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Bergstrøm-Nielsen, Carl

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IIMA Anthology 2003-2021, volume 1

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## GENERAL PREFACE TO THE IIMA ANTHOLOGY

The IIMA Anthology collects some of the most unique and important contributions to International Improvised Music Archive. IIMA is an internet archive founded 2003 by Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen, Denmark. The present Anthology was not meant to replace the site which hosts a number of other contributions and links, but to act as a signpost and an extra reserve for preservation of some rare works. The site features more authors and possibly more by the individual authors than included here, so I can warmly recommended to find it by internet search.

The motivation behind IIMA was to make both a number of instructional scores / graphic scores / open compositions / compositions for improvisors /etc. easily available - and some theoretical texts, both as a supplement to what is available elsewhere.

*For navigating:* as a starting-point, disregard the hypertexts (although a few might work). Scroll and use the index table. Contents were pasted from the individual HTML pages in the web version or recreated from archived files. Do not hesitate to use the standard search function within the document, in order to move from the index section to the item in question – or to browse for names, etc. This is possible to a large extent because much of the content (not all, though) is rendered in text, not graphics format. Care has been taken to make everything well accessible and readable, but please observe peculiarities such as the above ones.

None of my own creative and research output is included here apart from some composer portraits and translation work (I was born 1951 in DK) but I suppose it will be available through internet search.

All works appeared in IIMA by permission.

Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen

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# INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - CRISTIAN AMIGO (USA, b. 1963)

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Cristian Amigo is a guitarist, composer, music organizer and university teacher. [Homepage](#)

[Eleven one minute pieces](#) (2006)

These pieces were conceived and played at [Denmark's Intuitive Music Conference 2006](#).

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# CRISTIAN AMIGO: ELEVEN ONE MINUTE PIECES (2006)

#1

:01-1:00

As fast and as quietly as possible.

#2

:01-1:00

Something against your style or taste.  
Incorporate long silences.

#3

:01-1:00

isorhythms. Start and stop them.  
A visual image is cycles rotating at different speeds.

#4

:01-1:00

A section from a favorite piece of yours or from a  
piece of yours, but with half the elements removed.

#5

:01-1:00

Mimic/imitate/sound/meditate on the phrase:  
"The Way asks nothing hard, but detests any  
picking or choosing."  
- Seng-ts'an (c. 600) from the Hsin-Hsing-Ming  
("Inscription on Trust in the Mind.")

#6

:01-1:00

One note constantly repeated. Speed up and slow down.  
Vary the sound color. The theme is peace.

#7

:01-1:00

Do whatever you want, but without planning.

#8

:01-1:00

Perform an exact repetition of what you played  
as piece #7.

#9

:01-1:00

Don't try to be the fastest.

#10  
:01-1:00  
Follow your breath

--

#11  
:01-:15  
2 gestures. One is ppp; the other fff

:16-:26  
3 gestures. pp.

:27 - :37  
2 gestures; exact repetitions.

:38 - :48  
7 gestures; all are variations of the preceding 3 gestures.  
4 are f. 3 are pp.

:49 – 1:00  
9 gestures. ppp.

# INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - ANDERSEN, ERIC (DK), b.1943

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Composer, intermedia artist

COMPOSITION:

[Opus 51. I have confidence in you](#) For any kind of ensemble (1964).

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ERIC ANDERSEN: OPUS 51. I have confidence in you (1964).  
for any kind of ensemble.

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS.

There are a number of written parts consisting of a text and an alphabet. Additional agreements may be made for performance.

Here are examples of parts:

I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOU :

A A B B C C D D E E F F G G H H I I J J K K L L M M  
N O P Q R R S S T T U U V V W W X X Y Y Z Z Th a b c d e f g h i  
j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z t h . , - : ; ! ? " ' ( ) \$ \* + & 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

(from Andersen. Edition Bonotto, Italy, has an identical version, with the artist's signature)



(from moma.org)

Opus 51 :  
I have confidence in you :  
abedefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

(from moma.org - detail of a page typed by Andersen, comprising op.39, 51, 52 and 53. Fondazione Benotto, Italy, has a similarly typewritten version, however with "opus 51" added with pencil by a writer different from Andersen and, erroneously, the year "1965".

Parts have the same design - the initial text "I have confidence in you" followed by quoting an English alphabet, from beginning to end. Differences exist only in the style of the chosen alphabet and number of symbols after the letters.

There is no officially published collection of parts. New parts conforming to the original design may, however, be produced freely.

Andersen has these recommendations:

- 1 - do not plan in advance, do not coordinate with others.
- 2 - never repeat yourself
- 3 - listen more to others than to yourself.

#### Additional notes:

The above description has been approved by Eric Andersen and may safely be used for preparing a performance.

At the first performance, there were 14 parts in all. The conductor decided about an arrangement of dividing the given time-frame into 3 sections.

The description has been prepared to bring to light a more concise one of the work and how it may be performed. Historically, the first performance 1965 became a major event in the modernism debate in Denmark. For one glimpse into this, the conductor collaborated with the musicians but regarded the piece as a joke<sup>1</sup>. The book Notations from 1969 compiled by John Cage also quotes it, but as one part with no further explanation.

#### Audio links:

First performance - 1965, Danish Radio Symphony Orchester cond. by Francesco Cristofoli:  
[http://www.what-is-eric-andersen.net/audio/008\\_Opus\\_51\\_A\\_audio.mp3](http://www.what-is-eric-andersen.net/audio/008_Opus_51_A_audio.mp3)

Venice Biennale 1990, candidates from several Italian music conservatories:  
[http://www.what-is-eric-andersen.net/audio/010\\_Opus\\_1990\\_audio.mp3](http://www.what-is-eric-andersen.net/audio/010_Opus_1990_audio.mp3)

compiled by Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen, 2019

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1 Mogens Andersen: Historien om VOR TIDS MUSIK, Copenhagen (Wilhelm Hansen) 2009, p.87 states a summary of a radio program from 1965 with conductor Cristofoli and the composer participating. The work was one of the winners of a composition competition. - See also Martin Granau: Holms vision I - II, Radiosymfoniorkestret 75 år, Copenhagen (DR) 2000 - II p. 85f, 122, 126f

# **INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - ERIK CHRISTENSEN (DK, b. 1945)**

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Musicologist, educator and researcher, PhD. [Homepage](#).

[Graphic Pieces](#) (compositions, approx. 1977). Pdf

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# Erik Christensen: Graphic Pieces

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION for two or several musicians (1975)

CONSTANTLY ON THE EDGE OF A BREAKDOWN (1977)

NECESSARY CONSEQUENCES OF UNFORESEEN STRUCTURAL CHANGES  
(1977?)

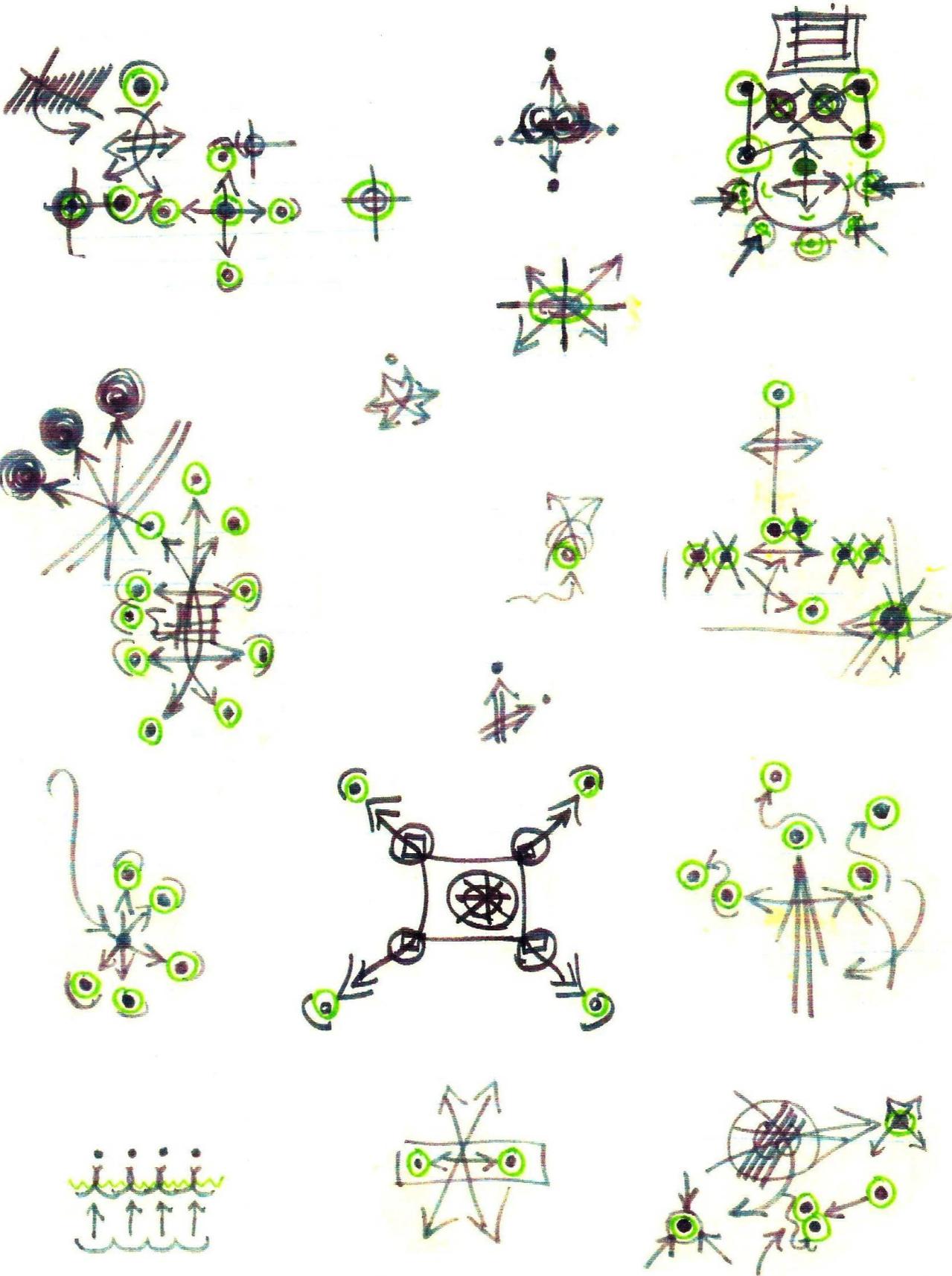
WHEN YOU ARE CRUSHED BY TRAGEDY, YOU DISCOVER THE WORLD  
AROUND YOU (approx. 1977)

These pieces were made by doodling during telephone conversations. The general designation "for two or more musicians" seems to be valid for all the pieces. "Telephone Conversation" was performed repeatedly by the Group for Intuitive Music in Belgium and Denmark 1977.

Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen

Erik Christensen: TELEPHONE CONVERSATION for two or several musicians (1975)

TELEFONSANTALE  
FOR TO ELLER  
FLERE MUSIKERE



## Erik Christensen: CONSTANTLY ON THE EDGE OF A BREAKDOWN (1977)

Rehearse individual structures one by one in the ensemble so as to get to know each structure and be able to remember a number of possible realisations.

For performance: consciously strive to provide a conscious overall form so that the chaos of the content suggested by the title is kept under control.

At any new performance a new set of playing rules are to be agreed on. For instance, this is a simple version:

Begin with the structure in the upper left corner. Then play the upper half (until this figure:



while letting the music follow the horizontal lines as precisely as possible.

Then select 3-5 structures from the lower half for free improvisation.

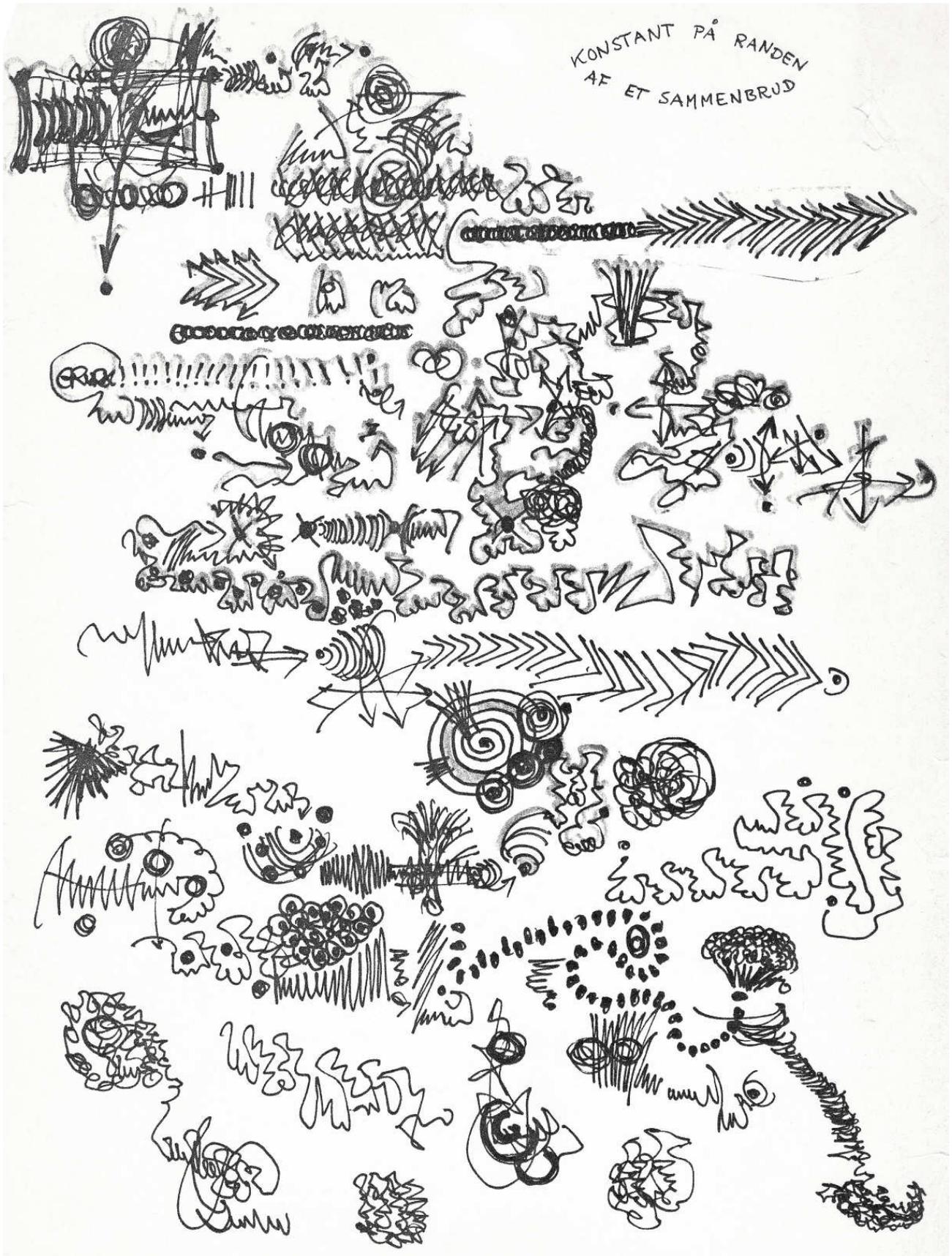
Agree on a conclusion using elements from both upper and lower half.

When rehearsing overall forms: shift between versions being meticulously planned in details and versions with different degrees of freedom. Play a totally free version each third or seventh time.

When performing: the overall form should be agreed on for the specific performance; it may not be rehearsed or played at an earlier performance.

E.C. 1977

Erik Christensen: CONSTANTLY ON THE EDGE OF A BREAKDOWN (1977)



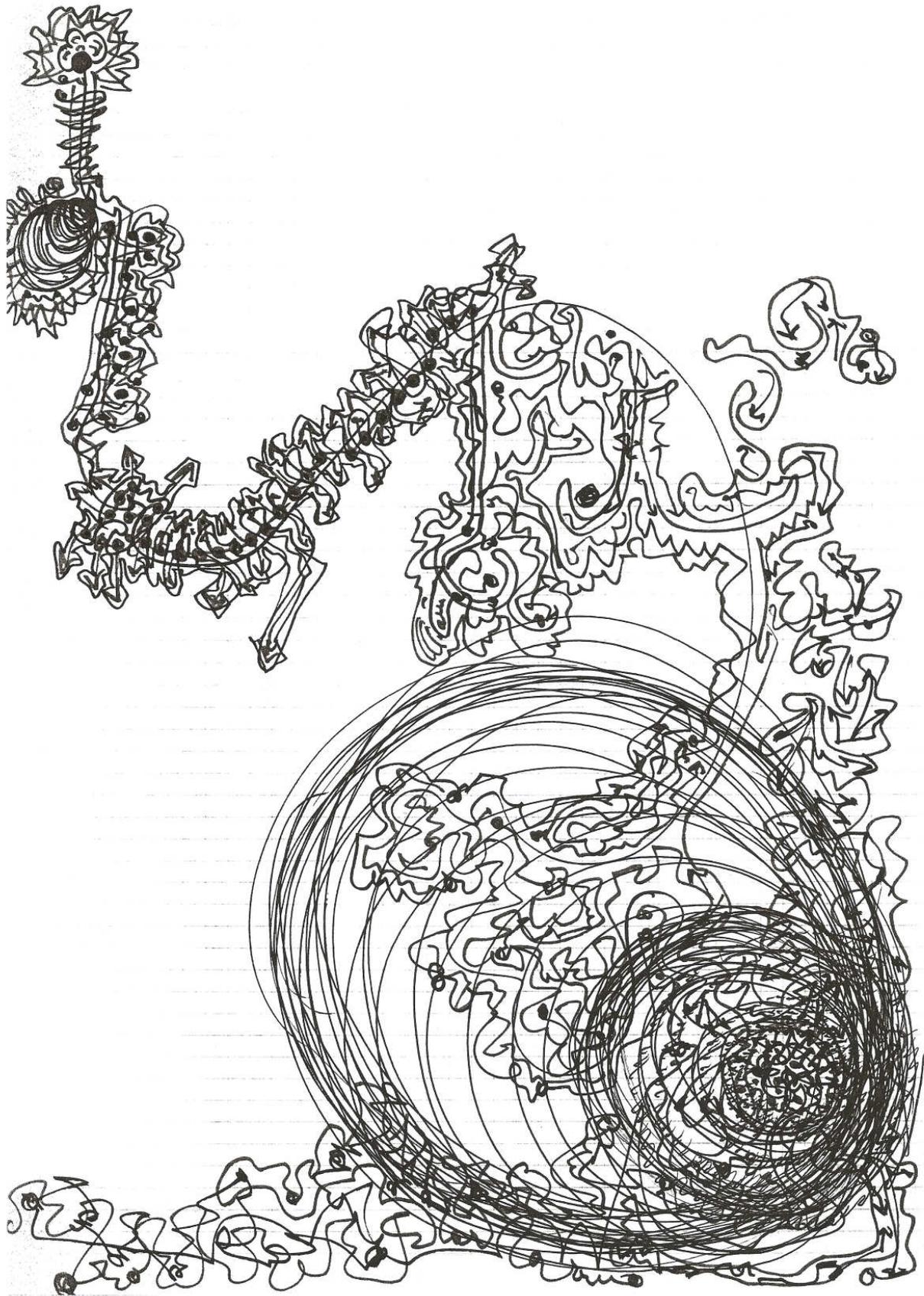
Erik Christensen: WHEN YOU ARE CRUSHED BY TRAGEDY, YOU DISCOVER THE  
WORLD AROUND YOU  
(approx. 1977)

Let the black lines lead your eye around and around and around in the picture, until you feel very crushed and empty.

Then forget everything about the picture and play from your impression of everything you see and hear around you, as if it were the first time.

To end: take a look at the picture and react to it.

Erik Christensen: WHEN YOU ARE CRUSHED BY TRAGEDY, YOU DISCOVER THE WORLD AROUND YOU (approx. 1977)



# **INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - CHRISTOPH COX (USA, b. 1965)**

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Christoph Cox (USA, b. 1965) is a philosopher, critic, and theorist of contemporary art and music. Together with Daniel Warner, he is the editor of the book *Audio Culture: Readings in modern music*, USA (Continuum) 2004.

[Every Sound you can imagine](#) (Article, 2008)

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## CHRISTOPH COX: EVERY SOUND YOU CAN IMAGINE (2008)

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*This essay was written for the exhibition "Every Sound You Can Imagine", which began at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, October 2–December 7, 2008 and then traveled to New Langton Arts, San Francisco, February 5–March 28, 2009.*

A large white sheet of paper is speckled with a few dozen black lines or bars—some horizontal, some vertical, some fat, some thin. In its geometric asymmetry, it might be mistaken for a sketch by Piet Mondrian or Kasimir Malevich. In fact, it's a musical score: Earle Brown's December 1952. Graphically, Brown's piece bears only a distant resemblance to a traditional musical score, as though all the notes and most of the staves had been erased, leaving only a fragmentary scaffold. As musical notation, it is thoroughly idiosyncratic, eschewing the standards of conventional sheet music in favor of a symbolic language all its own. So how does one perform this piece? A separate page of instructions offers only a slim bit of guidance. "For one or more instruments and/or sound-producing media," it reads. "The composition may be performed in any direction from any point in the defined space for any length of time and may be performed from any of the four rotational positions in any sequence."

December 1952 exemplifies a set of new compositional strategies that emerged in the early 1950s and that continue to thrive today. Intersecting with a range of visual art movements and forms—Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Fluxus, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Performance Art, Video Art, and others—such strategies envision the production of the score as a branch of visual art parallel to and partly independent from musical performance. As such, they challenge the traditional function of the score and propose a new set of relationships between composer, performer, and audience.

We generally take for granted that music is something composers "write" and musicians "read," and that musical "writing" and "reading" are distinct sorts of activities. Yet notation is a relatively recent invention in the history of music, as is the distinction between composition and performance. For most of human history, music was strictly an oral art, learned through hearing and transmitted and altered by way of performance itself. Within such a folk culture, music was in constant flux, without finished works or individual composers. While oral cultures adhered to traditional forms, improvisation always played a part and, like evolutionary mutation, caused traditional forms to continually drift and change.

Musical notation was introduced in the Middle Ages as a mnemonic aid for accomplished musicians, a crutch that became ever more necessary with the introduction of multiple melodic lines. Yet economic and political pressures made musical literacy a necessity. The transition from feudalism to capitalism meant the collapse of the courtly patronage system

that had supported musicians for centuries. Musicians were thrust onto the open market; and the emergent capitalism favored exchangeable objects rather than intangible, ephemeral forms such as music. Musical notation was thus enlisted as a solution to the problem of how to commodify the inherently transitory nature of sound and the fluid matter of music. Copyright regulations eventually assured the legal status of the musical work as the private property of its author, establishing a division between the work and its performance, the composer and the performer. These conditions served to fix music in the form of stable, finished products and led to the waning of real-time improvisation. The score shifted attention from the ear to the eye, as music became something to see and to read before it was something to hear. What began as a mere supplement to musical performance—the score—became an autonomous entity that governed performances and to which they were held accountable.

Today's system of staff notation first appeared in the 11th century and, over the next three centuries, achieved its familiar form: five parallel lines overlaid with notes and rests, clefs and time signatures. By the 16th century, staff notation had become the international standard in Western art music; and it continues to function today as the dominant system for notating all kinds of music. Yet in the past half-century, a crisis of musical representation has unsettled not only staff notation but also the whole musical edifice of which it is a part. This crisis was initially precipitated by the invention of the phonograph in the late 19th century and of magnetic tape a few decades later. These technologies challenged the status of written notation as the primary mode of capturing and commodifying music. Written notation could offer a description or set of instructions for musical performance; but electronic recording could preserve musical performances themselves. And while written notation was restricted to discrete pitches and their combinations, electronic recording could capture what John Cage called "the entire field of sound"—not only so-called "musical sounds" but the rush of the wind, the crackling of embers, the wail of sirens, the whir of machines, the roar of crowds, and the rest of the audible universe. These "non-musical sounds" enthralled artists and composers such as Luigi Russolo, Edgard Varèse, Cage, Pierre Schaeffer, and Iannis Xenakis, who began incorporating them into their compositions, either approximating them via traditional musical instruments or directly incorporating them through the use of phonograph records or magnetic tape. New electronic instruments—theremins, vocoders, synthesizers, and, eventually, computers—contributed to the exploration of this vastly expanded musical field, which traditional notation could not adequately represent. Already in 1936, Edgard Varèse prophesied the need for a "seismographic" notation to capture electronic sounds; and, within a few decades, composers such as Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and György Ligeti were producing just such graphic forms to represent the sonic sheets, waves, and pulses characteristic of their electronic compositions.

These developments coincided with the golden age of jazz, which treated the written score as a mere sketch, a springboard for creative improvisation. Jazz enthusiasts such as Earle Brown turned to indeterminate notational strategies as a way of jump-starting the improvisatory impulse. "I couldn't understand why classical musicians couldn't improvise,

and why so many looked down on improvisation," noted Brown. "The whole series [of open-form pieces] October, November, and December [1952] was progressively trying to get them free of having every bit of information before they had confidence enough to play." From the other side, composers emerging out of the "free jazz" explosion of the 1960s came to see experimental notation as a way of focusing what could otherwise be chaotic improvisatory blowouts. "One of the problems of collective improvisation, as far as I'm concerned," quipped composer and improviser Anthony Braxton, "is that people [. . . ] will interpret that to mean 'Now I can kill you'; and I'm saying, wait a minute!" Hence, Braxton, Wadada Leo Smith, Werner Dafeldecker and others began to use novel notational schemes to create a common point of reference so that improvisation could be genuinely collective rather than individualistic and competitive.

Whether used to encourage or to rein in improvisation, the turn toward experimental notational schemes often had political underpinnings. Brown's invitation to performers to become co-creators of his pieces sprang in part from a rejection of the hierarchy in classical music that made performers subservient to the composer and the score, a hierarchy that many experimental composers felt to be unsavory. "[W]hen you get right down to it," remarked John Cage, "a composer is simply someone who tells other people what to do. I find this an unattractive way of getting things done. I'd like our activities to be more social—and anarchistically so." Deeply political composers such as Cornelius Cardew shared Cage's aim and construed musical composition and performance as utopian activities that could foster experiments in radical democracy. Cardew thus envisioned his classic "graphic score" *Treatise*, 1963–1967, as a prompt or occasion for a group of musicians (or even non-musicians) to arrive at a consensus about how to perform the piece and then to follow the rules they had set themselves.

The experimental scores of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, then, were responses to the technological, cultural, and political transformations of the times. After a period of relative dormancy, the 1990s saw a reanimation of notational experiments that coincided with the emergence of new digital art-making technologies and a multi-media aesthetic sensibility. Inexpensive, portable, and ubiquitous computer technology fostered a popularization of electronic music production; and the internet made possible a global exchange of music and musical knowledge that opened a new generation to the history of experimental music. The vitality of video and performance art, and the ready translatability of digital data encouraged artists to ignore the boundaries between media and disciplines. It was no longer unusual for visual artists to incorporate sound into their practices or for audio artists to work with images. The paintings, sound works, and installations of Steve Roden, for example, draw as much inspiration from the canvases of Arthur Dove and Alfred Jensen as they do from the music of Morton Feldman and Brian Eno. Marina Rosenfeld performs improvised music on turntables and produces spellbinding photographs and videos. And Stephen Vitiello collaborates as readily with experimental music pioneer Pauline Oliveros as with painter Julie Mehretu. Not surprisingly, many of these artists have come to substitute the dominant visual formats—video monitors and computer screens—for the ink on paper characteristic of musical scores since the Middle Ages. Michael J.

Schumacher's *Grid*, 2007, for example, is an algorithmic visual program displayed on a computer monitor, while Rosenfeld's *White Lines*, 2005, and Christian Marclay's *Screen Play*, 2005, unfold in real time on video screens.

For all these artists, the experimental score serves as a nexus that links music with the other arts and acts as a kind of portable program for the endless production of new sounds, actions, forms, and communities. Rather than exemplifying the much-hyped notion of synaesthesia—the merging of sensory modalities or artistic media—these scores affirm the aesthetic value of metaphor in its original sense—the joy in unpredictable leaps and translations, in this case between sight and sound. As such, the works in this exhibition draw attention to musical notation as a species of graphic art and affirm a future that is conditioned by the past and present but that nevertheless remains fundamentally open.

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