a musician myself, I take a lot of flexibility on my personal choices. I think music is alive thus I need to work with composers. Ideally, we would do some rehearsals. Most of time if the composer does not like my way of playing, I would change. Also If I feel not comfortable about playing, the composer would change bit of written. That is the advantage of working with living composer.

- ***Working with a contemporary composer is sometimes possible, would you prefer to work with composers?***
  Have you had a working collaboration with a composer? (If yes, did you value that experience? Did this experience change your original decision of interpretation?)
  What advantage and disadvantage do you see in a performer-composer collocation?

Yes. I definitely prefer to work with composer and I always try to. I think there are two kinds of collaboration to me. One collaboration is to start the piece from zero and another is to work on the piece which has been written. I mainly work with composers on a completed score. I always tell them my feeling and my progress of preparation. Recently, I work with composer Fazil Say. I think there is no any disadvantages of working with composers. I have gained many benefits through this kind of collaboration. I know some people do not choose to work with composers but I definitely advocate to do this. Also I think a composer can not force you to play in certain way. It is still your choice of doing certain decision. I think this work relationship is also a friendship in some way.

- ***How authoritative do you think your interpretation of contemporary music is?***
  Do you follow the features of any other contemporary performers' interpretation?
  (For example, the one who inspires you most, and if so, what particular features?)

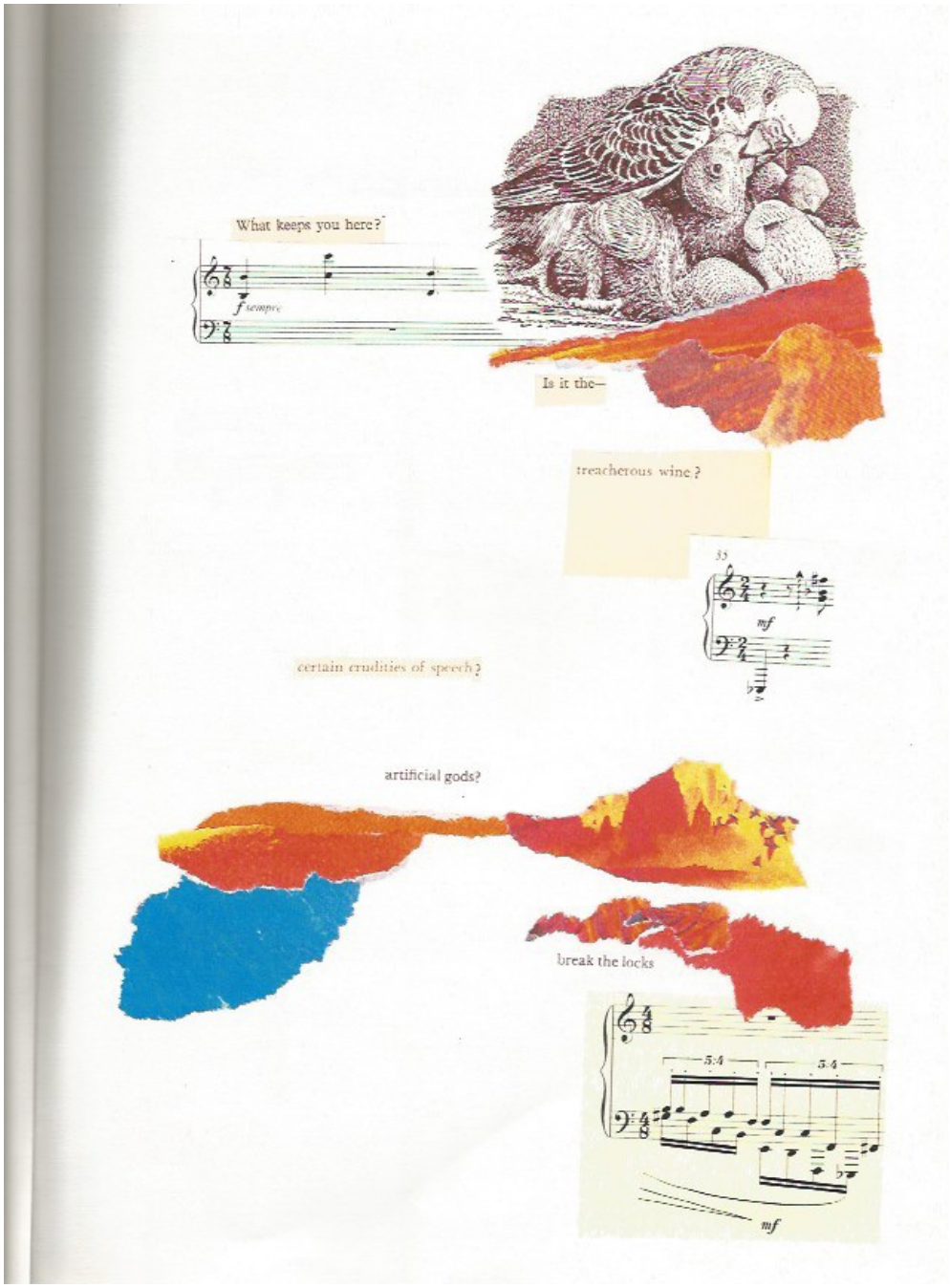
I think it does not need to be authoritative. Because some performers work with composers, so we tend to think those performers are authoritative. I know what I play is what the composer writes on the score, so I do not think about this issue. I think it is a difficult question because the context of authority is depending on certain composer. How do I know my interpretation is authoritative or not authoritative? If I am able to work with the composer I may ask this question.

- ***Do you think the composer can inhibit your own interpretation by giving you too much or too little information in the score?*** *(If yes, how do you cope with that?)*

No. I don't think so. I play contemporary music, and also I play classical music. As I say, I respect what the composer writes, but I am always free to make a choice.

Appendix 2

James Joslin *Mechanicals* (2017)



13

I speak only because we are

rude mechanicals,

The noise

we make is written

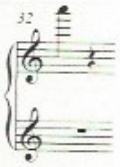
and

mine is

the lion's part.

but now the lock is open

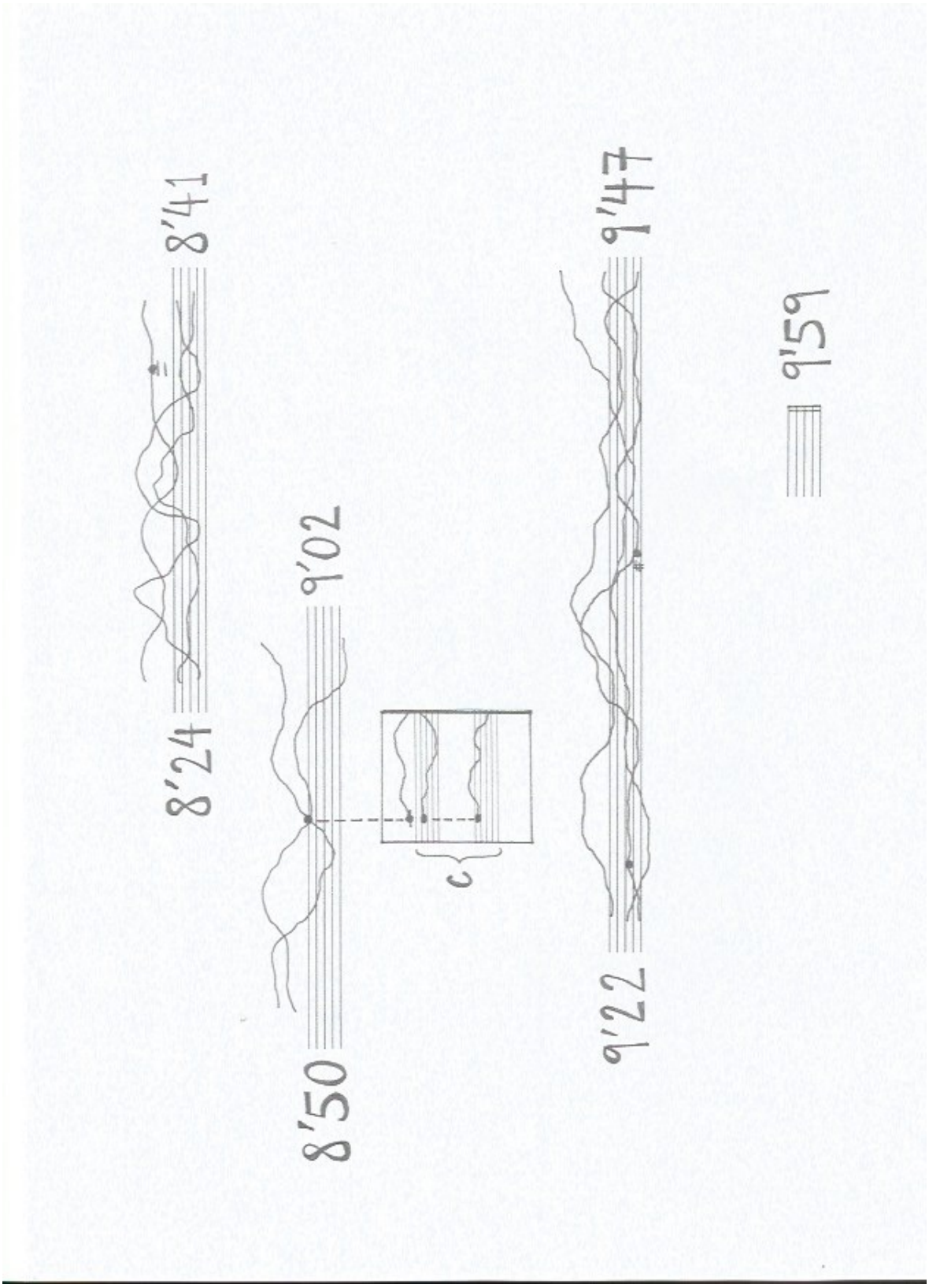
And so the lion



vanished.

What keeps you here?
Is it the treacherous wine?
Certain cruditics of speech?
Artificial gods?
Break the locks!

James Joslin *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (2015)


8'41
8'24
9'02
8'50
c
9'47
9'22
9'59

Performance Notes

Instrumental sections are to be played between the times indicated at the start and end of the written stave. In each section the instrumentalist should choose a line to follow. but routes can be changed at intersections with other lines. Dotted notes must be played when encountered and can be held at a constant pitch for a period of time (ie. They can override the line contour until the next written note). Individual discrete notes or glissandi (for example) can be played to follow the contours of a given line to create distinct events within the timeframe. Line contours are approximate and should be regarded as representing movement rather than definite pitch. Polyphonic instruments can follow more that one line at a time if desired. Instruments can use any other lines for supplementary notes (eg pedalling), though weighting should bias the line being followed. Lines of routes that aren't being used by the performer might be used to build chords, denote dynamics, or suggest harmonics, multiphonics, sung notes, string rattle/buzz etc. In other words, the score is an opportunity to find instructions within the notated lines. Sections should not be viewed as single smooth lines but rather as an opportunity to create a series of individual discrete events.

The example below demonstrates one way that the notation could be interpreted (shown on the bottom stave):

At certain points in the score, cues from other instruments act as entry points for other specific instruments. These synchronisations between performers are indicated by dashed vertical lines protruding from notation in a square. Section 2'22"-2'39" of **Instrument C**'s part shows a moment within the time bracket that will cue **Instrument B**. Section 4'39"-5'16" of the **Instrument C** part shows the moment (at a point AFTER 4'39") that **Instrument A** will cue **Instrument C**. If only 1 or 2 instruments are being used, ignore the cues from the instrument(s) not present. Instead, begin the phrase at the time stated next to the 'cue box'.

The text details dreams recorded in Carl Jung's autobiography. The text pages can be narrated in any order. The narrator should 'become stuck' on words or phrases of interest and explore their musicality and rhythm vocally as sung improvisations. One method would be to mimic instrumental sounds that are currently taking place, this may then also feedback into the instrumentalists choice of notes and phrasing. The shape of the words on the page might also inform the improvisation.

Once 10 minutes has passed the vocal performer should finish the page that they are on and then the piece ends.

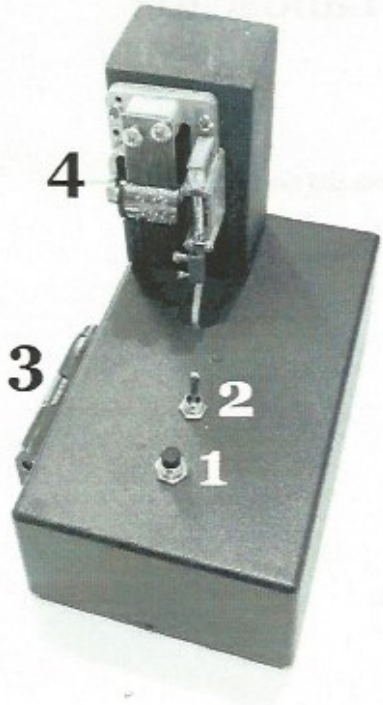
James Joslin *Cadaquésan Landscape* (2017)

INSTRUMENTATION

Piano
Custom mechanical music box*
2 Mechanical metronomes*

*Available from the composer

MECHANICAL MUSIC BOX



1. Push-to-make switch

When a single note is shown on the music box's stave, the push-to-make switch is pressed with the aim of emitting just one note.

2. Toggle switch

Not used in this piece. Switch should remain in the off position (Pushed away from the push-to-make switch).

3. Batteries (2 x AA)

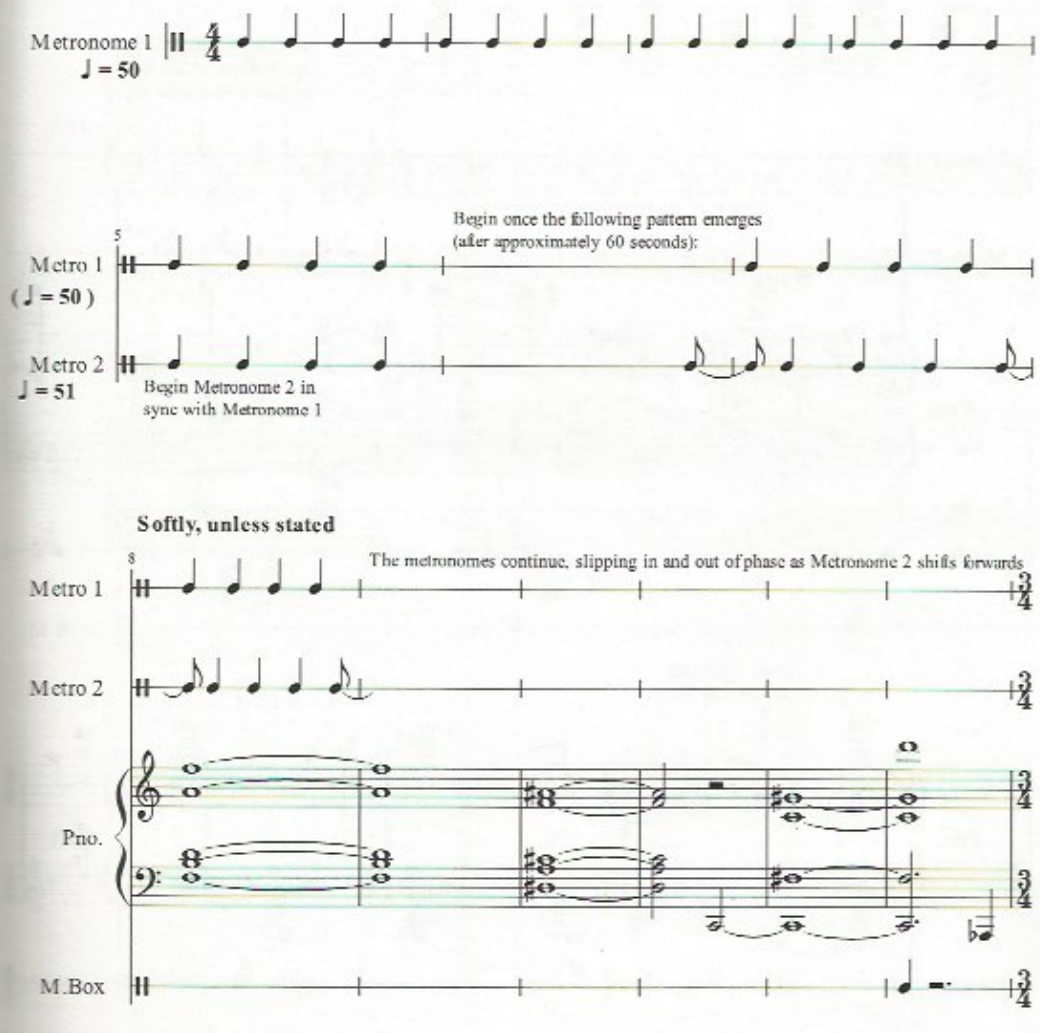
4. White mark on barrel

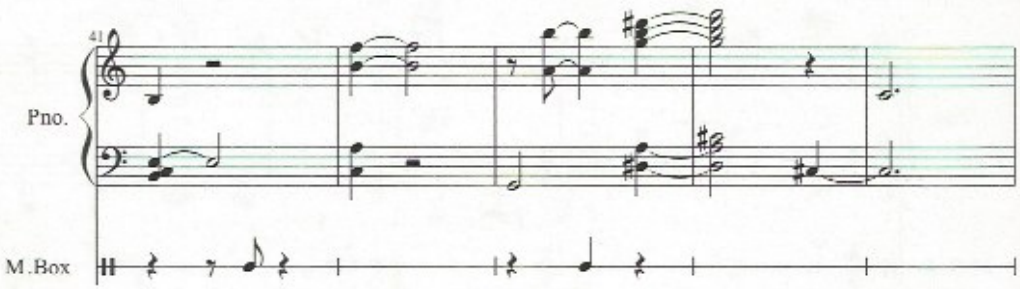
The first mark indicates the end of the run of notes (ie. If the push-to-make switch was pressed again, there would be no sound). The performer should therefore find an opportunity to hold the switch down until the next white mark is in position, indicating that a note *will* sound upon the next press of the switch. To prevent having to do this, the music box should be positioned close to the beginning of its sequence before starting the performance.

Cadaquésan Landscape

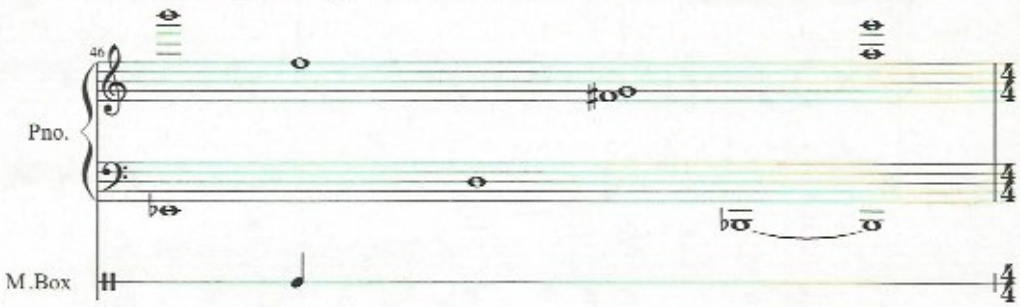
James Joslin

I do not paint a portrait to look like the subject,
rather does the person grow to look like his portrait.
Salvador Dalí

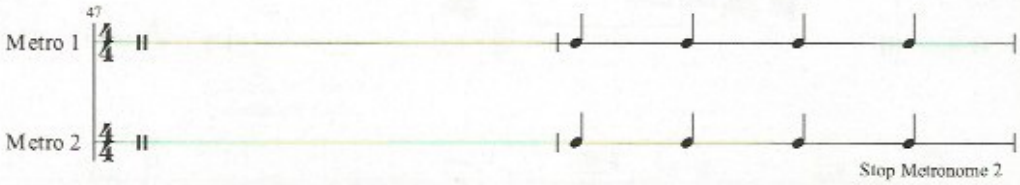




Free durations, very quiet

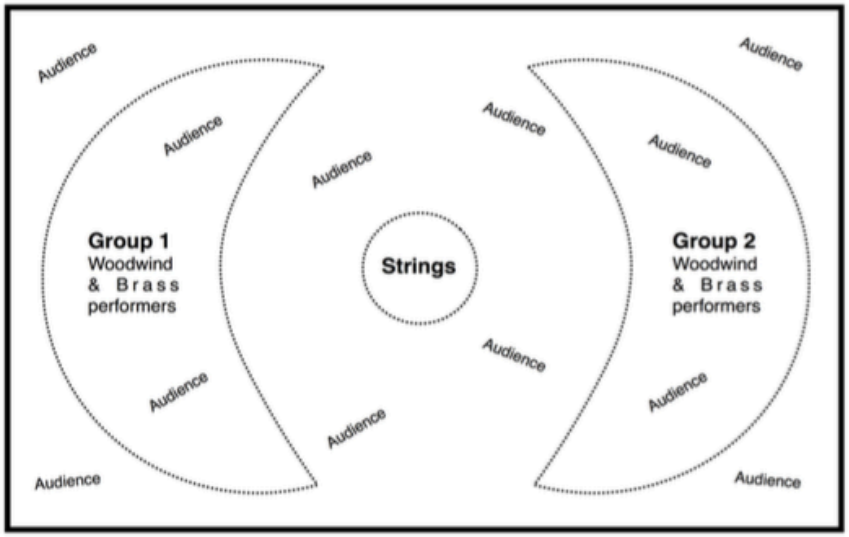


Perform the above notes with free durations (though in the correct order and only once) within approximately 60 seconds until the following metronome pattern emerges. If the metronomes are in phase shortly before the 60 seconds, wait instead to use the pattern in bar 7 as the cue to stop Metronome 2.



Jenny Jackson

[S]pan



Instructions for performance:

There are separate parts for **WOODWIND, BRASS & STRINGS** All three parts are shown on the Performance Score. Any instruments which fit into these categories are acceptable.

The size of the ensemble is flexible and will be largely dependent on the size of the venue, although there should be a minimum of four performers in each group.

WOODWIND & BRASS
Prior to performance, these performers should agree on a common starting pitch. This pitch is always shown on a single-line stave and is returned to throughout the piece. All other pitches are relative to this.

They should also determine who will be in Group 1 and Group 2. There should be a similar number of performers in each group. Decide who will play the Woodwind Solo 1 & Solo 2 and Brass Solo 1 & Solo 2 parts.

Group 1 performers should be positioned on one side of the performing space and Group 2 performers on the other. They should spread out and inhabit the entire space, wherever possible. It is not necessary for these performers to be able to see each other.

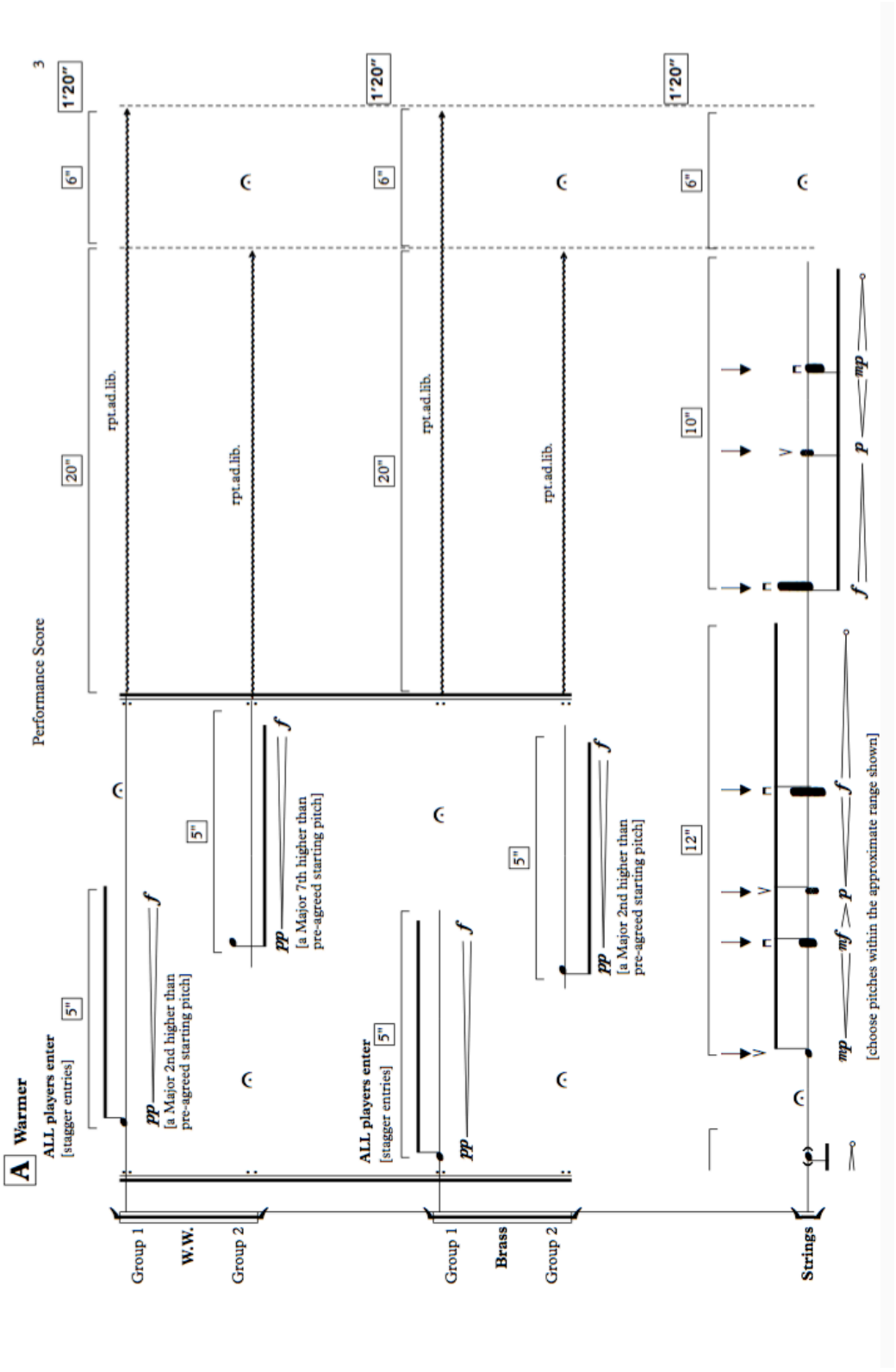
The dynamics are crucial to emphasise the panning effect.

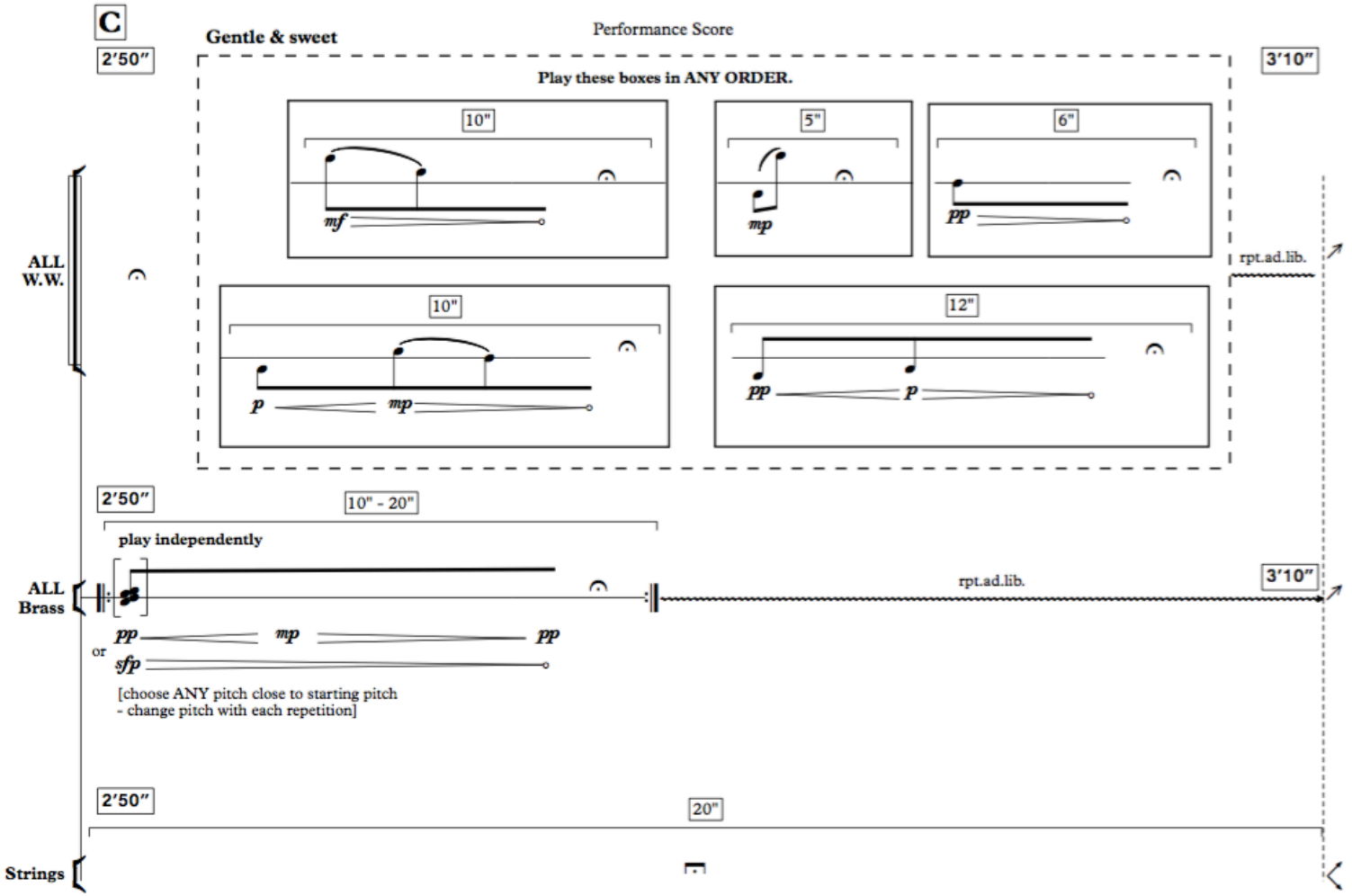
STRINGS
Performers in the String group should be grouped closely together in the centre of the performance space. They will need to be able to see each other in order to coordinate events within the group.

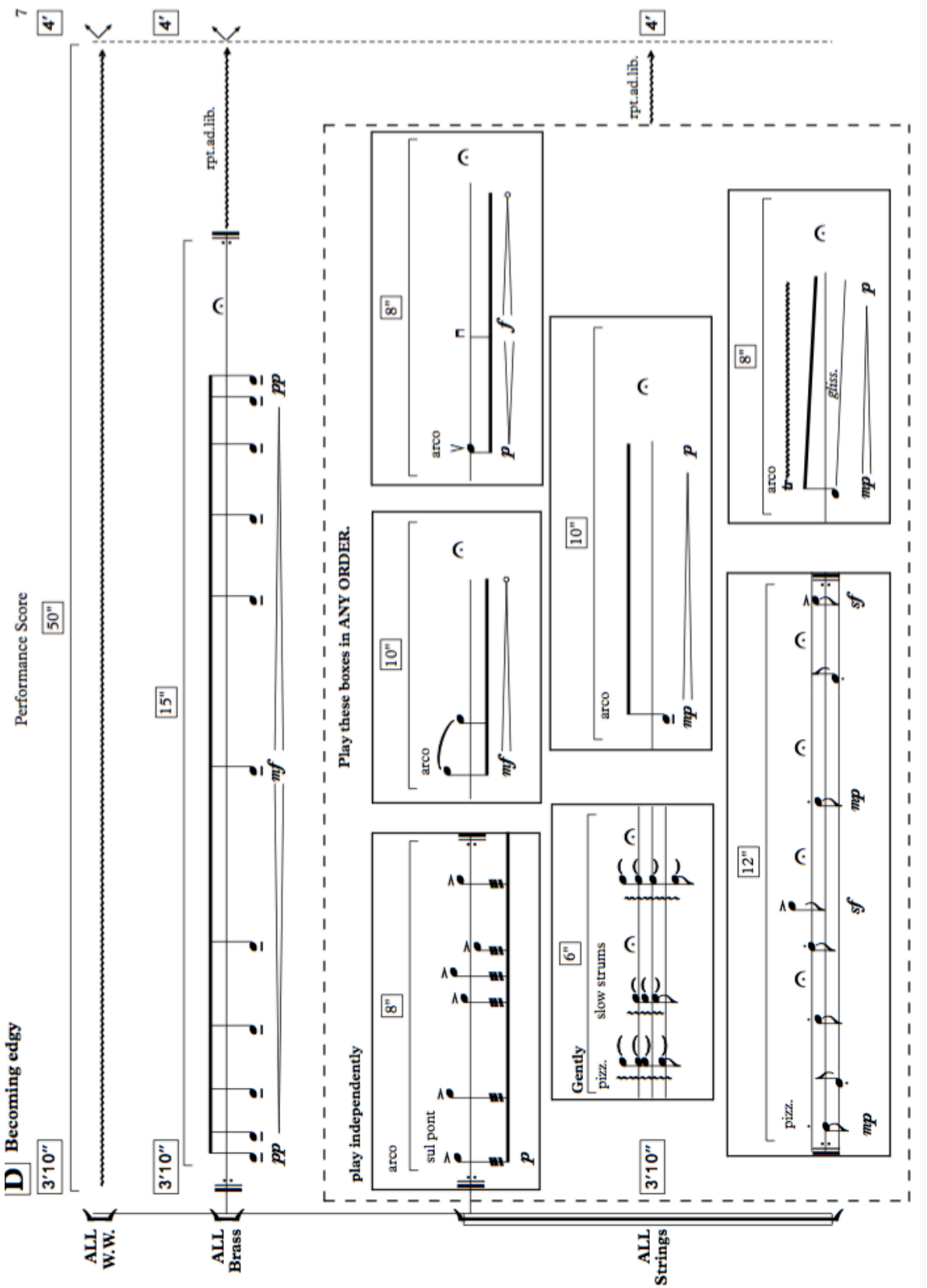
ALL PERFORMERS need a stopwatch and should follow the given timecode carefully in order to coordinate events effectively.

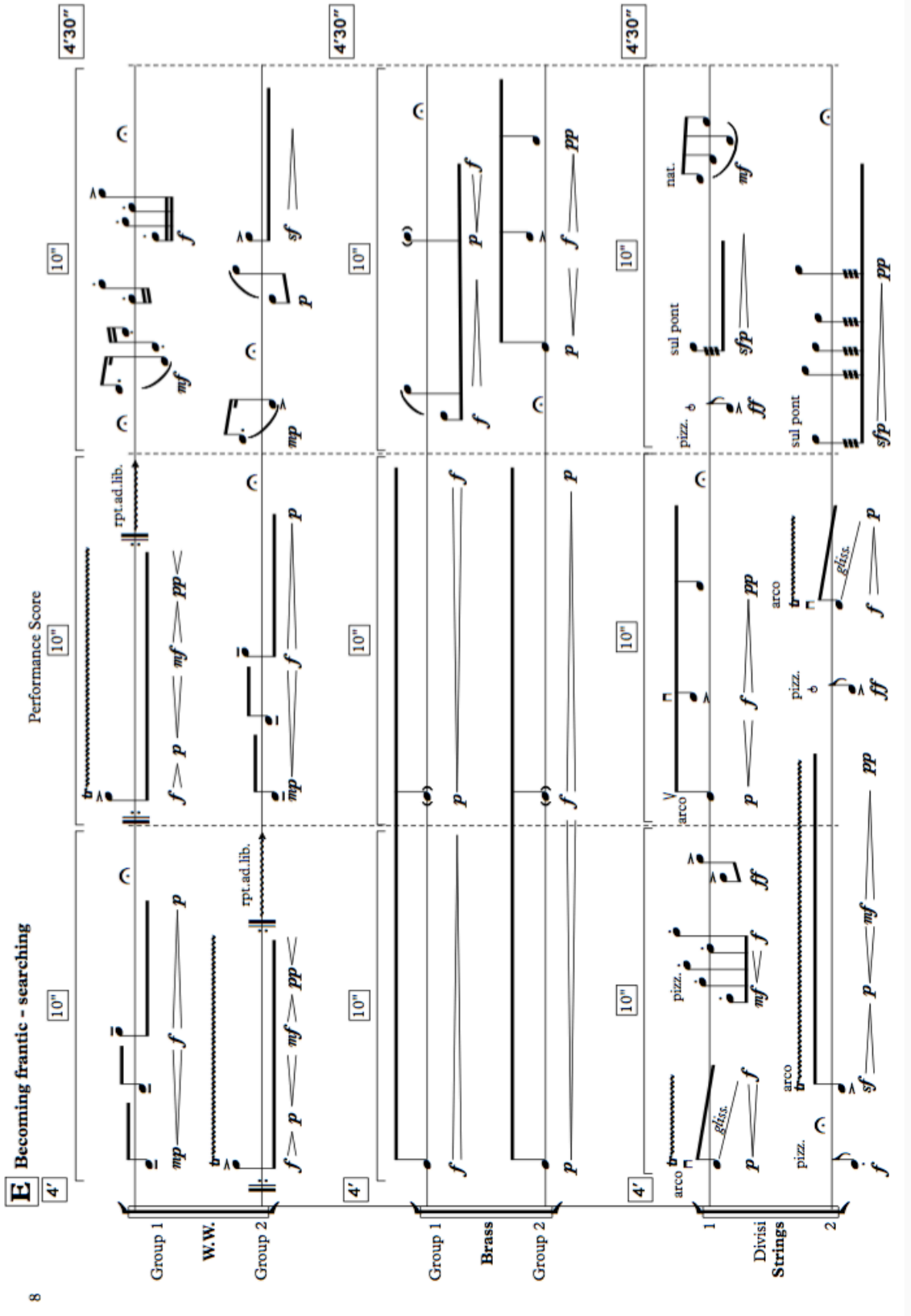
Timecode figures: 2'50" These timings override the approximate durations.

Approximate durations: 3" These provide a guideline for events between the timecode figures.

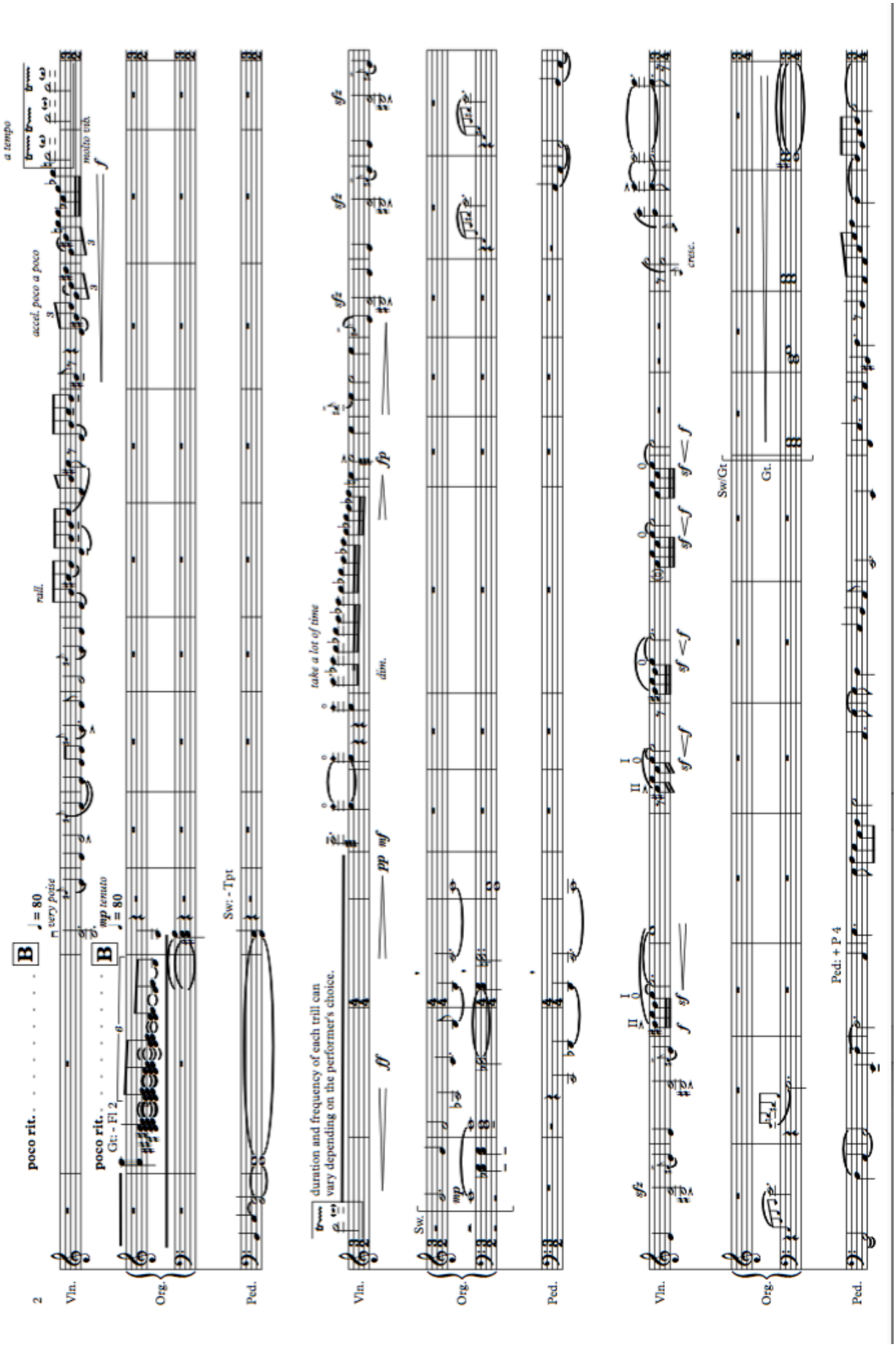

A Warmer
Performance Score
3
ALL players enter
[stagger entries]
5"
20"
6"
1'20"
rpt.ad.lib.
pp
[a Major 2nd higher than pre-agreed starting pitch]
f
5"
pp
[a Major 7th higher than pre-agreed starting pitch]
f
ALL players enter
[stagger entries]
5"
pp
f
5"
pp
[a Major 2nd higher than pre-agreed starting pitch]
f
12"
10"
mp
mf
p
f
[choose pitches within the approximate range shown]
Group 1
W.W.
Group 2
Group 1
Brass
Group 2
Strings

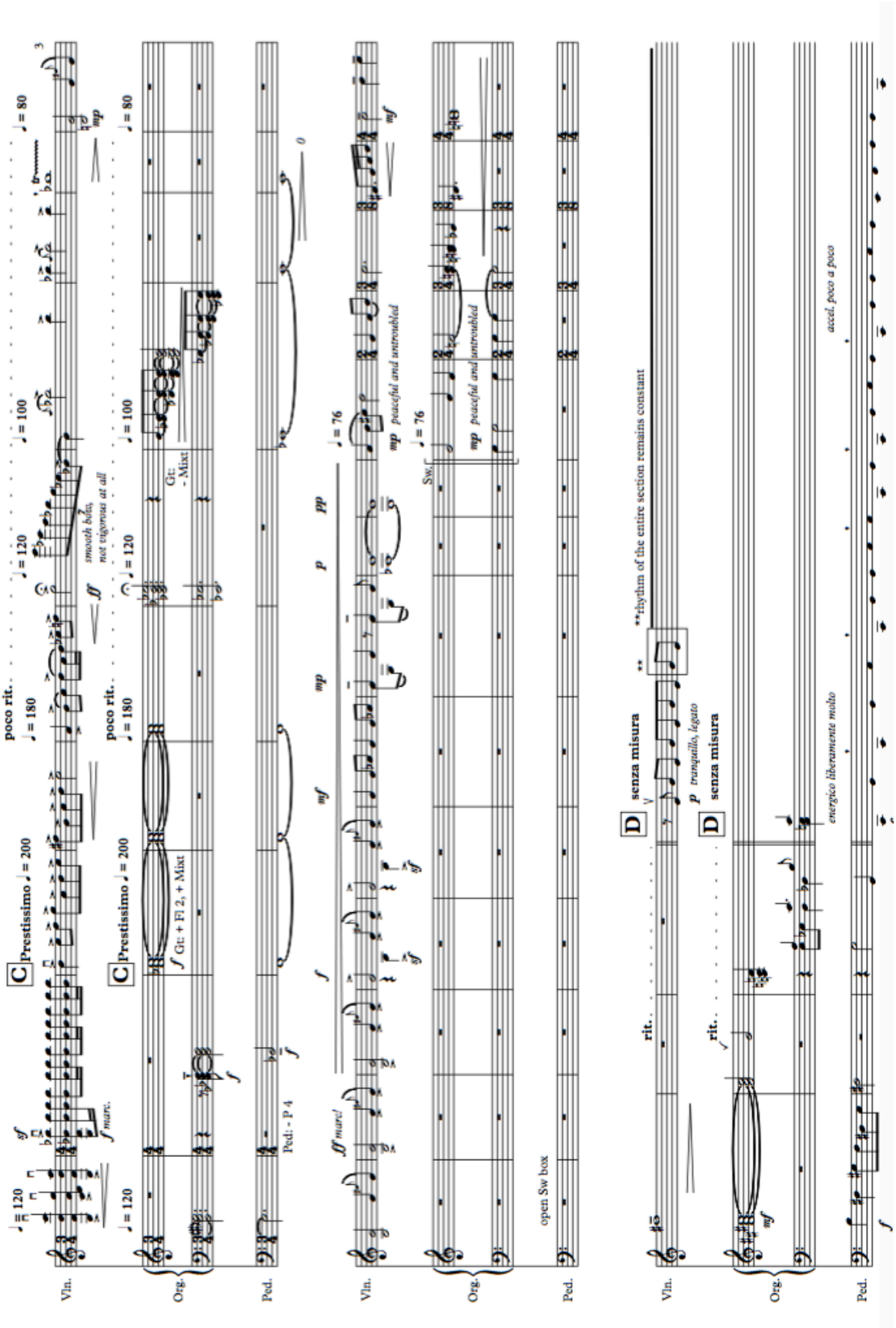

C
Gentle & sweet
2′50″
3′10″
Play these boxes in ANY ORDER.
10"
mf
5"
mp
6"
pp
10"
p
mp
12"
pp
p
ALL W.W.
rpt.ad.lib.
2′50″
10" - 20"
play independently
ALL Brass
rpt.ad.lib.
3′10″
pp
mp
pp
or
sfp
[choose ANY pitch close to starting pitch
- change pitch with each repetition]
2′50″
20"
Strings

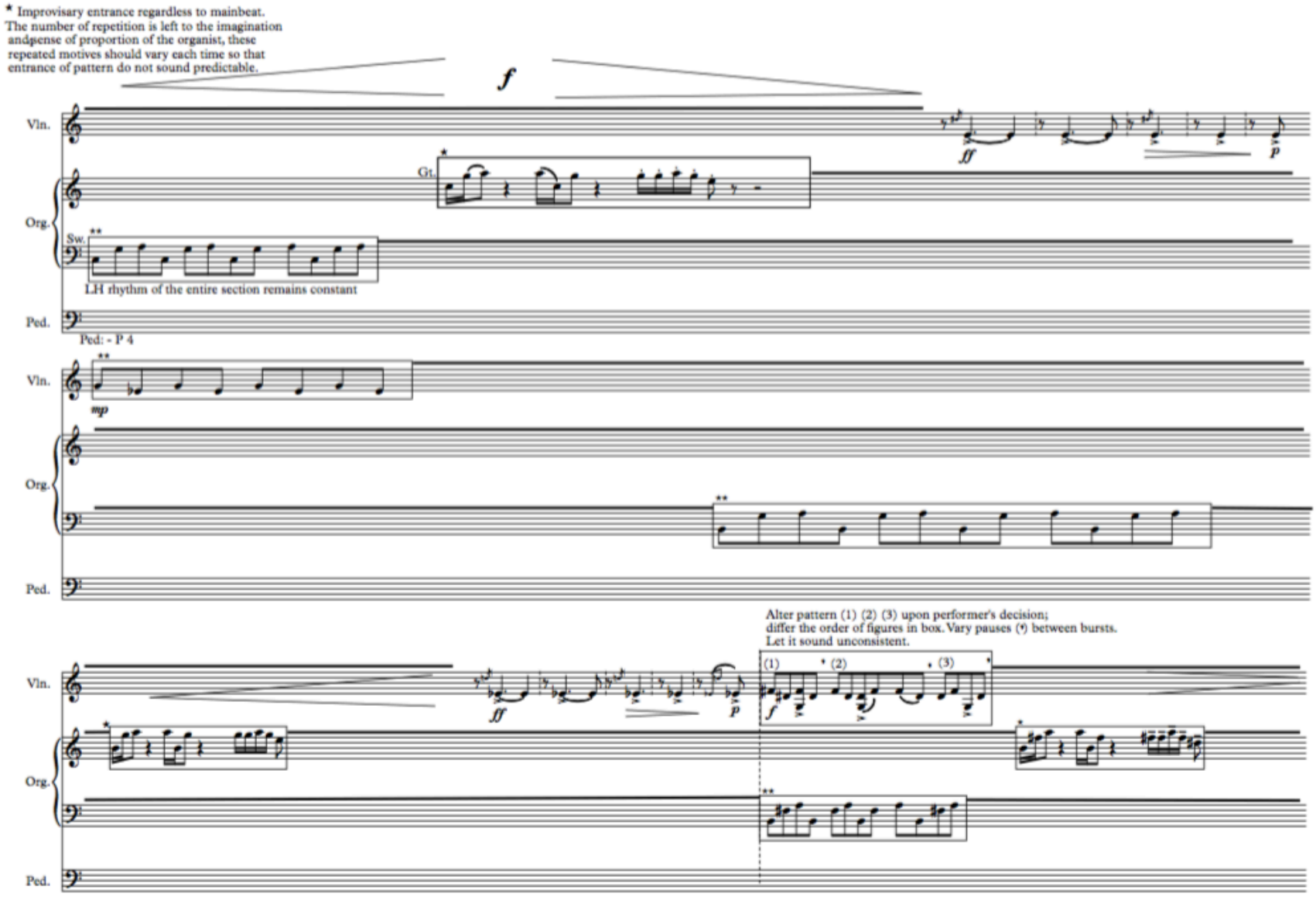

D Becoming edgy
Performance Score
7
ALL W.W.
ALL Brass
ALL Strings
3'10"
50"
15"
4'
rpt.ad.lib.
Play these boxes in ANY ORDER.
play independently
8"
arco
sul pont
p
10"
mf
6"
Gently
slow strums
pizz.
12"
sf
mp
gliss.

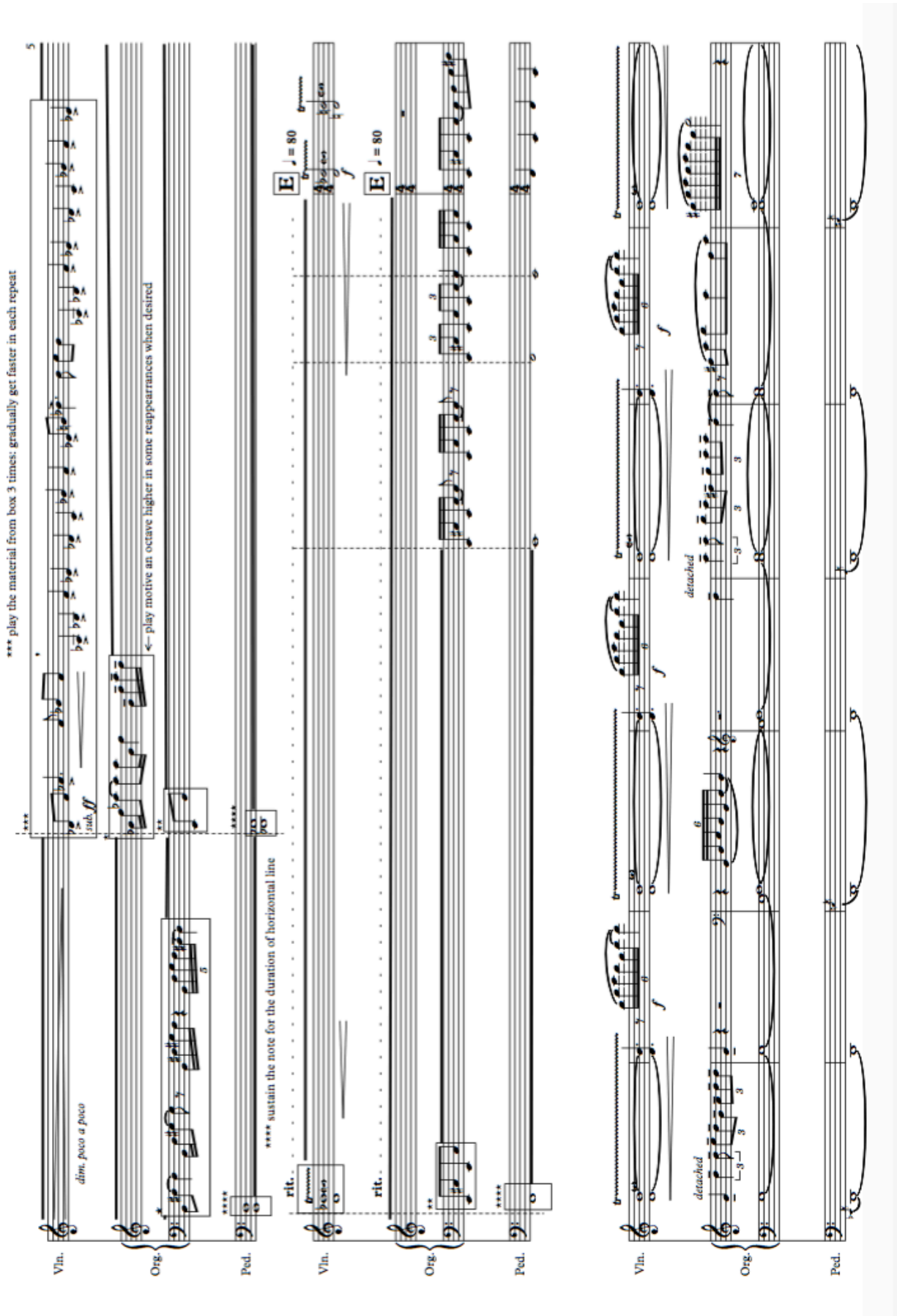

E
Becoming frantic - searching
Performance Score
4'30"
10"
4'
Group 1
W.W.
Group 2
Brass
Divisi
Strings
rpt.ad.lib.
sul pont
nat.
pizz.
arco
gliss.

Elena Chiu *O Still, Small Voice of Calm* (2017)




C Prestissimo ♩ = 200
poco rit.
♩ = 180
♩ = 120
♩ = 100
♩ = 80
Vln.
Org.
Ped.
Gt + Fl 2, + Mixt
Gt: - Mixt
smooth bite, not vigorous at all
Ped: - P 4
open Sw box
♩ = 76
Sw
peaceful and untroubled
D senza misura
**rhythm of the entire section remains constant
rit.
tranquillo, legato
energico liberamente molto
accel. poco a poco


* Improvisary entrance regardless to mainbeat.
The number of repetition is left to the imagination
and sense of proportion of the organist, these
repeated motives should vary each time so that
entrance of pattern do not sound predictable.
f
Vln.
Org.
Gt.
Sw.
**
LH rhythm of the entire section remains constant
Ped.
Ped: - P 4
ff
p
mp
Alter pattern (1) (2) (3) upon performer's decision;
differ the order of figures in box. Vary pauses (𝄾) between bursts.
Let it sound unconsistent.
(1)
(2)
(3)


*** play the material from box 3 times: gradually get faster in each repeat
<-- play motive an octave higher in some reappearances when desired
**** sustain the note for the duration of horizontal line
dim. poco a poco
rit.
E
♩ = 80
detached
Vln.
Org.
Ped.