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IIMA Anthology 2003-2021, volume 3

Authors F - I

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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 - CHARLES C. FORD (England, b.1950)

Charles Ford has taught jazz, popular and classical music at Thames Valley University. He published his doctoral thesis as *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* in 1991.

[Free Collective Improvisation in Higher Education \(1995\)](#). Article on improvised music teaching in higher education.

This article was first printed in British Journal of Music Education 1995, 12, p. 103-112.

ABSTRACT

Free improvisation has two sources in the avant garde jazz, and experimental classical practices of the 1960s. Sessions at Thames Valley University are managed by the students, and involve intense debate concerning how best to maximise collective musical freedom. Performances are triggered by individually prepared plans, which take the form of intervallic and rhythmic cells, registrally distinct roles, formal markers, dynamic processes, and even evocative poetics. Free collective improvisation in the classroom rewards sensitivity and sustained, intense concentration with a confrontational and convivial, ethical and musical, experience.

Free improvisation has twin sources in the free jazz of the early 1960s (Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane et. al.), and in the experimental stream of avant garde classical music that is best dated from 1953, the year of John Cage's iconoclastic silent piece *4'33"*. But whilst all these names are US-American, free improvisation has been far more prevalent in Europe (Dean 1992: xviiiif). Both streams, jazz and classical, developed in reaction against increasingly formulaic approaches to new music, be they the intricate 'standard' chord sequences of bebop, or the mathematics of integral serialism. Furthermore, the scores of the latter camp became so densely determined as to prohibit accurate realisation, which inevitably triggered loose, if not actually improvisatory, performance practices. (Dean 1992: 4f; Richards 1992: 57). Stockhausen recognised this irony, and under the influence of the renegade Cage, began to loosen up his scores, allowing players to choose the ordering of discrete events. Indeed his collection of verses, *Aus dem Sieben Tagen* of 1968, was one of the first unconventionally notated stimuli for free improvisation.

The most well-known free collective improvisation group in this country, and then only amongst a very small coterie of the avant garde, was AMM. The group grew out of the Mike Westbrook jazz band in 1965, and was then joined by the classical composer, Cornelius Cardew, who was to become Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music, shortly after. Lou Gare, the sax player, recalls how the 'classical' strand in the group's style-history came to drown out the jazz side.

After Cornelius joined it became AMM music. Before that it was quite jazzy, Coleman, Ayler stuff, although the rhythm wouldn't be. (cited in Richards 1992: 63)

Whilst AMM managed to drive the jazz out of their playing partly by way of a battery of electronic gadgetry, others found it less easy. Sam Richards recalls conflicts between classical and black US-American influences.

The problem when the white disciples of Coleman and Coltrane entered the European improvisation nexus was that idioms clashed horribly, rendering both powerless in the face of each

other. The blues apparently had nothing to do with the European experience. So what happened in the midst of the post-serialist plinks and plonks was that fragments of another experience flashed across the texture, usually louder than everything else, making the experience unsatisfactory *musically*. (Richards 1992: 61f)

The fact that these musicians were remaining obedient to the styles with which they were familiar must surely suggest that what Richards remembers was not really free improvisation at all, for free improvisation, in theory at least, knows no style.

If free improvisation follows no rule or principle, it would seem to promise no pedagogic function, since it can offer no criteria for assessment. Yet, free, or at least, partially free, improvisation has been practiced in schools since the York Project of 1973-78, in the guise of 'creative music' (see Paynter 1982: 98-103; Dennis 1975; Schafer 1967; Self 1967). 'Creative music' demonstrated to the planners of benchmarks in the National Curriculum for music, that children could compose without either conventional notation or advanced instrumental skills. But whilst I was able to pursue such things as an undergraduate music student at Sussex University in the anarcho-hippy twilight of the mid-seventies, such practices now seem altogether too dreamy for the hard-headed, management-directed teaching practices of higher education today, with their assessment criteria, aims and objectives. I have, however, taught two courses called 'Free Improvisation' to undergraduates at Thames Valley University in recent years. Both were very successful according to the students, who produced assessed work to the highest standards. Moreover, they managed to invigorate a musical culture amongst Humanities students taking music modules. I want to argue that such practices are of great value, not only for the sake of students' musical education, but also for their general ethical development, and, via the fashionable notion of 'transferable skills', for their vocationally relevant outcomes. In order to clarify what I mean by 'free collective improvisation', I want first to consider the nature of both 'free music' and freedom *per se*.

FREEDOM AND MUSIC

'Freedom' in our modern world is generally conceived in terms of the individual's freedom to act, to compete, and to choose, which are realised economically in the freedom of the manufacturer to produce without constraint, and the freedom of the consumer to select from a range of equivalent commodities. Such prescriptions are not of much help when considering the freedom of other people, or one's own freedom in relation to the freedom of others. They depend on the assumptions that we are all capable of sustaining and enjoying this sort of unrestrained freedom, and that it will not violate the freedom of others. Whilst the latter assumption is little more than wishful thinking, the former only holds in a purely personal sense. Indeed, the search for unfettered freedom for the individual will lead to unhappiness if it blocks the reciprocal relationships with other people through which we come to know ourselves. Even abstract rules, or limits, are amongst the principal sources of human happiness. Whilst this is especially obvious with young children at play, the same principle underpins humanity's love of the arts and sciences, as well as sports and games. This, I think, is the reason why, when we thematise freedom as the main end of our social systems, we seem quite spontaneously to generate a plethora of rules by which to lend that freedom form. Lady Thatcher's crypto-anarchist denial of the responsibilities of the state in the light of the non-existence of society (sic) has resulted in the most intensely ideological centralisation of social policy outside wartime that twentieth-century Britain has ever

known.

The notion of a 'free music' that acknowledges no style or limit has been popular amongst teenage pop musicians since the commercial consolidation of the group that writes (most of) its own material with the Beatles in 1963. Since that time rock has spurned any suggestion of a separate songwriter in an 'authentic' assertion of artistic independence. Now you cannot be a pukka rock musician if you perform, or 'cover' other peoples' music. But such determined individualism often actively inhibits the development of young creative musicians who profess to 'do their own thing' and 'let it all hang out'. Ask most 16-year old rock musicians, excited by playing with their first group, who they are like, and they will probably vehemently deny any possibility of such an invidious comparison; their group will be unlike anyone else - completely original and *free*. But these teenage rock stars *manqué*, who are hell-bent on denying the style-base of their music, are liable to stagnate once they have exhausted the potential of the few chords that fell under their fingers so simply that they could just as easily forget that they had once learnt them.

The individualism of rock culture blessed itself with the epithet 'progressive' in the mid-seventies, only to be rejected as pompous and conceited by its wayward child, punk rock, soon after. Now that rock's cherished individual freedom had been embraced by an increasingly centralised, and therefore, non-street-credible, leisure industry, nihilism remained the only way to keep youth culture's flag of Oedipal rejection flying. Johnny Rotten went down in the annals of pop mythology when he said of his group, The Sex Pistols, 'We're into chaos, not music', but punk rock's attempt to play directly without rules resulted not in the extreme difficulty of 'chaos' but in the naive reproduction of the elementary sub-rules of pop music dating back to fifties' rock'n'roll - primary chords and bass lines, basic backbeats, and retrogressive, 'unproduced' pop group textures, all overlaid by the continuous 'buzz-saw' grinding noise of heavily distorted small amplifiers. Once again, the search for unfettered musical freedom lead to the repetition of that which the artist has not noticed they have learnt. Whilst the Sex Pistols will appear as a mere nihilist blip in future accounts of twentieth-century music history, the musical revolutionaries of our age have always relished the freedom that is grounded in rules. Webern wrote, with reference to the composition of his second cantata, op.31,

Everything has become stricter, and for just that reason still freer too. That is to say: I move with complete freedom on the basis of an endless canon by inversion. (Webern to Willi Reich, in Moldenhauer 1978: 50)

Stravinsky intended much the same when he wrote,

Whatever diminishes constraint diminishes strength. The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself of the chains that shackle the spirit. (Stravinsky 1956: 65)

These two comments accord with a wide variety of philosophical traditions. Lao Tzu's founding text of Taoism, sometimes known as the *Tao te ching*, does not address the issue of freedom directly, but many aphorisms like 'The heavy is the root of the light' (Lao Tzu XXVI, 59), and 'Let your wheels move only along old tracks.' (Lao Tzu IV, 12; LVI, 129) represent similar denials of the efficacy of absolute freedom within the context of a philosophy that is more concerned with peace. The Bible also rarely addresses freedom *per se*, but the second collect for morning prayer contains a similar notion: 'Oh God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life, to serve you is perfect freedom' (*Alternative Service Book* 1980: 59). Karl Marx's early critiques of Hegel rest on the idea that true freedom is grounded in the recognition of necessity (Marx 1843, 1844).

It might now seem from what I have been saying that, by promoting free improvisation, I am advocating an unreal, or even amoral, musical practice for higher education. On the contrary, and this is the significance of the word 'collective' in my title, I am proposing a practice that foregrounds an interactionist ethics. Before I begin this rather difficult transition from a negative to a positive evaluation of 'free music', listen once again to Lou Gare of AMM:

I suppose you're free by being totally committed to something. It's that kind of freedom. It's not the freedom to do anything you like. It's the freedom to do what the music likes. And what the music likes happens to be what you like as well. That way you're totally free. (Q. in Richards 1992: 64f)

It is this notion of 'what the music likes' that answers all my reservations discussed above. Sam Richards, with assistance from two other members of AMM, gives similar accounts of a music happening as if beyond each individual player's will. He is describing how the AMM

... went for a kind of anarchism in which the individual was free to play whatever he was driven to knowing that the others were doing likewise. The permission given to each other to do this is what, paradoxically, produces a 'group mind'. This, at times, seems to function autonomously. Thus the space becomes safe despite its ability to sound abrasive or even violent. Prévost and Rowe have written in a sleeve note:

The players could share a timeless immersion in a world of sound, while simultaneously being free to pursue their individual paths. It was not uncommon for the musician to wonder who or what was producing a particular sound, stop playing, and discover that it was he himself who had been responsible. (Richards 1992: 64)

The idea of a collective musical object directing the players must surely seem strange, mystical even, to those who have not known it. How, after all, can more-or-less coherent musical patterns emerge from chance collisions of individual free wills? This emergent collective music, however, is not a chaos of individual wills, but a product of concentrated listening. The refusal to follow styles in the search for maximum collective freedom does not rule out communication. Pitch, interval, duration and timing (if not rhythm in the customary sense), dynamic and mode of attack, along with texture and structure are still viable paradigms for spontaneous musical dialogue. Each player listens and contributes to the formation of a collective sound, which is in a constant state of becoming music, and this sound-becoming-music, in turn, shows the way for each player to proceed. Like the manner in which cats' eyes constantly reveal themselves in a car's headlights, this is a provisional style, a way that knows no being, but only becoming. The movement from individual to collective and back to individual music is not really cyclic or processual, but I know no other way to express it. At its most successful this virtual movement is not known as movement at all, for it does not unfold in time. When collective freedom finds its voice in musical improvisation, the relationship between individual and collective becomes a static, though modulating unity. Individual freedom may well be lost, but what is promised is the most extraordinary union of minds in music, a union that dissolves and assumes ethics, pleasure and aesthetic experience into itself.

Are these 'more-or-less coherent patterns' worthy of the name 'music'? Perhaps the term 'musical dialogue' is more accurate. Herbie Hancock suggested this analogy during an interview concerning his work with Miles Davis in the late sixties.

... the kind of experimenting that we were doing in music, not full experimentation, but we used to

call it 'controlled freedom', just like conversation - same thing. I mean how many times have you talked to somebody and you got ready to make a point, and it kinda went off onto another direction, but maybe you wound up never making that point but the conversation went somewhere else and it was fine. There's nothing wrong with it; maybe you liked where you went. Well, this was the way we were dealing with music. (*Arena* 1976)

The Miles Davis band at this time were working within certain modal and rhythmic limits, and in accordance with fairly clearly defined roles: audiences stood some chance. But the free collective improvisation that I have in mind knows no such pre-established ground rules, for it is guided only by the way that constantly emerges, generating and regenerating an ephemeral syntax from and for the moment. Whilst this is certainly a musical activity it does not accord with our conception of art as an object intended, at least in part, for another. In this sense, free collective improvisation is unsuitable for audiences, who will find themselves unable to 'tune in' to sounds that only become music through participation. Audiences are likely to feel like eavesdroppers on a conversation in a unknown language. Collective free improvisation sessions are more like rituals than performances. This becomes clearer in certain religious contexts like the guided, free collective improvisation of Gaelic psalm singing on the Hebridean islands. This 'shadowing' of a leading voice is not designed to be listened to as music, so much as to be expressed as a collective act of faith (Bailey 1992). Similarly, the New York improvisation coordinator John Zorn, has talked about his exercise for free collective improvisation - 'Cobra' - in terms of its cathartic function for the players, for whom this almost unendurably chaotic racket is, quite clearly, a source of enormous pleasure. Their circular arrangement maximises eye-contact and effectively excludes an audience (Bailey 1992).

FREE IMPROVISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Teaching free collective improvisation at Thames Valley University has, similarly, reminded me more of my experience of drama therapy than of any musical rehearsal or performance. I reduce my role from teacher to coordinator, since the management of improvisations is given over to individual students. The only thing I teach, in the customary sense of the word, is respect for music for its own sake, linking this respect to the paramount importance of listening 'as if your life depends on it'. The more I repeat this phrase, time after time, week after week, the better the results; some things can only be learnt this way.

At the beginning of each session I organise warming-up exercises, three of which I have found particularly useful. Tuning is probably the best way to open up the sensitivity of the group to its own sound - to listen to itself. We have held onto sung and played single notes for over five minutes, listening to the beats that result from slight mis-tunings gradually slow down as the whole group enters absolute unison. I have used Stockhausen's *Stimmung* to show students how to extend tuning beyond its customary sense, by applying it to the unification of vocal timbre. 'Tuning' can also be understood temporally, as the sharing of a single pulse. Establishing a fast clapped pulse is easy, but slow it up to less than one per second, and the exercise becomes fascinatingly difficult. The third exercise I use is like a musical Chinese whispers game in which students pass a melodic cell around the group, each trying to reproduce the last version precisely. These cells can, of course, be lengthened and complicated as the standard of the group improves.

The groups I coordinate do not perform absolutely free collective improvisations since all performances are triggered by plans prepared by individual students. These are limited to what

can be displayed on an overhead projector, which is to say, not more than about two-thirds of a page. Many have suggested one or more germinal cells, comprising various combinations of pitches, intervals, durations and rhythms for collective development: see Appendix 1, Example 1. Some encourage varied textures, underpinned perhaps by registral distinctions: Example 2. Some suggest structures in terms of timed sections, or with prearranged physical or musical gestures to signal change: Example 3. Others prompt processes involving, typically, broad arches of dynamic intensity Examples 4 and 5. Example 5 is also typical of the use of extra-musical imagery to invoke a particular sort of mind-set, as does the title of Example 2. But when concrete images and narrative *are* the directions, as in Example 5, the result is often less collective music, than the combined noise of sound-effects from a crowd of individuals' off-stage daydreams.

One student begins the improvisation session proper by showing their plan, choosing participants if the whole group is not required, and answering any questions that might arise. When the performance is over, which rarely lasts more than ten minutes, I chair a discussion with the whole group. I always try to give opportunities for the leader to consider to what extent the realisation of their plan accorded with their expectations, and for participants to reflect on their role with the assistance of those who were listening. I return to these discussions at the end of this essay.

Plans are often insufficient, in the sense that they do not adequately explain their terms, since the planner fails to write all that they had in mind: an object lesson in communication skills! We have had many discussions concerning the propriety of departures from plans, which sometimes can be criticised as breaches of contract, but at other times signify an intense concentration on the condition of the music at that time, rather than on the recollected plan, which by now has served its purpose. This often occurs with over-complicated plans, once again demonstrating the ironies of freedom and necessity. Similarly, cues for change, whilst on the one hand encouraging concentrated listening, can themselves be distracting when they become all that the player is listening for, effectively treading water until they hear or see the sign.

Experienced musicians in these groups have often found more difficulty integrating themselves, since they had internalised habits of performance that proved difficult to shed. If one person is so used to playing in a key, or on a blues scale, that they spontaneously do so without thinking, then they will have to repress their experience in the name of integration with those who cannot or do not wish to play in that way. Free collective improvisation sanctions styles, not because of their rigidity, but because of their exclusivity - the fact that they inevitably alienate: 'Leave your past outside the door; listen as if your life depended on it'. One student with considerable experience of playing in pop groups described adapting to free improvisation as being 'like learning to ride a bike having just had the stabilizers removed'.

Experienced musicians might, furthermore, find their skills rejected along with their style-knowledge. One group engaged in a prolonged discussion over several weeks concerning whether to harness pre-existent musical skills (we listed them in the first session), or to actively ignore them in the interests of originality and spontaneity. They were excited by the results of a plan which asked four players, who had no experience with the guitar, to stop the strings, pluck and strum them, turn a volume control, and manipulate a distortion unit respectively. One particularly enthusiastic student wrote, 'Communication is the most important thing, even if it is at the expense of technique.' But people can enjoy musical freedom at a variety of levels. Although I was considerably more musically skilled than the rest, I took great pleasure in keeping a pulse, since I could at once contribute shifting accents to the musical whole: Example 6. To maximise the

group's collective musical freedom is to make full use of its technical resources, and it does not matter if those resources are mixed in quality. However good or bad an improviser is, their contribution comes not so much from being in control of their instrument, as from their determination to make, with maximum precision, the sound that the music requires at any one time, and the more skilled they are, the more precise that contribution will be. The piece for four unskilled guitarists was precisely that; if they had been skilled they could have dealt with, and perhaps would have required, more instructions, less freedom. Skilled musicianship is a great asset for free collective improvisation, but excellent pieces can be played without it, and with no less benefit to the players.

Free improvisation, especially with mixed ability groups, poses a problem for assessment, since it is virtually impossible to establish criteria for performances. Furthermore, any sense of competition within the group will ruin the integrity of the music, especially when the assessor is participating. My solution to these problems is to keep assessment well away from the practice of improvisation. I ask students to produce three performances. After each, the participants and the rest enter into, often heated debate about the music and the politics of its production. I then give them time to take notes. I tape-record all performances, and keep them in the university library alongside copies of the plans they are based on. These records, together with individual students' own notes on class debates, constitute the study materials for the course. I assess students on the basis of three short essays, each concerning one of their own, and one of another's plans and their realisations. At the end of the course they also write a longer, general essay about the nature of free improvisation and their general experience of their particular group. So I assess not improvisations, but thoughts about improvisations, be they philosophical, political, moral or aesthetic. Despite (or, dare I say, because of) the lack of any customary scholarly work, I have never witnessed anything to compare with the thoughtfulness and sensitivity of these essays.

Free collective improvisation at Thames Valley University has attracted the rebellious (typically anarchists of one sort or the other) and the religious, because both understood the course as an extraordinary alternative to the rest of their studies, since it promised a unique forum for interpersonal confrontation and ethical debate. In this context it has been interesting to see a Christian argue against the use of Christian words in the name of collective freedom, and then to see the whole group respond by deciding (without stooping to vote) to veto the use of any words apart from musical directions. I was also delighted to see two women make the men aware of the dominant sexual role that they were taking up (and one confessed to me that he had never believed in sexual politics before), by always somehow finding the electric instruments in their hands. Would it be chivalry, political correctness, positive discrimination - levelling the field - to offer it to a woman? How might such considerations balance with the desirability of utilising the best resources: 'But I can't help it if girls don't play electric guitars'.

More pragmatically, free collective improvisation can accord with new educational directives from primary schools to universities. It can be used for mixed-ability groups, and requires no library resources, though some minimal percussion is helpful. Furthermore, the outcomes of such a course can be expressed in vocational terms, such as:

- 1) group management and collective decision-making;
- 2) sensitivity and imagination;
- 3) sustained concentration;

- 4) communication skills and innovative forms of representation;
- 5) ability to deal with constant change.

All these outcomes, like the transferable skills of music studies 12:12 22-09-2002 generally, answer to the expressed educational requirements of the Confederation of British Industry and the Chamber of Commerce (Paynter 1982: 239f).

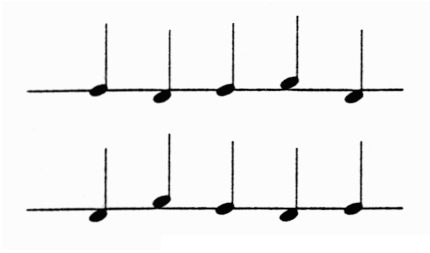
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APPENDIX

The following six plans for improvisations were written by members of free improvisation groups at Thames Valley University. I have selected representative examples of various approaches.

EXAMPLE 1



No specific instruments, although preferably an even number to each part.

No emphasis upon time or speed.

Play as the way you feel.

EXAMPLE 2

HEAVEN AND EARTH

Someone plays a simple, strongly shaped gesture.

The group develops this gesture, aiming more for identity than difference.

The development becomes gradually polarized between high, fast notes and slow, low ones, each player choosing one or other direction.

The piece ends when the last low note has sounded.

EXAMPLE 3

TIME IN SECONDS 10 10 30 20 40 20 10 15

PIANO 1 8 9 17 1 13 2 4 11

PIANO 2 1 3 13 1 6 9 12 2

MARIMBA 6 5 20 2 4 10 3 7

GUITAR 2 7 11 1 12 10 9 3

BASS 4 3 1 2 10 7 6 8

Numbers against instruments refer to how many notes should be played in that duration

EXAMPLE 4

Begin playing all together loud and at random, but remember your first gesture.

Move gradually towards quiet identity, and get quieter.

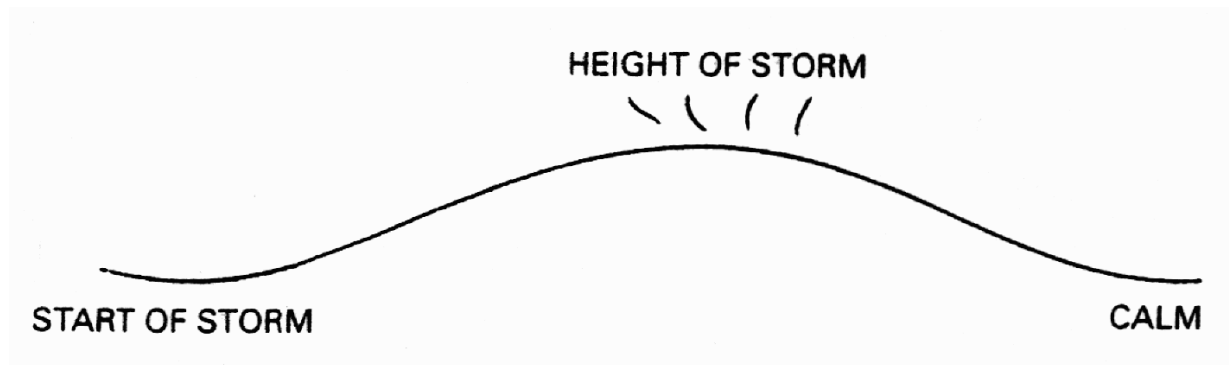
When you are unable to hear your partners, reverse direction until you reach your first gesture: repeat it.

When everyone is repeating their first gesture move gradually into a collective oscillation between two notes (keep it loud): stop.

EXAMPLE 5

Imagine that you are caught in a storm during the night, and try and express some of the sounds, i.e. trees crashing, cars screeching, lightning, thunder, the wind, sirens in the distance, the pounding of heartbeats, children crying, background music, cans rolling ...

As the storm dies down things slowly come back to normal.



EXAMPLE 6

IMAGINE YOU'RE A DRUM KIT

Three players take the roles of closed hi-hat, bass and snare drums, following dots, vertical lines and #s respectively.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

.....

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

| ... # ... | . | ... # ...

Now you have a basic rhythm, play around with it, jam with it, improvise with it, but stick to the pulse and don't get lost!

Other percussion instruments may join in the 'rhythm jam', but only after the rhythm becomes lost or the structure will fail.

True, the pulse bass-drum and snare drum are working within very rigid confines, but that doesn't mean they don't have room for improvisation.

INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - VINKO GLOBOKAR (Yugoslavia, b.1934)

Vinko Globokar is a composer and improviser (trombone and various instruments). He participated in Stockhausens' intuitive music group and worked with free improvisation from 1969 and on in the group New Phonic Arts.

[Reacting \(1970\)](#). This article describes pioneering compositional work dealing with how to make interesting challenges to improvising musicians.

REACTING (1970)

by Vinko Globokar

*This article has been translated by Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen from the French original published in *musique en jeu* 1, 1970. It appears here with the kind permission from the author and from C. F. Peters Music Publishers, Frankfurt/M., Leipzig, London, New York. A German version appeared in *Melos* 2, 1971, without the music examples.*

The interdependence between composer and performer has nowadays become one of the fundamental problems in our music. Owing to recent experiences and acquisitions in aleatoric and graphic music which among other things developed a responsibility from the side of the performer, it is a desire today to let the performer participate more deeply in the musical creation. We would like him to engage himself totally, not just use his technical proficiency about the work but also his capability of inventions, his ability for decisions and more or less spontaneous reactions, in one word - his "psychic contents". Nevertheless, we would like to preserve the possibility of being able to "conduct" - to canalise - the different forms of this participation.

We have already made an experiment: the more we are transferring the responsibility of composing to the performer, the more we run the risk of creating musical situations which will jeopardise our aesthetic view. This is why we are looking for some technical means which primarily stimulate the performer to an extremely engaged participation and which at the same time eliminate this most frequent fault: the use of personal clichés which he puts into play as soon as you appeal to his invention. On the other hand this technique must allow for a dynamic change (1) back and forth between those situations having a maximum of responsibility from the side of the performer and those in which the performer does nothing but reproducing a totally fixed/composed music.

It would be an aberration to prescribe to a musician: "At this point, improvise" without giving him previous orientation. The rare musicians for whom improvisation is a vital necessity have no need for this frustrating occasion (2). To them, this seems to signify: "At this point, you should undress". They do it when they feel the need to do it but definitely not when being ordered to. Those skilled musicians who are superficially initiated in this practise, find in this case an occasion to expose a repertoire more or less full of their own personal clichés. Most orchestral musicians will interpret the prescription his way: "At this point, do whatever". The two last attitudes are understandable, as in principle the compositional process takes place rather strictly within the aesthetic ideas of the individual composer. Because of a lack of sufficient indications, the performer participates in a subjective way. Being in most cases not initiated to the aesthetic and stylistic conceptions of the composer, he cannot figure out his silent wishes. Presented in this way, the musician's participation is clearly not constructive.

A different means to make the performer participate in the creation of a work became especially the object of experimentation in recent years. This consisted of inviting a choice between a limited number of different possibilities. For instance: choose freely among a group of prescribed notes, choose between given structures, choose one of several possible ways, etc. We have been able to establish that this lead in most cases to a demonstration of open disinterest in the offer given to him to participate in the construction. The act of choosing is above all an intellectual operation. Experience has showed us that the performer is especially interested in those operations which are

more directly musical, more interested in tasks putting him directly into contact with the sounding material and thus excluding operations based on decision, choice or a reasoning which has been pushed too far.

If we give him the possibility to react on sounding contextual material, whether composed by us or selected by us, this will have strong chances to yield the desired results: 1) evoking deep interest from the musician, 2) having the possibility to "canalise" his imagination and invention in the service of the work. If you want a performer to react, it seems necessary to "send" him a stimulation of a visual or acoustical kind. What interests us is the quality of reactions provoked by stimulations from different sound sources.

Simplifying the matter, it is possible to qualitatively catalogue the reactions which we can prescribe into five categories, fundamentally different from one another.

The most direct and instinctive one is no doubt IMITATION. After a variable time lapse, the performer is to reproduce exactly what he heard. Clearly, the spontaneity as well as the quality of the response will depend on the contents and character of the model, on the degree of its complexity and on the degree of its perceived difficulty. Only very few performers have a sense of absolute pitch; thus we must take into account a certain groping for the result when dealing with exact imitation of given pitches. In the same way, the time lapse separating stimulus from response varies much according to every performer's "spiritual presence". Imitation is a spontaneous reaction, it happens almost instinctively, with neither much reflection nor conscious analysis.

Instead of imitating literally, it is possible to INTEGRATE ONESELF into a material serving as a model, to follow it, to incorporate oneself into it, to move into the same direction. In this case, the response differs from the proposed material above all in the details. One perceives subtle deviations taking place alternatively in all parameters. The sounding results coming from this group of reactions reveal aspects of embellishment, of disguising or reinforcing, and certain intentional deviations from the established road may entail short developments of fragments having been discovered within the model. For the performer, this group of reactions remain rather manageable. The performer can always find a possibility of integrating himself into the model in one way or the other, and so the degree of complexity of information does not play a decisive role. (Ex.1)

To HESITATE, with further variants of paying no interest or making only sporadic interventions constitutes the group of tasks tending the most to creating distant and disengaged attitudes. Starting from being "tied" to a certain material, the performer arrives at creating active halts, extremely alive and tense rests by means of these prescribed reactions. He takes bits out from the model and places them in time, transformed and in a subjective way. Hesitating may produce an inner tension in the performer which a totally fixed writing would probably have been incapable of provoking. Idleness in music, which in rather many cases makes for a dead situation, becomes here extremely "constructive".

There is a fundamental difference between these three modes of reaction (imitate, integrate oneself and hesitate) and the reaction consisting of DOING THE OPPOSITE. In the previous cases, the performer did not reflect nor analyse consciously. He employs his musical sense, instinctively and in a fair number of cases even intuitively. Contrary to this, from the very moment one demands him to react to a model, doing the opposite, he has to rapidly analyse the situation, dissect it into parameters in order to become able to subsequently decide what could be the opposite of the heard situation. Following experience, one has been able to establish that everybody "chooses" the

parameter or parameters appearing to him to be the most characteristic. Ultimately, he does not "choose" but reacts. One type of material, proposed with maximum loudness, static, in a deep register, will be "opposed" according to the individuals in one, two or even all three parameters at the same time, whether it be ppp but remaining static and deep, moving and high but remaining fff, or ppp and high but remaining static, etc. (Ex.2).

The selection of one or several parameters which seem important followed by the creation, the invention of the opposite of them is a reactive but in the next place compositional process. (3). The spontaneity of reaction which we have been able to establish in the precedent cases was tied to a certain qualitative uniformity, because the performers would have rather similar and predictable responses. In the case of doing the opposite and even more in the fifth case - DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT - this instinctive but uniform spontaneity gives way to a multitude of possible responses, in which every individual has an interpretation of what to do with the prescription, together with an entirely personal perception and analysis of the model. We might say that he rather "composes" his response in the case of doing the opposite and that he invents his response in case of doing something different. Especially in the last case, there may appear risks of moments coming up which do not any more correspond to our aesthetic views, but they are rather suppressed by the fact that the performer is conditioned by the contextual material and can only with difficulty escape the stylistic context of the model.

It is especially in these two last cases that the personality of the performer at last has the possibility of emerging and that his musical culture, his "reservoir of possibilities" plays a decisive role. This poses the question whether we are writing the music for a group of performers with whom we work regularly and with whom we live on a basis of deep friendship, or whether we are immediately composing our music for unknown performers. In the first case we know each other mutually; this means that the performer knows more or less the aesthetic points of view of the composer, and he knows more or less the depth of the musician's "reservoir of possibilities". Thanks to this knowledge and this collaboration, also thanks to the possibility of experimenting and discussing points of misunderstanding, the prescription of reactions like "do something different" or even proposing something new, without anything musical supplementing it, becomes possible and extremely fruitful.

Not having the possibility of working in a group and writing directly for unknown performers, without having the possibility of talking to the performers, one has to be conscious of the fact that verbal prescriptions like "do something different" may yield unpredictable results, arising completely out of our conception and our desires. In this case one must be honest and, without contenting oneself with hoping for the best (4), we must know whether we wish for the responses to be exclusively within the order of that which we could foresee, or whether, on the contrary, we accept also the unpredictable, not only the strictly musically unpredictable but also the aesthetically unpredictable. The more we want to control the result, the more it is consequently necessary to tie the performer to precise conditions, prescribe reactions with predictable results, to provide him stimulations of sounding material which is simple to perceive and to analyse, or to give supplementary indications in case reactions could lead to ambiguous results. Coming back to works addressed to the performers of a group in which we are working, in which we can allow ourselves to propose "tasks" to the performers which are susceptible of leading to unexpected responses (5), it is clear that even these works are intended for unknown performers. The advantage is that these performers, when asked to play the piece, probably will have a recording or a release at their disposal by the group to inform themselves by.

Until now we have been talking about results being more or less predictable, provoked by the prescription of five categories of reactions, omitting to mention the fundamental importance of, first, the quality of the information to which the performer is to react, and second, the origin of this information - the means of its dissemination.

Clearly, we can compose a model which the performer is called upon to react to. This is, however, not a very interesting solution, since the performer, after several rehearsals, will know the material, and the spontaneity disappears. In principle, the information given out should be constantly different, in order that the performer cannot predict the nature of it and is forced to stay attentive. This is because it is necessary to include a portion of chance if we wish to compose the information; it must contain the possibility to present itself every time under a new aspect (Ex.3). These composed informations are nevertheless simple; being composed, they are in principle "musical". On the other hand, letting an instrumentalist react to electronic or concrete noises, or going beyond all reservations to let him react to the human language or even that of an animal, to a yet unknown acoustic world, in one word, all that which is "extra-musical", can yield results the sounds of which we are not yet capable of foreseeing.

The instrumentalist, obliged to approach with his instrument a sounding model, being till now completely unfamiliar with its possibilities, finds through the force of the stimulation, maybe rationally, but even more often instinctively, new solutions, thus enlarging also the present personal limitations.

Concerning the dissemination of acoustic materials, one can imagine the greatest variety of sources - tapes, discs, radio, all this distributed by loudspeakers or headphones. Almost unexplored are moreover the various aspects offered by the reaction between performers. Even the relation: performer-performer - in which, for example, a performer, having material at his disposal which we have prescribed him in an incomplete form "searches for" the absent elements (which are, however, necessary if he wants to play) within the playing of his neighbour - yields extremely tense and engaged results. Even more interesting are the situations which oblige the performer to react simultaneously to the playing of two of his neighbours, thus having to analyse two materials at the same time.

It seems important today for us to create relations between performers in order that they should be tied more closely together, that they should be interdependent, that they should have the possibility of influencing each other. Exactly if we succeed in creating a variety of relations between them, not just musical ones but also psychologically, we arrive at making them interested in participating.

There is a common wish to "humanise" music in these days. To arrive at this, we must take a risk and first "humanise" the tasks of the performers.

Writing out each and every dot over the *i* letters when composing is a highly creative historical process, in which *we* (the composers) are responsible for everything. This process, whatever one might say about it, does not seem to satisfy us any more, because we wish for a "compositional" collaboration from the performer's side.

Trying to make the performer participate through abstract tasks, often being extremely complicated, formulated through a number of visual symbols, does not seem to be an ideal solution. The method is probably too rational.

Going to the opposite extreme and letting the performers improvise will not bring really

constructive results. In most cases a chaos results, but even more often an eruption of the most superficial emotions of the performer. Clearly, that does not prove the non-existence of performers capable of creating music full of qualities and possibilities opening towards the future on a basis of quasi total freedom. They probably announce a new era, but do not solve the problems we are preoccupied with.

One more reflection of a chiefly moral nature: it is evident that the more the performer is engaged "compositionally" in the creation of a work, the more this work becomes a product of collaboration, belonging as well to the performer as to us. This work is not just our work any more, it becomes the work of all those who participate.

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Notes:

- (1) I am thinking of a transition which does not upset the performer.
- (2) These musicians have nearly always the impression that you steal something from them which is their own. And what is more, in such cases it is impossible for them to unfold, to go where their intuition leads them, because they have been conditioned by what they have previously heard. This is why I make the summarisation "frustrating".
- (3) Every performer, from listening, selects what he finds to be most perceptive (most logical, most interesting). And so, after having selected and analysed, he invents the opposite of this selected material. This is why I say the process is in the first place reactive (selection), in the next place compositional (invention of the opposite)
- (4) Often, the composer presents aesthetic difficulties - but he counts on the presence of competent performers who can understand it and find a good solution. This is the "hopefulness", which in most cases will be disappointed, I am talking about.
- (5) I mean: giving *practical tasks*.

(see next page for illustrations)

Ex. 1

Harmoniques δ consonant.

I corde

II anche

III. cuivre

IV. percussion 3. métaux
(probablement grincements sur tam-tam ou cymbale)

Extrait de "CORRESPONDANCES" (1969) pour 4 exécutants.

Instructions for players' reactions to each other read as follows (starting from the top):

- integrate your playing into the pitch register of the percussion (IV) while still respecting the rhythmic values
- play at half-tone distance to the string instrument (I) while still respecting the rhythmic values. Also, follow his changes of intensity.
- integrate your playing into the pitch register and into the intensity changes of the woodwind (II) while still respecting the rhythmic values.

Ex. 2

Modèle

l'opposé :

a)

b)

c)

d)

etc.....

Ex. 3

varier le caractère de chaque "échantillon"
ainsi que les silences les séparant

Modèle
hautbois solo I

hautbois II - imiter de temps en temps un des échantillons
proposés par le hautbois I

hautbois III - imiter de temps en temps un des échantillons
proposés par le hautbois I

hautbois IV - imiter sobrement le jeu du hautbois III - Développer ce qui vient
d'être joué.

hautbois V - imiter sobrement le jeu du hautbois II - Développer ce qui vient d'être joué.

Extrait de « DISCOURS III » pour 5 hautbois (1969)

Instructions read as follows:

- vary the character of each "sample" and of the rests separating them.
- imitate from time to time one of the samples proposed by hautbois I
- imitate the playing of hautbois II in a restrained way - - - Develop that which is going to be played

INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - ROMAN HAUBENSTOCK-RAMATI (P/OE, 1919-1994)

Roman Haubenstock-Ramati was a composer and editor at Universal Edition, Vienna.

Text with illustrations:

[musikalische graphik](#). Catalogue of the exhibition at Donaueschinger Musiktage 1959. Text in German, French and English.

Thanks to Universal Edition for its pioneering initiative documented here and to IMD Darmstadt for scan! Copyright issues concerning printing should be cleared directly with [Universal Edition](#).



der komponist serieller musik wird sich zwangsläufig mit dem problem beschäftigen müssen, eine neue grafische darstellung seiner musikalischen gedanken zu finden. aus dem bestreben, ein schärferes bild des wirklichen musikalischen geschehens zu zeichnen, entsteht ein notenbild, das mehr und mehr von der traditionellen form abweicht.

entscheidender faktor ist die zeit. an stelle der symbolischen darstellung, derer sich die konventionelle notenschrift bedient, wird in den neuen aufzeichnungen angestrebt, dem ablauf der zeit möglichst adäquat zu folgen.

aus der dialektik des subjektiven und objektiven zeitempfindens ergeben sich neue grafisch-musikalische konzeptionen, welche die zwischen stabilität und variabilität oszillierende musik fixieren.

diese konzeptionen werden einerseits durch eine neue graphische **mise en page** repräsentiert, andererseits führen sie in die welt **neuer grafischer darstellung** musikalischer vorgänge, sowohl mit verwendung der traditionellen notenschrift-symbole als auch in neuer form freier und spontaner **zeichnung**.

le compositeur de musique sérielle devra forcément s'occuper du problème comment trouver une nouvelle représentation graphique de ses idées musicales. la tendance de dessiner une image plus nette de l'événement sonore réel produit des figurations qui dévient de plus en plus de la forme traditionnelle.

c'est le temps qui est le facteur primordial. au lieu de la représentation symbolique dont se sert la notation musicale conventionnelle, on cherche à suivre dans les nouvelles figurations le plus adéquatement possible le déroulement du temps.

la dialectique de la sensibilité subjective et objective du temps crée de nouvelles conceptions graphico-musicales, susceptibles de fixer la musique qui oscille entre stabilité et variabilité.

ces conceptions sont représentées d'une part par une nouvelle **mise en page** graphique, tandis qu'elles mènent d'autre part au monde d'une **nouvelle représentation graphique** des événements sonores, dans l'usage des symboles de notation traditionnels aussi bien que dans la nouvelle forme de **dessins** libres et spontanés.

the composer of serial music is obliged to face the problem of finding a new notation for his musical ideas. His effort to produce a more exact image of the actual musical event results in a notation which deviates more and more from the traditional one.

time is the deciding factor. instead of using the symbols of conventional notation, the composer attempts in the new figurations to follow the passage of time as adequately as possible.

the dialectic of the subjective and objective perception of time results in new graphic-musical conceptions which fix the music oscillating between stability and variability.

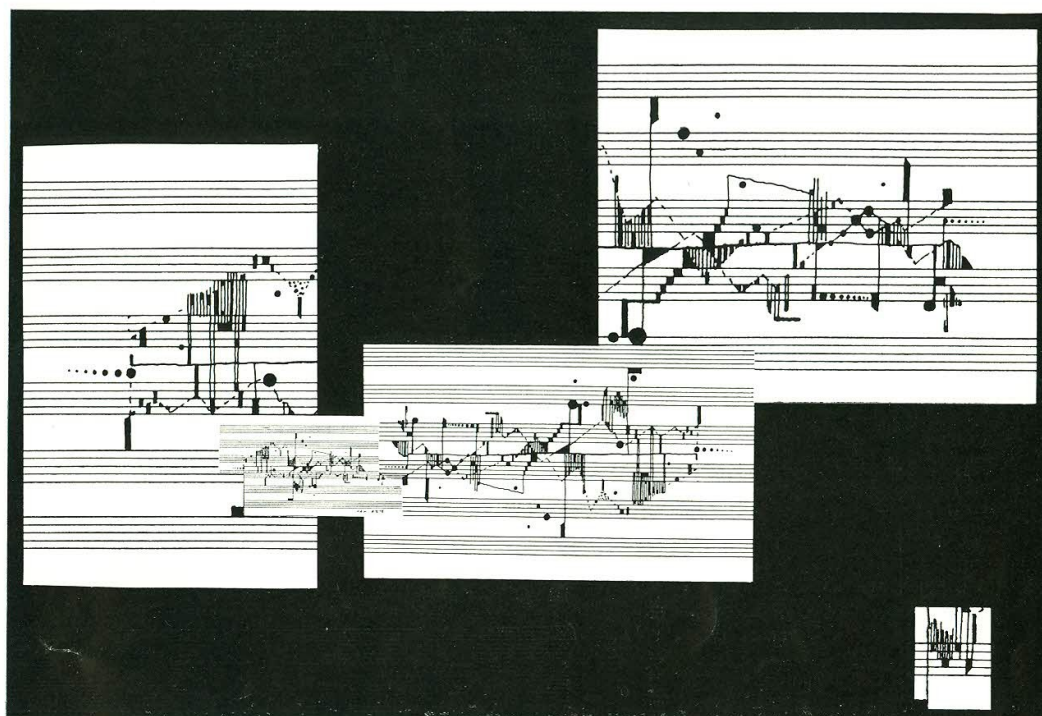
these conceptions are represented on the one hand by a new graphic **mise-en-page**; on the other hand they open the door to the world of **new graphic representation** of musical processes, by making use of the traditional symbols of notation as well as of new, free, spontaneous **drawing**.

universal edition

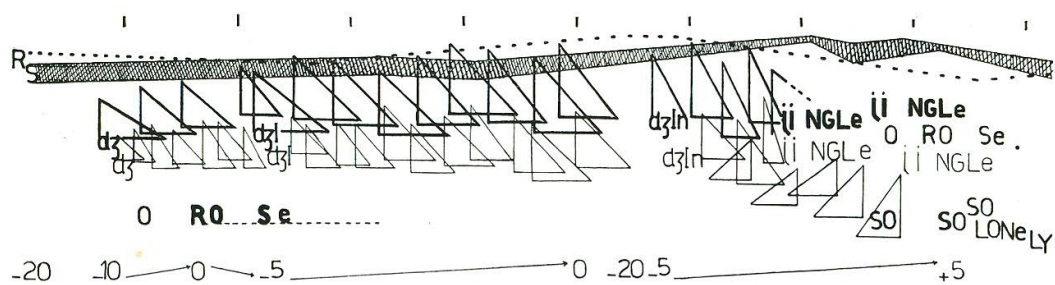
musikalische grafik

a) mise en page

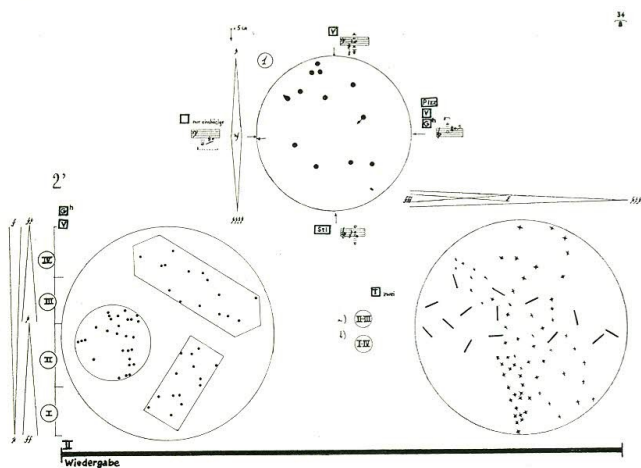
1. aus pierre boulez, improvisation sur mallarmé I +
 2. aus pierre boulez, improvisation sur mallarmé II +
 3. aus pierre boulez, le marteau sans maître (vorarbeit für die neuausgabe)
 4. aus roman haubenstock-ramati, ständchen sur le nom de heinrich strobel +
 5. aus roman haubenstock-ramati, séquences pour violon et orchestre ++
 6. aus karlheinz stockhausen, gruppen für drei orchester ++
 7. aus karlheinz stockhausen, zeitmaße +
 8. aus anton webern, op. 24 (vorarbeit für die gesamtausgabe)
- 1—6 und 8 mise en page von roman haubenstock-ramati
- 7 mise en page von karlheinz stockhausen



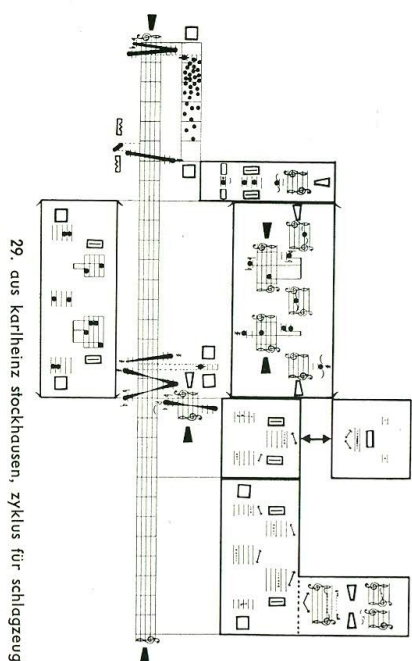
20. roman haubenstock-ramati, „decisions“; studie in form



9. aus luciano berio, thema



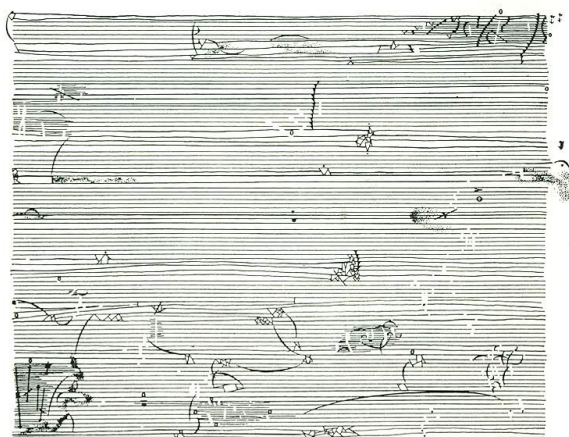
22. aus mauricio kagel, transición II



29. aus karlheinz stockhausen, zyklus für schlagzeug

d) piano piece for David Tudor 3

11.5.1959



14. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 3

Modéré E

Pas trop lent Modéré F

Vibra

Clavier

Soprano

Harpe

Flûte

Clarinette

Basson

Cor

1. aus pierre boulez, improvisation sur mallarmé I

27. aus karlheinz stockhausen, elektronische studien: studie II

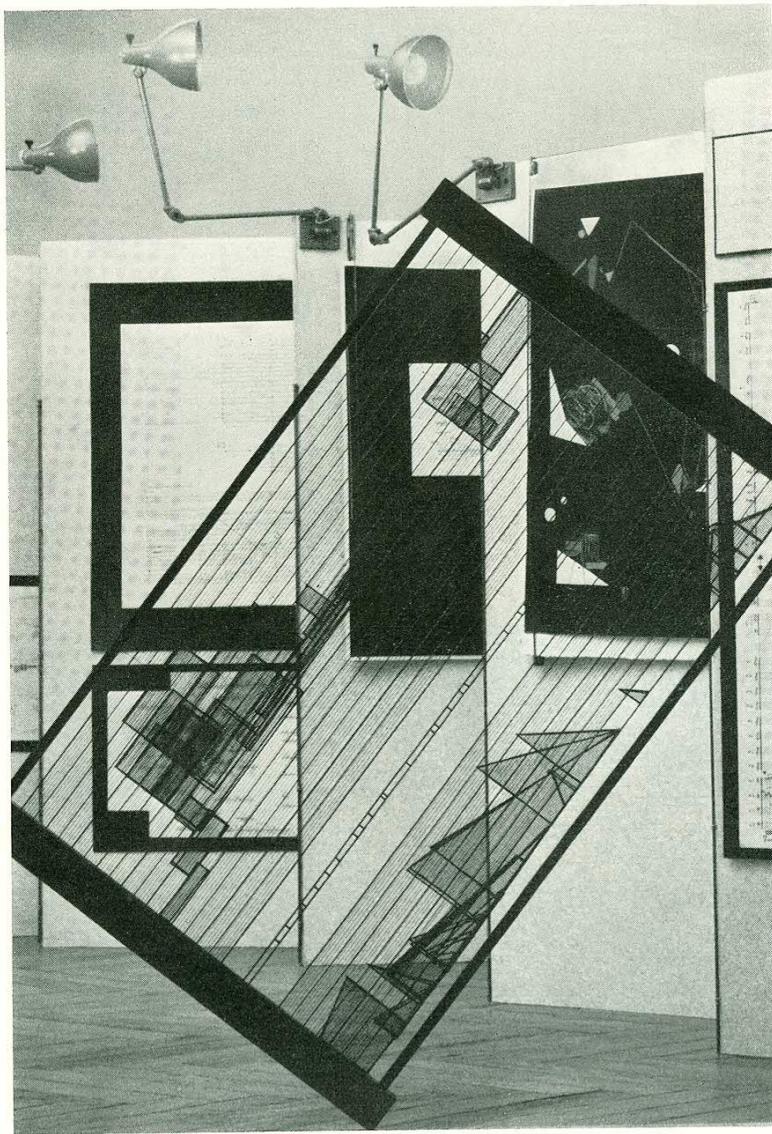


photo: till-borchardt

b) neue darstellung

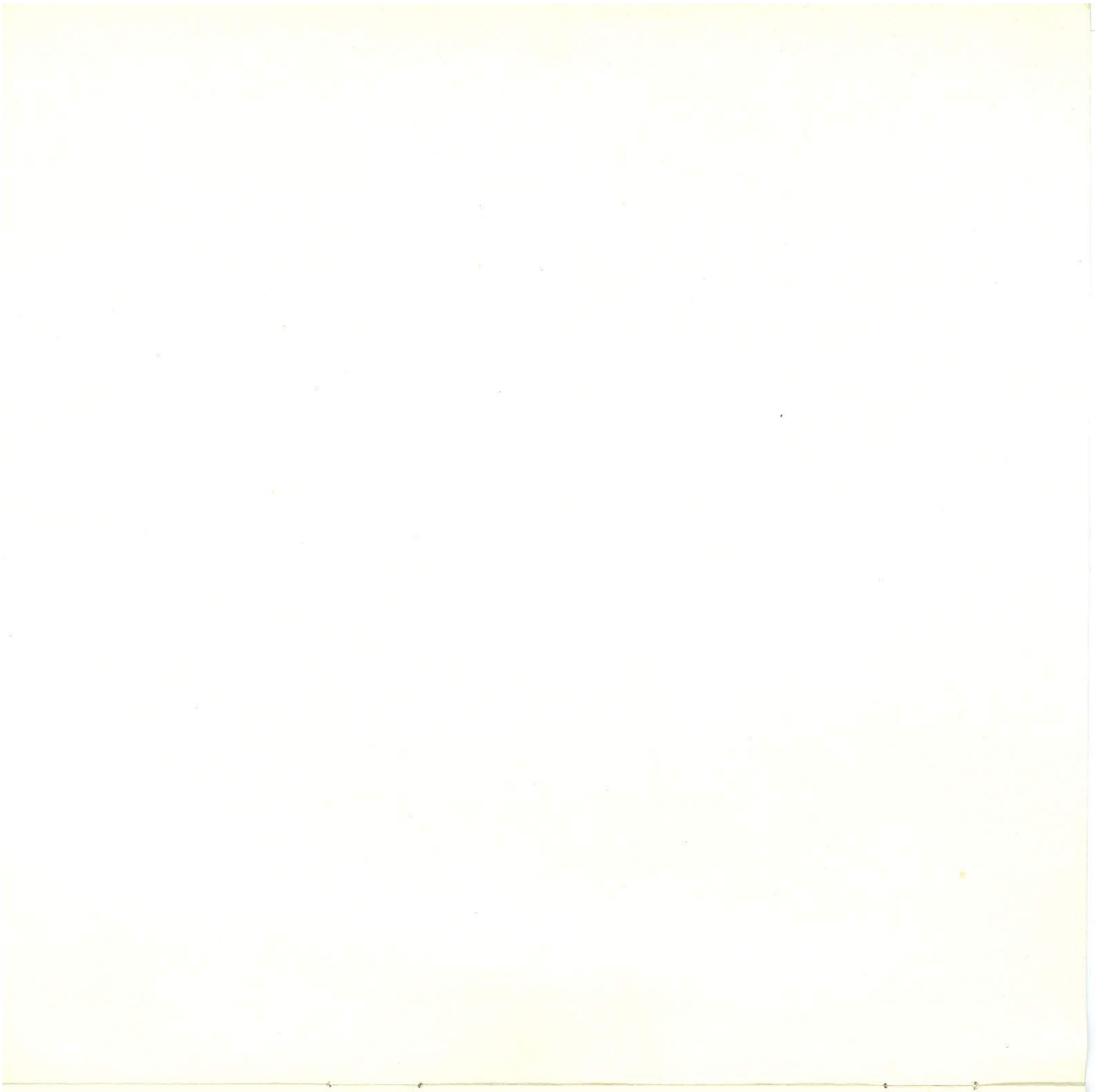
9. aus luciano berio, thema
10. earl brown, piano piece for david tudor +++
11. aus john cage, piano concerto (orchesterstimmen: flöte, tuba)
12. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 1 +
13. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 2 +
14. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 3 +
15. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 4 +
16. sylvano bussotti, piano piece for david tudor 5 +
17. aus franco evangelisti, incontri di fasce sonore +
18. roman haubenstock-ramati, interpolation +
19. aus roman haubenstock-ramati, petite musique de nuit ++
20. roman haubenstock-ramati, „décisions“; studie in form ++
21. roman haubenstock-ramati, „décisions“ — détail (sonderausführung)
22. aus mauricio kagel, transicion II ++
23. aus gottfried m. koenig, klangfigur II
24. bo nilsson, 20 gruppen +
25. bo nilsson, quantitäten +
26. aus karlheinz stockhausen, elektronische studien: studie II +
27. aus karlheinz stockhausen, elektronische studien: studie II (sonderausführung)
28. karlheinz stockhausen, klavierstück XI +
29. aus karlheinz stockhausen, zyklus für schlagzeug
30. karlheinz stockhausen, refrain ++

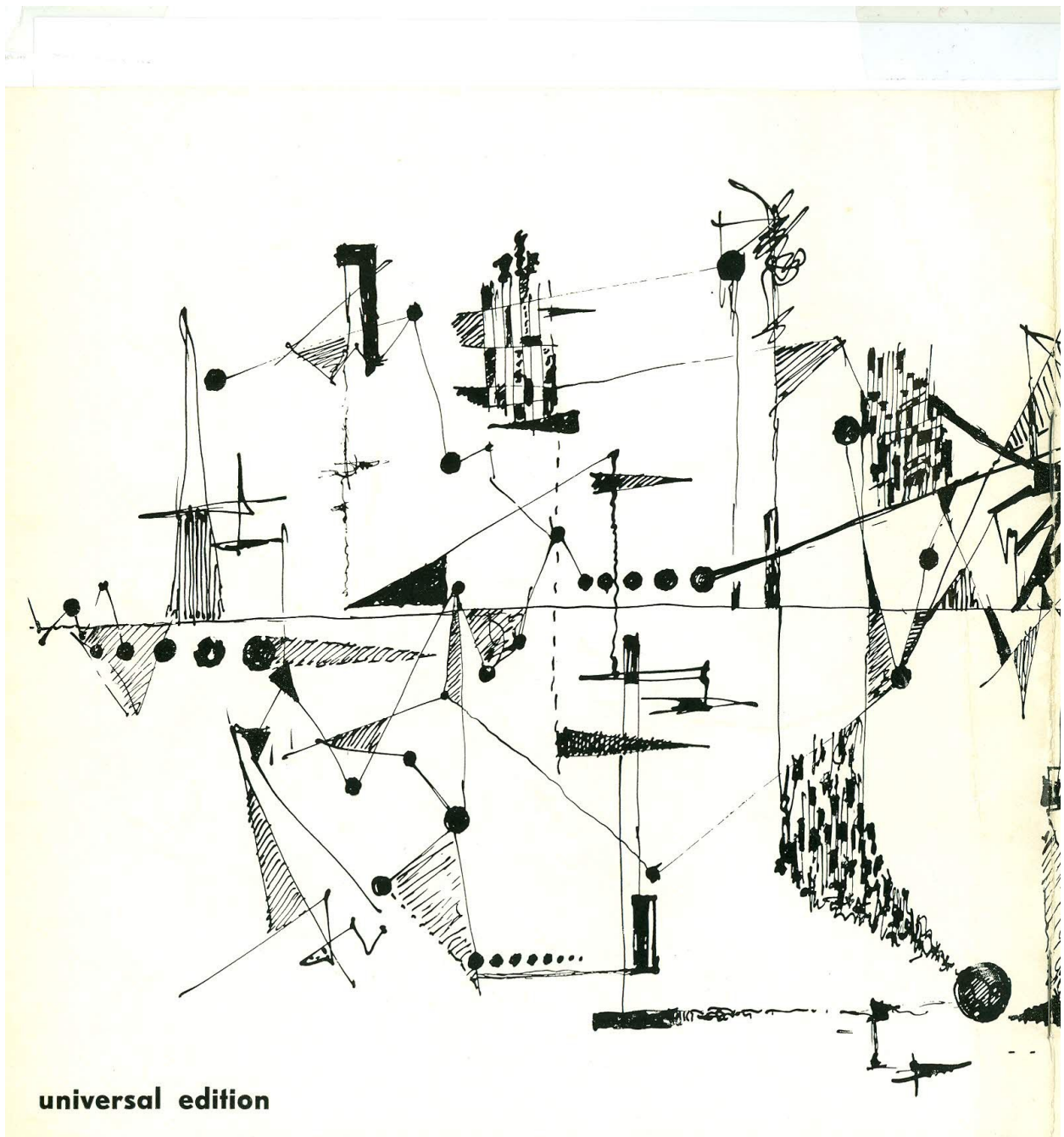
+ bereits erschienen, universal edition

++ in vorbereitung, universal edition

+++ in vorbereitung, b. schott's söhne, mainz

diese von der universal edition gestaltete ausstellung
wird zum erstenmal bei den donauessinger musiktage
für zeitgenössische tonkunst 1959 gezeigt, wofür herrn
dr. heinrich strobil und der gesellschaft der musikfreunde
donauessingen besonderer dank ausgesprochen wird.





INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - HÜBSCH, CARL LUDWIG (DE), b.1966

Musician, improviser, composer. Homepage: <http://www.huebsch.me>

ARTICLE: Text written for a workshop held at the Symposium on „Improvisation Didactics in Higher Music Education“ at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Hannover, Germany, on April 21-25th, 2018.

[Ansichtssache](#) German original

[A matter of opinion](#) English translation

ANSICHTSSACHE

von Carl Ludwig Hübsch

Einführung | Material zum WORKSHOP: HÖREN improvisierter Musik

Liest man Kritiken über improvisierte Musik fällt auf, dass gerne und vor allem über das klingende Material gesprochen wird. Ob es nun rauscht, quietscht, blubbert oder quiekt, oft gilt das Interesse vor allem jenen abenteuerlichen erweiterten Spieltechniken mittels derer bislang unbekannte Klänge auf einem traditionellen Instrument hervor gebracht werden. Aber diese scheinbar so ausserordentlichen Klänge sind für die sie erzeugenden Musikerinnen ganz alltägliche Begleiter auf einem Weg in immer wieder neue Begegnungen. Will man also Improvisierte Musik eingehender beschreiben, sollte man daher auch über das sprechen, was gerade für diese Musik besonders entscheidend ist und über das sich aber nur schwer allgemein gültige Aussagen machen lassen: Den Kontakt der Musikerinnen untereinander.

Selbst die Musikerinnen reden nicht allzu gerne über diesen Aspekt der Improvisation. Wieso sollte man auch über etwas reden, was vorbei ist, und Wissen zusammentragen, was sich in der nächsten Improvisation schon als vollkommen nutzlos erweist, da es sich nicht in ein gültiges Konzept, in eine Strategie verwandeln lässt? Ausserdem: was die eine als innige Klangumarmung hört, empfindet der andere vielleicht als lasches Nebeneinanderher im spannungslosen Allerlei. Und überhaupt kann man mit allzu viel „Zerreden“ jedes auch noch so spannende Setting in Harmonie ertränken.

Dennoch möchte ich ein Votum dafür abgeben, sich aufs Eis unbeweisbarer, streitbarer Aussagen zu begeben und mich selbst in diesem Artikel/Workshop der schwer zu beschreibenden Seite der Improvisationsmusik sprachlich annähern.

Ein der Improvisation angemessenes Sprechen jenseits herkömmlicher nur auf das Material beschränkter Kritik ist aus mehrerlei Gründen notwendig: Ein Teil der Rezeption eines ästhetischen Werkes findet in einer Diskussion desselben statt - im praktischen Umgang und Anwenden der gewonnenen Eindrücke. So bekommt es Bedeutung, in einem sozialen aber auch im politischen Sinne. Andersherum gesagt, etwas, worüber nicht geredet wird verliert seine Bedeutung. Dagegen wird etwas, um dessen Begrifflichkeit man sich bemühen muss, in diesem Findungsprozess konkret und erfassbar.

Werke, die kommentarlos geschluckt, konsumiert werden, sind ohne Bedeutung und unsere Zeit liefert mehr denn je solche. Es gibt sogar ganze Kategorien von Werken, die ausschliesslich dafür gemacht zu sein scheinen, dass die Menschen möglichst nichts von ihnen mitbekommen. Und hier spreche ich nicht nur von Aufzugsmusik.

Improvisation aber will anders gehört werden. Sie verlockt einen auf eine Reise in ein unbekanntes Land. Sie will eben nicht Bei-Werk sein sondern bieten sich den Hörenden zum reflektierendem Hören an, für Kopf und Bauch, denn beide mögen ernährt werden. Und beim Sprechen über Improvisation wünsche ich mir mehr Kompetenz bei der Benennung des musikalisch-interpersonellen Kontaktes.

Während in einer festgelegten Komposition das Verhältnis der Beteiligten über die notierten Klänge geregelt ist, ist die Tinte, mit der ein improvisiertes Werk geschrieben wird, die Interaktion. Diese Art der Interaktion ist ja schlechthin das Merkmal der Improvisierten Musik. Nur sie wird auf diese Art und Weise her gestellt, ganz gleich ob sie nur reduziert oder komplex klingen mag.

In diesem Artikel schlage ich eine Methode vor, besonders den Kontakt der Spielenden untereinander zu besprechen, ohne dabei übermässig zu psychologisieren.

Im Gegenteil - ich möchte die Rückkopplung zur Musik aufrecht erhalten. Denn um die entstandene Musik geht es ja am Ende. Das Werk¹ der improvisierten Musik bildet ja ihren eigenen Entstehungsprozess ab.

1) Ich benutze hier den Begriff „Werk“ im Wissen um die Diskussionswürdigkeit dieses Aspektes

SCHULZ VON THUNS VIER SEITEN MODELL

In einer Improvisation ist jede klingende Information gleichzeitig eine Information über den Kontakt der Spielenden untereinander. Sie gibt als Klang unmittelbar Auskunft darüber, was die Spielerinnen miteinander musikalisch zu tun haben.

Musikalisch könnte man das Wort Kontakt vielleicht in Zusammenklang übersetzen.

Die Qualität von Zusammenklang kann ästhetisch sehr unterschiedlich eingeordnet werden. Selbst in einer scheinbar am anderen völlig uninteressierten Spielhaltung bildet das Gemeinsame zwischen den Spielern die Basis, von der aus ein gutes Zusammenklingen ermöglicht wird.

Das Gemeinsame beinhaltet neben dem Klingen und dem Zusammen-Klingen vor allem das Hören und das gehört werden. Ein gemeinsames Ohr sozusagen. Das Hören hören.

Seit einigen Jahren entwickle ich immer wieder Modelle für das Hören der improvisierten musikalischen Interaktion. Für das Symposium in Hannover im Februar 2018 habe ich mich von Friedemann Schulz von Thuns Vierseiten-Modell² der gewaltfreien Kommunikation inspirieren lassen. Schulz von Thun beschäftigt sich ganz allgemein mit der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation und unterteilt diese in 4 Aspekte. Eine kurze Erklärung anhand eines Beispiels:

Der Satz einer Beifahrerin zum Fahrer: „Da vorne ist grün!“

Diese Mitteilung zerlegt Schulz von Thun in vier Bestandteile:

Die Sachebene: „Die Ampel ist grün“,

die Selbstoffenbarungsebene: „Ich habe es eilig“,

die Appellebene : „Gib Gas!“

und die Beziehungsebene: „Du brauchst meine Hilfestellung.“

Die vier Seiten, nämlich Sachebene, Selbstoffenbarung, Beziehung und Appell habe ich auf die Improvisationsmusik übertragen. Auch wenn ich sie dafür etwas verbiegen musste, ist doch ein interessantes Werkzeug zum differenzierten Hören des Kontaktes der Musizierenden dabei entstanden.

Im Gegensatz zu sprachlicher Kommunikation, in der Mitteilungen meisten abwechselnd gemacht werden, senden und empfangen Musikerinnen gleichzeitig. Dennoch: Jeder Klang, der gespielt wird, wird unmittelbar in Kontext mit den Klängen der anderen gestellt, gehört, erlebt. So gesehen ist jeder Klang ein Statement oder Feedback auf ein anderes Statement und hat hochgradig interaktiven Charakter.

Da es aber zu sehr in kleinste Details führen würde, jeden Ton auf seine Codierung durch den Sender („ein schlecht gelautes A“) und der Decodierung durch den Empfänger („wow, ein kreischend lautes A“) zu untersuchen, habe ich das Modell modifiziert. Es geht mir ja darum, Beobachtungen zu machen und die Ebene des sprachlichen Austauschs darüber weiter zu entwickeln.

Wie soll mit den gewonnenen Erkenntnissen umgegangen werden?

Als Spielerin sollte ich vermeiden, die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse umzudrehen und als Strategien einzusetzen. Als Hörerin/spielende Hörerin jedoch erweitern sie meinen Horizont, was sich dann intuitiv im Spiel umsetzt.

Es geht hier nicht um die Frage ob die Musiker einen bestimmten Klang spielen wollten, sondern darum, durch sprachliche Begriffe Werkzeuge der Einordnung zu schaffen, die eine gemeinsame Reflexion ermöglicht und das Hören und somit das Spielen inspirieren.

Wenn ich im folgenden eine ziemliche Menge ungeordneter Begriffe als Beispiele in den Raum stelle, gehe ich davon aus, dass sie den Teilnehmenden dabei helfen, die Kategorie besser einzuengen, um letztlich eigene Begriffe zu finden.

1) Friedemann Schulz von Thun: „Miteinander Reden, Störungen und Klärungen“ rororo Sachbuch 1997

Die vier Ebenen in der Improvisation:

1) Die Sachebene ordne ich dem Material in der Musik (WAS?)

zu: einige ungeordnete Beispiele für mögliche Beschreibungen:

Beispiele: kleinteilig, in einem Bogen, abschnitthaft, zerfasert, homogen, vielfältig, dynamisch - statisch, abwechslungsreich, monochrom, pulsierend, organisch, elektronisch, stilistisch, flächig, pointillistisch, erzählerisch, poetisch, konkret, geräuschhaft, microtonal

Oder nach Gertrud Mayer-Denkman: Klangpunkte, Klangstriche, Bewegungsklänge, Klangketten

Oder nach Helmut Lachenmann: Farbklang, Fluktuationsklang, Texturklang, Kadenzklang, Strukturklang

2) Die Selbstoffenbarungsebene möchte ich in die Charaktereigenschaften der Spielerinnen übersetzen (**WER?**): Die Offenbarung der künstlerischen, der instrumentalen Ästhetik, auch der Fähigkeiten, evtl. das eingesetzte musikalische Wissen. Die Haltung der Spielerinnen.

Beispiele: reduktiv, neutral, aktiv, abwartend, riskant, vorsichtig, kontrolliert, kompositorisch, selbstvergessen, planend, aufgelöst im Moment, beweglich, unbeweglich, überraschend, zögerlich, verschlafen, überfließend, verzagt,

auch: expressiv, elektronisch, jazzig, klassisch, maschinenhaft

psychologisch: verstrickt in das eigene Spiel, die eigenen Möglichkeiten, das eigene Scheitern, schüchtern, selbstverliebt ...

3) Die Beziehungsebene beschreibt die in Klang ausgedrückten Beziehungen der Spieler untereinander. Sie steht für die Einstellung der Musiker aufeinander in diesem konkreten Stück und die allgemeine Gruppendynamik (WIE?)

Beispiele: traditionelle Funktionen und Hierarchien wie solierend, begleitend, chorisches etc

Aber auch jenseits: akzeptierend, führend, nicht-reaktiv, kopierend, schüchtern, folgend, einhellig, widersprüchlich, variierend, ornamentierend, instrumentierend, orchestrierend, gleichgültig, kommentierend, affirmativ, zustimmend, neutral, widersprechend, vertiefend, verändernd, aufweichend, verzögernd...

4) Die Appellebene soll beschreiben, wie die Gruppenästhetik von den Einzelnen umgesetzt wird. Sie entspricht der Frische, der Crispyness der Musik, der Geschwindigkeit der mit einander verschalteten Gehirne und ihrer Durchlässigkeit für Veränderung und Frische sowie dem wahr genommenen Interesse der Musikerinnen für einander, der Beweglichkeit, der Frage danach wie sich ihr Spiel gegenseitig beeinflusst (**WIE? WER? WANN?**).

Die Verbindung zum Begriff „Appell“ behalte ich bei, weil das Senden bzw. Hören einer

Verhaltensaufforderung für das Kontaktempfinden der Hörer und Musiker sehr plastisch nachzuvollziehen ist. Ganz besonders lässt sich diese an Wendepunkten im Spiel beobachten: Wer initiiert Wechsel, wer folgt und wer nicht? Wurden Wechselangebote nicht wahrgenommen oder absichtlich nicht wahr genommen? Benennung von Stellen der Veränderung und Versuch ihrer Beschreibung.

Beispiele: Impulse geben, überraschen, anstossen, dynamisieren, initiativ sein, passiv sein, manipulativ spielen, reaktionsfreudig sein, beruhigen, gleichgültig sein, affirmativ bejahend / ablehnend sein, vorschnell sein, träge sein, auffordern, Kontakt suchend, verdrängen, einbinden, polarisieren, integrieren, verbinden, fortführen, verwirren, überraschen, fokussieren, verlangsamen, bagatellisieren, auf jeden Zug aufspringen, unberührt bleiben => s.a. interessante Missverständnisse

In anderen Worten:

*A möchte, daß B mit ihr spielt, sucht den direkten Kontakt
oder A möchte allein gelassen werden - ein Solo spielen*

Oder als Frage: Erkennt man einen offenen, einladenden Charakter in einem Klang? Kann man einem Klang seine Absicht im Bezug auf das Miteinander anhören?

Abgesehen von der Materialebene kann das Benennen von solchen Beobachtungen durchaus heikel und Streitbar sein. Es ist aber eine interessante Übung, dennoch darüber Aussagen zu machen, sich also dem nicht messbaren durch Benennung des eigenen Erlebens zu nähern, ohne sich damit über den Kollegen bzw die Musikerin auf der Bühne zu erheben. Das bedeutet, dass man über sich selber, über seine eigenen Wahrnehmungen spricht und Beobachtungen neben einander stellt.

Wie man feststellen kann, sind Begriffe nicht selten in mehreren der vier Kategorien sinnvoll einsetzbar. Sie bedeuten aber möglicherweise im Bezug auf den Typ des Spielers, auf die Art der Musik und auf die konkreten Spielsituationen jeweils etwas anderes.

Ganz entscheidend bei all diesen Betrachtungsweisen ist für mich, sie nicht in Spiel-Strategien umzukehren, um dann - sozusagen à la carte - zu reagieren. Sie sollen viel mehr das Hören inspirieren. Das Geheimnis einer gelungenen Improvisation³ soll und wird letzten Endes nie ganz erklärt werden können.

Auch Strategie-Übungen können natürlich dazu führen, dass sich das Hören verändert. Aber „freie“ Improvisation, und nur um diese soll es mir hier gehen, ist kein Kompendium eingeübter Verhaltensweisen. Sie ist eher der Ernstfall in dem Pläne auf direktem Weg in die Hölle des Aneinander-Vorbei führen⁴.

Je erfahrener die Musiker sind, desto subtiler werden die Interaktionen sein; um so vielfältiger sind ihre Möglichkeiten der Interaktion, der Überraschungen und des gegenseitigen Verständnisses. Eine Kommunikation wird dann spannend, wenn eine möglichst hohe Unbedingtheit der individuellen Spielentscheidung mit einer möglichst positiven Durchlässigkeit gegenüber

Veränderungen einher geht.

„SPRACH-HYGIENE“

Die Sprache über Improvisation ist bisweilen geprägt von einem Bemühen, durch vermeintliche Ehrlichkeit deutlich und klar zu sein. So wird Musik vielleicht als belanglos, uninteressant, viel zu laut, viel zu reduziert oder ähnliches bezeichnet.

Ist es aber in einer Improvisation zu laut, zu leise oder zu langweilig, bedeutet das für denjenigen Musiker, der das so empfindet, dass er im Moment keinen Kontakt zur Musik bzw zu den Kollegen hat und herstellen kann/will. Offensichtlich finden aber alle anderen es gerade genau richtig langweilig zu spielen. Das bedeutet, daß offensichtlich der Plan oder Wunsch nach einer bestimmten Musik besteht, was sich in einer Improvisation am ehesten durch die Auswahl der richtigen Kollegen mit ähnlichen Vorlieben verwirklichen lässt.

Dagegen gilt: Da es so war, wie es war, gibt es daran nichts zu kritisieren. Das heisst, alles war im gegebenen Zeitpunkt richtig. Die Reflexion verbessert die Musik auf der Meta-Ebene. Sie wird nicht in eine Strategie umgemünzt oder in eine Bewertung der Spieler. Diese behalte ich für mich und kann im gegebenen Fall darauf verzichten, mit den vermeintlich schwierigen Kollegen erneut in einer Improvisation zu landen.

Einige Bemerkungen zu dem Thema „Fehler“ in der Improvisation:

Zunächst sind da diejenigen „Fehler“ die man auch in jeder anderen Musik machen kann: Man ist nicht bei der Sache, man agiert sozial statt musikalisch, man ist eitel etc pp.

Speziell gefährlich für die „freie“ Improvisation sind jedoch:

Gute Ideen, weil die meistens die ahnungslosen anderen mit einschliessen und in der logischen Konsequenz natürlich auch Pläne aller Art. Da es aber fast unmöglich ist, planlos zu handeln, schlage ich statt dessen vor, alle willentlichen und unwillentlichen Pläne im eigenen Gehirn einfach in Ruhe zu lassen und ihnen keinen Platz auf der Bühne einzuräumen.

Auch sozial motiviertes Verhalten ist in einer Improvisation hinderlich. Volle Verantwortung übernimmt man vor allem für sein eigenes Spiel und für die Sauberkeit gegenüber der eigenen Planlosigkeit. Wer jemand anderem hilft, handelt nicht musikalisch sondern sozial und nimmt

3) eigentlich doch jeder Musik, jeden Kunstwerkes. Das macht sie/es ja so wertvoll.

4) Selbstverständlich habe ich nichts gegen Konzepte und Komposition. Alles zu seiner Zeit.

möglicherweise allen Zuhörerinnen und Musikerinnen die Möglichkeit, ein grandioses Scheitern zu erleben, zumal man sich ja nie sicher sein kann, ob der oder die Hilfsbedürftige sich selbst zu diesem Zeitpunkt als solche versteht. Wer nicht mehr weiter weiss, darf ja aufhören.

Diese Aspekte möchte ich im folgenden positiv, quasi als Spielempfehlung formulieren:

Niemand verfolgt Ideen. Alle Pläne geraten stets von neuem vollkommen in Vergessenheit.
Keiner übernimmt die Verantwortung für die anderen oder verhält sich in sonst einer Weise sozial statt musikalisch (positiv wie negativ). Das Hören belangt alle Ebenen und Kanäle. Es ist nicht auf die Akustik reduziert, sondern schliesst alle Umstände des Musizierens (z.B. Raum, Bewegungen, Zuhörer) mit ein. Es gibt nichts zu tun, packen wirs an.

KONKRETE UMSETZUNG DES VIER-SEITEN-MODELLS:

Eine benennt das Material: WAS?

Eine benennt die Spielertypen: WER?

Eine benennt die Gruppendynamik der Musik: WIE?

Eine benennt konkrete Kontaktsituationen, sie sie beobachtet hat: WIE/WER/WANN?
(für Notizen könnte man die im Anhang befindlichen vier Seiten benutzen)

Variationen: Einer beobachtet nur einen Spieler, wann oder wann der nicht spielt

Einer versucht die Musik auf ihren emotionalen Gehalt hin zu beschreiben.
Andere hören einfach nur zu, ohne Ziel. (Weitere Aufgaben erfinden)

Im Anschluss an eine Improvisation werden die Erfahrungen ausgetauscht.

LINKS:

Link zu Interviews mit Improvisatoren: blog.huebsch.me

Webseite: www.huebsch.me (<http://www.huebsch.me/index.php/de/text>)

AUDIOPLAY FROM INTERVIEWS WITH IMPROVISORS ON SFMOMA [open space]: listen here:

<https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2018/02/nailing-a-banana/>

Im folgenden zwei kurze Beispiele (von CD, ohne Anspruch auf Gründlichkeit)

Küchen | Müntzing

Materialebene (WAS): Küchengeräte, Elektronik, ein lockerer Puls glockiger, spieluhriger und pochender Klänge bei 5:11 Bewegungsklang: Texturklang (Motörchen auf Fell) und Verdichtung. die Musik ist innerlich sehr locker und transparent gehalten, (auch durch nahe Mikrophonie)

Die Spieler (WER): scheinbar unvirtuos bis ausprobierend, beiläufig, zwischen Zufall und Absicht.

Gruppendynamik (WIE): sehr homogenes Zusammenspiel, fast symbiotisch

Die stellenweise insistierende Rhythmik führt nicht zu Festigkeit oder Ideen/Materialwettbewerb. Das musikalische Material erlaubt und bespielt auch ein Nebeneinanderher. Am Umgang damit entscheidet sich die Frische (Appell). Man könnte vielleicht sagen, dass einer mit sich selbst spielt und ein anderer daran Teil hat.

Durchlässigkeit (WER WIE WANN): 5:11

Der Bewegungsklang mit scharfem Einsatz ist ein Appell zum Wechsel, der auch angenommen wird. Er wird stellenweise durch ostinatives Spiel konterkariert

7:00 neuer Impuls: regelmässiges Klopfen => erhöhte Aktion bzw Ostinato

Allgemeiner: Linker Spieler (Stereo) ist im Bezug auf Kontakt aktiver, rechter passiver. Das Material links ist deutlich vielfältiger als rechts. Es kommen immer neue Klänge und Strukturen (Motor, Spieluhr, Rythmus) während rechts relativ stoisch weiter gespielt wird.

Three Pullovers:

Sea of Mice

Materialebene (WAS): Texturklang von mehreren Spielern, wegen Dichte und Vielfältigkeit des Materials eher textural als Küchen/Müntzig (dort eher pulsi-artig). Bei 4 Min verändert sich etwas, es wird etwas lichter und der Kontakt inniger.

Die Spieler (WER): grosse Vielfältigkeit, sehr grosse Wendigkeit der Spieler, man agiert konsequent und ist doch durchlässig.

Gruppendynamik (WIE): Starker gemeinsamer Flow bei sehr unterschiedlichem Material. starke Übereinstimmung im gemeinsamen Pulse. Kein Nebeneinanderher sondern direkt grosse Dichte im Zusammenklang trotz sehr heterogener Instrumente / instrumentaler Möglichkeiten.

Durchlässigkeit (WER WIE WANN): Gelegentliche lautere, gefährlichere Klänge setzen sich auf

die das Kinderklavier und die Gitarre auf. Insistierende Momente: Kinderklavier. 9:01 Perkussion
=> Gitarre

Bei 9 Min starker Wechsel. Es gibt immer mehr direkte Reaktionen über das Material (Variation, Orchestrierung)

1) WAS KLINGT? Material in der Musik:

Beispiele: kleinteilig, in einem Bogen, abschnitthaft, zerfasert, homogen, vielfältig, dynamisch - statisch, abwechslungsreich, monochrom, pulsierend, organisch, elektronisch, stilistisch, flächig, pointillistisch, erzählerisch, poetisch, konkret, geräuschhaft, microtonal...

Oder nach Gertrud Mayer-Denkman: Klangpunkte, Klangstriche, Bewegungsklänge, Klangketten

Oder nach Helmut Lachenmann: Farbklang, Fluktuationsklang, Texturklang, Kadenzklang, Strukturklang

2) WER KLINGT? Charaktereigenschaften der Spielerinnen:: Die Offenbarung der künstlerischen, der instrumentalen Ästhetik, auch der Fähigkeiten, evtl das eingesetzte musikalische Wissen. Die Haltung der Spielerinnen.

Beispiele: reduktiv, neutral, aktiv, abwartend, riskant, vorsichtig, kontrolliert, kompositorisch, selbstvergessen, planend, aufgelöst im Moment, beweglich, unbeweglich, überraschend, zögerlich, verschlafen, überfliegend, verzagt,

auch: expressiv, elektronisch, jazzig, klassisch, maschinenhaft

psychologisch: verstrickt in das eigene Spiel, die eigenen Möglichkeiten, das eigene Scheitern, schüchtern, selbstverliebt ...

3) WIE KLINGT DAS GEMEINSAME? Gruppendynamik, Beziehungen der Spieler: Beispiele: traditionelle Funktionen und Hierarchien wie solierend, begleitend, chorisch etc

Aber auch jenseits: akzeptierend, führend, nicht-reaktiv, kopierend, schüchtern, folgend, einhellig, widersprüchlich, variierend, ornamentierend, instrumentierend, orchestrierend, gleichgültig, kommentierend, alternativ, zustimmend, neutral, widersprechend, vertiefend, verändernd, aufweichend, verzögernd...

z.B: Spielerin A trägt etwas zum Solo von Spieler B bei, indem sie ihn begleitet, A spielt chorisch (imitierend?) das gleiche wie B, dieses stört/unterstützt,

Oder wie werden Tonhöhenverhältnisse harmonisierend oder dynamisierend eingesetzt, Einverständnis gesucht oder unterlaufen...

4) WIE? WER? WANN? Die Benennung von Stellen der Veränderung und Versuch ihrer Beschreibung: gefühlte und hörbare Wendepunkte, wie die Gruppendynamik im Einzelnen umgesetzt wird, auch zusammenhängend mit dem gefühlten Interesse der Musikerinnen für einander, ihrer Beweglichkeit sowie der Durchlässigkeit für Veränderung und Frische im Hören, der Frage danach wie sich ihr Spiel gegenseitig beeinflusst. Crispyness...

Beispiele:

Impulse geben, überraschen, anstossen, dynamisieren, initiativ sein, passiv sein, manipulativ spielen, reaktionsfreudig sein, beruhigen, gleichgültig sein, affirmativ bejahend / ablehnend sein, vorschnell sein, träge sein, auffordern, Kontakt suchend, verdrängen, einbinden, polarisieren, integrieren, verbinden, fortführen, verwirren, überraschen, fokussieren, verlangsamen, bagatellisieren, auf jeden Zug aufspringen, unberührt bleiben => s.a. interessante

Missverständnisse

In anderen Worten:

A möchte, daß B mit ihr spielt, sucht den direkten Kontakt

oder A möchte allein gelassen werden - ein Solo spielen

Oder als Frage: Erkennt man einen offenen, einladenden Charakter in einem Klang? Kann man einem Klang seine Absicht im Bezug auf das Miteinander anhören?

This text was written for a workshop held at the Symposium on „Improvisation Didactics in Higher Music Education“ at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Hannover, Germany, on April 21-25th, 2018.

Listening to Improvised Music

A MATTER OF OPINION

By Carl Ludwig Hübsch,

Translation by Carl Ludwig Hübsch and Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen

Short Summary: Hübsch proposes a model for analysis for free improvisation. His idea is based on a general communication model by Schultz von Thun in which different aspects of verbal communication are described. By transferring and applying this model to improvised music Hübsch aims to enrich the possibilities of description and review of improvisation beyond the levels of material (sounds and their production) and taste. The proposal deals with four aspects of listening to improvisation: The Factual, the Self-revealing, the Relational and the Appealing Level.

Hübsch's model is not meant to be turned into playing strategies nor does it claim to be complete. It should rather lead to a deeper experience and exchange about improvisation and be a base for more explanations of how improvisation works.

When I read reviews of Improvised Music concerts or CDs I frequently notice a restriction to the mere description of the sounds. Whether the music rustles, squeaks, bubbles or squeals; most reviewers are completely taken by new sounds, mostly evoked by extended and at times very personal playing techniques of the musicians. But, for the musicians themselves, these sounds are well known companions on the road into the unknown and nothing more than their regular working tools.

So, if it comes to speaking about an improvisation on a different level I propose to speak about something which is more difficult to describe objectively: the contact amongst the musicians.

Even the musicians themselves hesitate to speak about this subject. Why should one talk about something that is - after the concert - over and collect knowledge which will turn out to be useless at the next opportunity (concert) and which can not be turned into a useful playing strategy?

Also perception of improvised music differs immensely depending on the personality: Where one listener hears a passionate sound embracement another listener might just notice an insipid devoid of simultaneous excitement. And - even worse: Any joyful playing experience can be drowned in an exaggerated, overwhelming analysis.

This being said I would like to inspire you to take the risk of making maybe unprovable, questionable statements about the contact in an improvisation by offering you a tool for this difficult to describe aspect of improvised music.

A good part of processing an aesthetic work takes place in its discussion - in using and applying the experiences which were made. Thus, a work acquires significance, in a social but also in a political sense. Put in a different way: something you don't talk about becomes meaningless.

On the other side, verbalization and the search for appropriate expression clears up a matter, adds sense beyond the mere auditive experience.

Any work that is consumed without deeper exploration or discussion remains just an object of consumption, without any meaning beyond this fact. There are even entire categories of works that seem to have been produced solely for the purpose of not being noticed at all (I am not just talking about elevator music).

But I claim that improvisation wants to be perceived in a different way. It takes the listener to a journey in an unknown land. It delivers itself to the listeners reflective listening, to head and guts, since both need to be nourished (is there a friction between these two at all? Is the head not a part of the body? Don't we think with the guts?). And this reflection will probably profit from a growing competence in describing the musical-interpersonal contact between the players.

In a fixed composition notated sounds determine the relationship between the musicians or instruments. But the ink with which an improvised work is written, is the interaction.

Interaction is actually the criterion of improvisation per se. Because only improvised music is produced by immediate interaction, regardless whether it may sound reduced or complex.

In this article I propose a method of discussing the interaction between the musicians. And even if there might be a bit of sociology or psychology involved, the musical content should always be the base. Because in the end this is about the music.

SCHULZ VON THUNS FOUR-SIDED MODEL

In an improvisation sound is not only the musical material but also gives information about the contact between players. It conveys - in an immediate way - information about how the players deal with each other, musically. A more musical term for the word contact could be communal sound.

[German: Zusammenklang]

The quality of this communal sound may be categorized aesthetically in different ways. Even in a seemingly totally independent improvisation the common ground between the players makes the base for a good communal sound. The communal sound refers to a good part to the act of listening and of being listened to. So to speak the communal ear. Hear the hearing.

In recent years I have developed various models for listening to interaction in improvisation. For this Symposium in Hannover, in February 2018 I have taken inspiration from the four-sided model of non-violent communication by Friedemann Schulz von Thun¹.

Schulz von Thun's work focusses on the communication in human language. He divides language into four aspects. An example:

A passenger in a car approaching a traffic light says to the driver: „Green!“ Schulz von Thun divides this message into four components:

The Fact Level: "The traffic light is green", the Self-Revelation Level: "I am in a hurry“, the Appeal or Plea Level: „Speed up!“, and the Relation Level: "You need my help".

I have tried to transfer these four aspects to music. Even though I had to make some adaptations, the model became an interesting tool for a differentiated observation of the contact between improvisors.

Musical information works obviously totally different than language information. In normal language informations are mostly exchanged alternating, whereas musicians send and receive information at the same time. Also, improvisors don't convey messages. But each sound will be perceived in context with the other occurring sounds. From this point of view any sound is a statement or feedback to another statement and has an interactive aspect.

For a critical language about improvisation it is obviously senseless to scrutinize each single sound's coding ("a bad-tempered A") and it's reception ("wow, a screeching A"). So I have modified the model to make it more applicable to the reality of improvised music and the purpose of observing and developing the a post play discussion of improvisation.

1) Friedemann Schulz von Thun: „Miteinander Reden, Störungen und Klärungen“ rororo Sachbuch 1997

As a player, please avoid to turn the gathered observations into playing strategies. It will not work and will eventually turn improvisation into conceptual improvisation.

But as listener/playing listener your listening will expand, which will automatically influence your playing intuition.

It is all about building up interactive verbal reflection and - last but not least - inspiration for the listening and playing, not about whether musicians had been wanting and achieved to play a certain sound.

The following collection of only partially sorted descriptive terms are meant to be guidelines for the participants who should eventually add their own terms.

The four levels of improvisational contact.

1) I connect the Fact Level to the musical material (**WHAT?**):

here are some assorted examples for possible descriptions:

Examples: in small parts, curved, in sections, in different threads, homogenous, diverse, dynamic – static, varied, monochromatic, pulsating, organic, electronic, stylistic, fields, pointillistic, narrative, poetic, concrete, noisy, microtonal.

Or, following Gertrud Meyer-Denkman's description of sounds: sound points, sound commas, movement sounds, sound chains.

Or, following Helmut Lachenmann's Sound Types of New Music: colour sound, fluctuation sound, textural sound, cadence sound, structural sound.

2) The Self-Revelation Level is assigned to the individual characters of the players (**WHO?**): The aspect of the artistic and instrumental aesthetics, also of abilities and skills, also of applied musical knowledge. The attitude of each single musician.

Examples: reduced, neutral, active, awaiting, risky, cautious, controlled, compositionally, self-forgetting, planning, absorbed in the momentum, flexible, still, surprising, hesitating, sleepily, exuberant, disappointed..

also: expressive, electronic, jazzy, classical, machine-like

psychologically: pre-occupied with one's own playing, one's own possibilities, one's own failure, shy, self-indulgent...

3) The Relation Level describes the relationship between the players being expressed in sound. This level highlights the musicians' group behavior in a piece, as well as the the general group dynamics (**HOW?**)

Examples: traditional functions and hierarchies like soloing, accompanying, choral etc. But also beyond: accepting, leading, avoiding ping-pong reactions, copying, shy, following, unanimous, contradicting, varying, ornamenting, instrumenting, orchestrating, indifferent, commenting, affirmative, agreeing, neutral, contradicting, deepening, modifying, softening, delaying...

4) The Appeal Level corresponds to the interactional aspect, the musical freshness, its crispiness, to the speed of the networking brains and their permeability for change and freshness, and to the perceived interest of the musicians in each other, the flexibility, the aspect of how one's playing

influences other players in a mutual process (**HOW? WHO? WHEN?**).

I have kept the connection to the concept of "Appeal" because provoking or asking for a musical reaction seems to be pretty discernible to me. Turning points are crucial for this observation: Who initiates a shift, who follows and who does not? Were impulses not perceived at all, or purposely neglected?

This Level points out where change occurs and describes it.

Examples: giving impulses, surprising, bumping into, dynamising, taking initiative, being passive, playing manipulatively, rejoicing in reactions, calming down, being indifferent, affirmatively, agreeing / rejecting, acting with haste, being sluggish, inviting, seeking contact, impeding, assimilating, polarising, integrating, connecting, carrying on, confusing, focusing, delaying, trivialising, jumping on any train, staying unaffected => see also: interesting misunderstandings.

In other words:

A would like B to play with him, he seeks direct contact or A would like to be left alone – to play a solo

Or, as a question: is it possible to perceive an open, inviting character in a sound? Is it possible to listen to a sound while focusing on its intention towards the interpersonal dimension?

It is a challenge to share one's own experience and discuss personal observations which can not be proved. Besides the Fact Level which deals with the musical material, such a discussion can become a very personal and, at times, hurtful affair.

It is important to remember that this discussion is not about the right or wrong or the better or worse taste but rather about exchanging observations of a highly personal quality.

It is not rare that perceptions fit into several of the four categories. But they may mean something different according to the type of player, to the kind of music and to the actual playing situation.

In dealing with all these approaches it is crucial not to turn them into playing strategies which would lead to a playing mode so to speak „à la carte“. They should rather inspire the listening. Anyway, the secret of how to improvise can and should not be completely explainable at all². Strategy exercises of any kind may lead to a change in listening, but so called "free" improvisations, and this text deals with those, is not a compendium of acquired ways of behavior.

To me, improvisation is rather a place where things happen by themselves and in which any plan will lead you directly to the hell of missing each other³.

The more experienced the musicians, the more subtle and rich the possibilities of interaction will become. Diversity, surprise and the mutual understanding will expand accordingly.

When players perform with a maximum of individual determination and, in the same time, a maximum of appreciation of change, communication will be exciting.

2) This applies obviously to any music, any work of art. This is in fact what makes these so valuable.

3) Of course, I am not against open scores [German: Konzepte] and composition. There is a time and place for everything.

"LANGUAGE HYGIENE"

Language about improvisation is sometimes characterized by a striving to be definite and clear, out of supposed honesty. Consequently, music may perhaps be described as inconsequent, uninteresting, way too loud, way too reduced or something similar.

If an improvisation is described to be too loud, too soft or too boring, this signifies that the musician cannot or does not wish to establish a connection to this music and thus to the co-players. But maybe the others find it exactly right to play in this way. So if you have the desire to improvise a certain kind of music, the best way to achieve this is to select the right colleagues, colleagues with similar likes and dislikes.

An improvisation can not be changed after playing. Things were as they were. From this point of view nothing ever went wrong. Reflection improves music on a meta-level. It is not transformed into a strategy or used for an evaluation of those who played. Whatever I like or dislike, I keep it for myself and maybe refrain from improvising more with these supposedly difficult colleagues.

Some remarks to the issue of "mistakes" in the improvisation:

Of course there are those "mistakes" one can make in any kind of music: not to be there, acting socially instead of musically, being egoistical, etc...

But here are some „mistakes“ especially dangerous for "free" improvisation:

Good ideas - because they usually include others - and, of course, plans of any kind. But as it seems to be almost impossible to have no plans at all, I propose instead to simply leave all conscious or subconscious plans alone, wherever they sprung - inside your own brain or elsewhere - and to not give them any space on the scene.

Socially motivated behavior impedes an improvisation. Take full responsibility primarily for your own playing. Somebody helping someone else out of a seemingly difficult situation is not acting musically but socially. The well meant help might deprive all listeners and musicians of experience of a beautiful failure.

I would like to state these „mistakes“ in a positive way, quasi as a suggestion for playing: No one follows ideas. All plans are totally forgotten. No one takes responsibility for the others and no one behaves socially instead of musically (positive or negative). Listening comprises all levels and all channels. It is not limited to the acoustic sphere but includes all circumstances for the playing activity (space, movements, audience...). There is nothing we should do - let's get it done.

A POSSIBLE REALISATION OF THE FOUR-SIDED MODEL:

Person 1 names the material: WHAT?

Person 2 names the player's characteristics: WHO? Person 3 names the group dynamics: HOW?

Person 4 names concrete contact related situations: HOW/WHO/WHEN?

(you may use the four pages to be found as an appendix in the last part of this article for making notes).

Variations: One observes only one player, about when (s)he is playing or not. One attempts to describe the music according to its emotional contents.

Others simply listen, without a goal. (Please invent further tasks). Referring to an improvisation, experiences are then shared.

LINKS:

Link to interviews with improvisors: blog.huebsch.me

Website: www.huebsch.me ((<http://www.huebsch.me/index.php/de/text>)

AUDIOPLAY FROM INTERVIEWS WITH IMPROVISORS ON SFMOMA [open space]: listen here:

<https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2018/02/nailing-a-banana/>

1) Fact: **WHAT SOUNDS?:**

The musical material

Examples: in small parts, curved, in sections, in different threads, homogenous, diverse, dynamic – static, varied, monochromatic, pulsating, organic, electronic, stylistic, fields, pointillistic, narrative, poetic, concrete, noisy, microtonal.

Or, following Gertrud Meyer-Denkman's description of sounds: sound points, sound commas, movement sounds, sound chains.

Or, following Helmut Lachenmann's Sound Types of New Music: colour sound, fluctuation sound, textural sound, cadence sound, structural sound.

2) Self-Revelation: (**WHO SOUNDS?**):

The aspect of the artistic and instrumental aesthetics, also of abilities and skills, also of applied musical knowledge. The attitude of each single musician.

Examples: reduced, neutral, active, awaiting, risky, cautious, controlled, compositionally, self-forgetting, planning, absorbed in the momentum, flexible, still, surprising, hesitating, sleepily, exuberant, disappointed..

also: expressive, electronic, jazzy, classical, machine-like

psychologically: pre-occupied with one's own playing, one's own possibilities, one's own failure, shy, self-indulgent...

3) Relations Level (**HOW DOES THE GROUP WORK GENERALLY?**)

The relationship between the players | the general group dynamics

Examples: traditional functions and hierarchies like soloing, accompanying, choral etc. But also beyond: accepting, leading, avoiding ping-pong reactions, copying, shy, following, unanimous, contradicting, varying, ornamenting, instrumenting, orchestrating, indifferent, commenting, affirmative, agreeing, neutral, contradicting, deepening, modifying, softening, delaying...

4) Appeal/Plea (**HOW? WHO? WHEN? HOW ARE THE MUSICAL INTERACTIONS?**). The interactional aspect, the musical freshness, crispyness, the flexibility, the aspect of how one's playing influences other players in a mutual process. Turning points, where change occurs: Who initiates a shift, who follows and who does not? Were impulses not perceived at all, or purposely neglected?

Examples: giving impulses, surprising, bumping into, dynamising, taking initiative, being passive, playing manipulatively, rejoicing in reactions, calming down, being indifferent, affirmatively, agreeing / rejecting, acting with haste, being sluggish, inviting, seeking contact, impeding, assimilating, polarising, integrating, connecting, carrying on, confusing, focusing, delaying, trivialising, jumping on any train, staying unaffected => see also: interesting misunderstandings.

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Two short examples (from CDs, without any claim of being exhaustive): (translation Carl Bergstroem Nielsen (thank you))

Küchen/Münzing

Material Level (WHAT): Kitchen equipment, electronics, a relaxed pulse of bell-like, music box-like and throbbing sounds. At 5:11 moving sound: textural sound (small motors on fur) and increasing density. The inner character of the music is kept very relaxed and transparent (also through the use of microphones near by).

Players (WHO): seemingly un-virtuosic or trying out, casual, between random and following an intention.

Group dynamics (HOW): very homogenous playing together, almost symbiotic. Insisting rhythms which occur sometimes do not lead to something solid, nor to ideas/competition of proposed materials. The musical material allows for and plays together parallel existence. One could say that one player plays with him/herself and another one participates.

Permeability (WHO HOW WHEN): 5:11

The moving sound with a sharp attack is an appeal for change which is also accepted. At some places it is counteracted by ostinato-like playing.

7:00 new impulse: regular knocking => increased action respectively ostinato

More generally: left player (stereo) is more active regarding contact, the right one more passive.

The left material is clearly more diverse than to the right. New sounds and structures keep coming (motor, music box, rhythm), while playing to the right is relatively stoically carried on.

Three Pullovers:

Sea of Mice

Material Level (WHAT): textural sound coming from several players, because of its density and diversity this is closer to textural as Küchen/Münzig (they performed more "puls"-like). At 4 minutes something changes, towards becoming somewhat lighter and with a more intimate contact.

Players (WHO): big diversity, very pronounced maneuverability, they act with consequence and at the same time with permeability.

Group dynamics (HOW): Strong communal flow with very contrasting material.

Strong unanimity of shared pulses. No parallel existence but directly a big density in the common sound in spite of very heterogenous instruments / instrumental possibilities.

Permeability (WHO HOW WHEN): Occasionally louder, more dangerous sounds make themselves heard from those of the toy piano and the guitar. Insisting moments: toy piano.)-01 Percussion => guitar.

At 9 Min. strong change. More and more direct reactions to the material (variation, orchestration).

INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISED MUSIC ARCHIVE - IMPROFON (Germany)

Improvisors/composers' collective in Dresden (Germany).

COMPOSITIONS:

[Compositions \(anthology\) for ensemble ad libitum \(1994-95\)](#). Text in German and English.

GRUPPE IMPROFON

(Dresden)

GROUP IMPROFON

(Dresden, Germany)

Hartmut Dorschner (sax), Sabine Grüner (vc), Günther Heinz (tb), Agnes Ponizil, Jörg Ritter (perc)

ANTOLOGIE / ANTOLOGY 1994-95

5 STÜCKE FÜR VARIABLE BESETZUNG / FIVE PIECES FOR ENSEMBLE AD LIBITUM

.....

Bei der Notation der folgenden Stücke handelt es sich um Aufführungsmodellen / Muster / Möglichkeiten.

- 1) Beschreibung der Stückideen - wurden von der Gruppe Improfon entwickelt (meist liegen strukturelle / intuitive Abläufe zugrunde)
- 2) Graphische Notation einer Aufführungsvariant (Muster) ist ein Vorschlag (dies könnte interpretiert werden, sollte von der jeweiligen Besetzung in eigenen Varianten erarbeitet werden)

The notation of the pieces was made to present models of performance / patterns / possibilities.

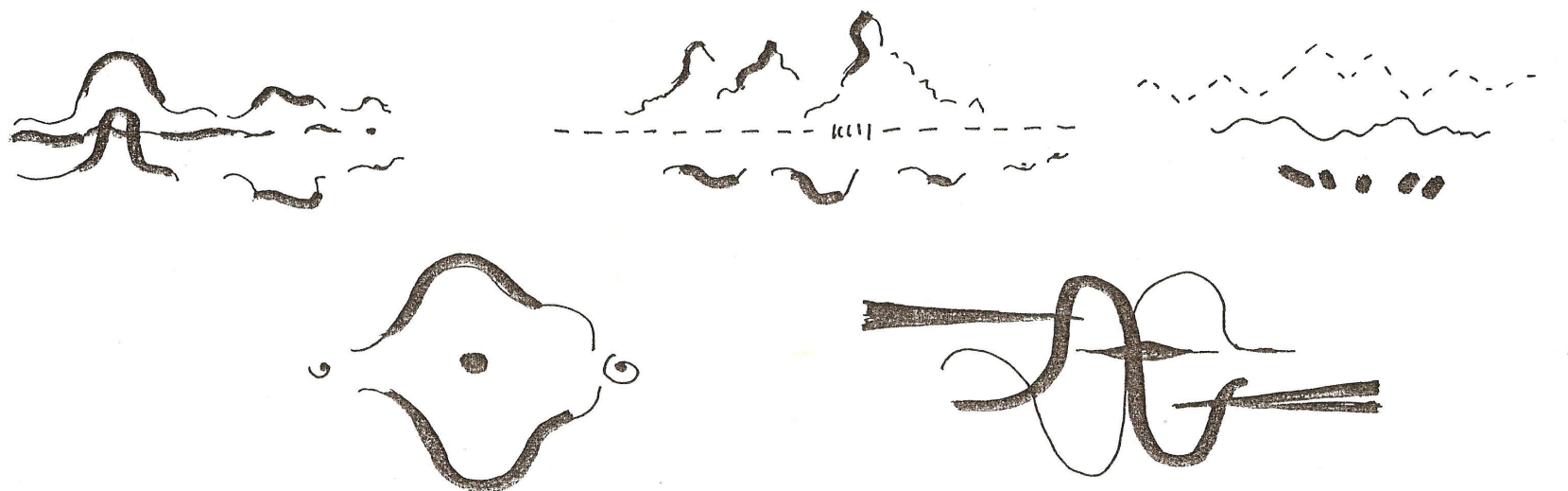
- 1) Description of the pieces' ideas were developed by Group Improfon (in most cases, structural / intuitive processes have been the starting-point)
- 2) graphic notation of a specific piece (model) is a proposal. It can be interpreted and should be worked on and interpreted by the ensemble in question to suits its own needs.

(graphische Notation / Transkription: Agnes Ponizil)

GESTEN GESTURES

.....

5-7 Miniaturen gestischen Characters, die Miniaturen sollten die Dauer einer Minute nicht überschreiten. Man stelle sich eine bestimmte Stimmung, formuliert in einem mehrteiligen Stück oder in 2-3 kurzen Sätzen (Sprache) vor. Anfang und Schluss teilweise gemeinsam, auch versetzt.

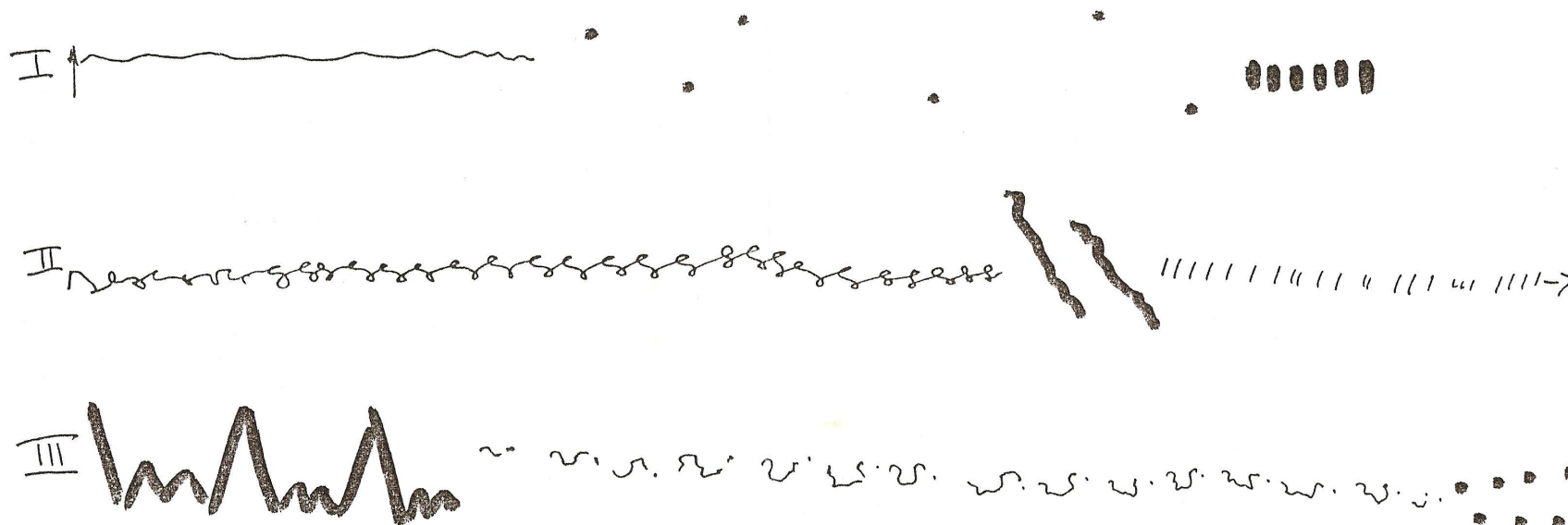


Five to seven miniatures having a gestic character. They should not last longer than one minute each. Imagine a specific atmosphere which is depicted in a piece of several sections or in two or three short sentences (of language). Beginning and end to be played together, partly one after another.

3 STRUKTUREN THREE STRUCTURES

.....
Jeder Spieler legt 3 Strukturen fest, die unabhängig voneinander ablaufen. Die zeitliche Dauer der einzelnen Strukturen steht nicht fest, es sollte aber eine Struktur kurzer, ein mittlerer und eine langer Dauer geben.

Each player decides on three structures which are played independently of each other. There is no fixing of their duration, but there should be one of short, one of middle and one of long duration.

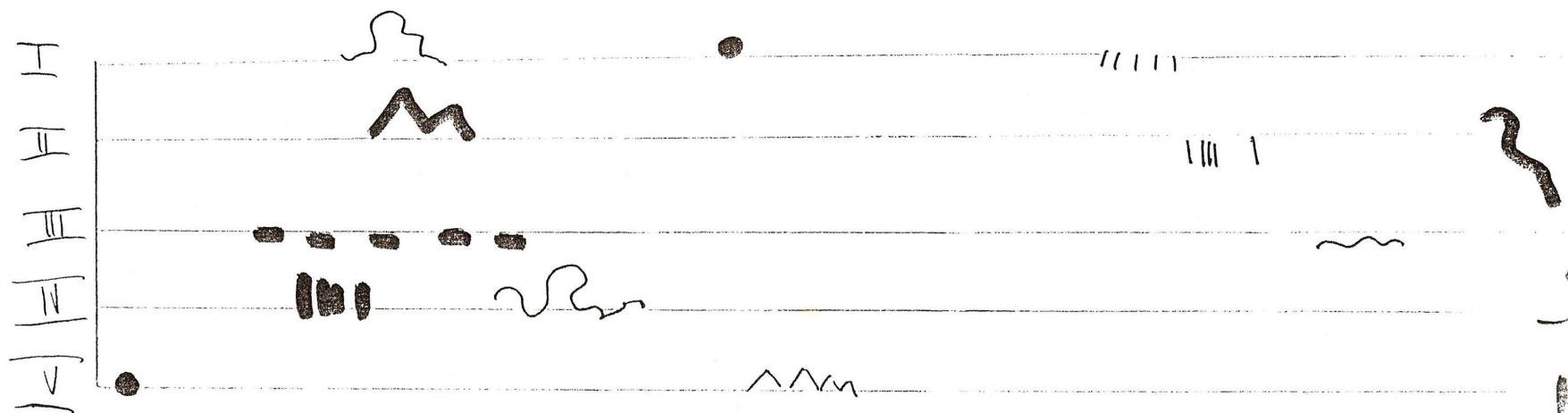


3 AKTIONEN THREE ACTIONS

.....

Jeder spieler legt für sich 3 prägnante kurze Klangereignisse fest. Die Grundstimmung des Stückes ist Stille. Den Zeitpunkt des Erklingsens der jeweiligen Aktion legt der Spieler nach eigenem Ermessen während des Stückes / Spielens fest. Wichtig sind Pausen / Stille wahrzunehmen.

Each player decides for himself on three short sounding events. The basic atmosphere of the piece is silence. The player determines during the playing process when the events are to be played according to her or his own judgement. It is important to have a clear perception of pauses / silence.



Dieses Stück wurde im Rahmen der deutsch/französischen Coproduktion: Improvisation, musique et danse 1995 von Musikern und Tänzern aufgeführt.

This Piece was performed in 1995 by musicians and dancers as part of the German/French Coproduction: Improvisation, musique et danse.

Agnes Ponizil - Gruppe/Group Improfon Idee/Idea: Günter Heinz

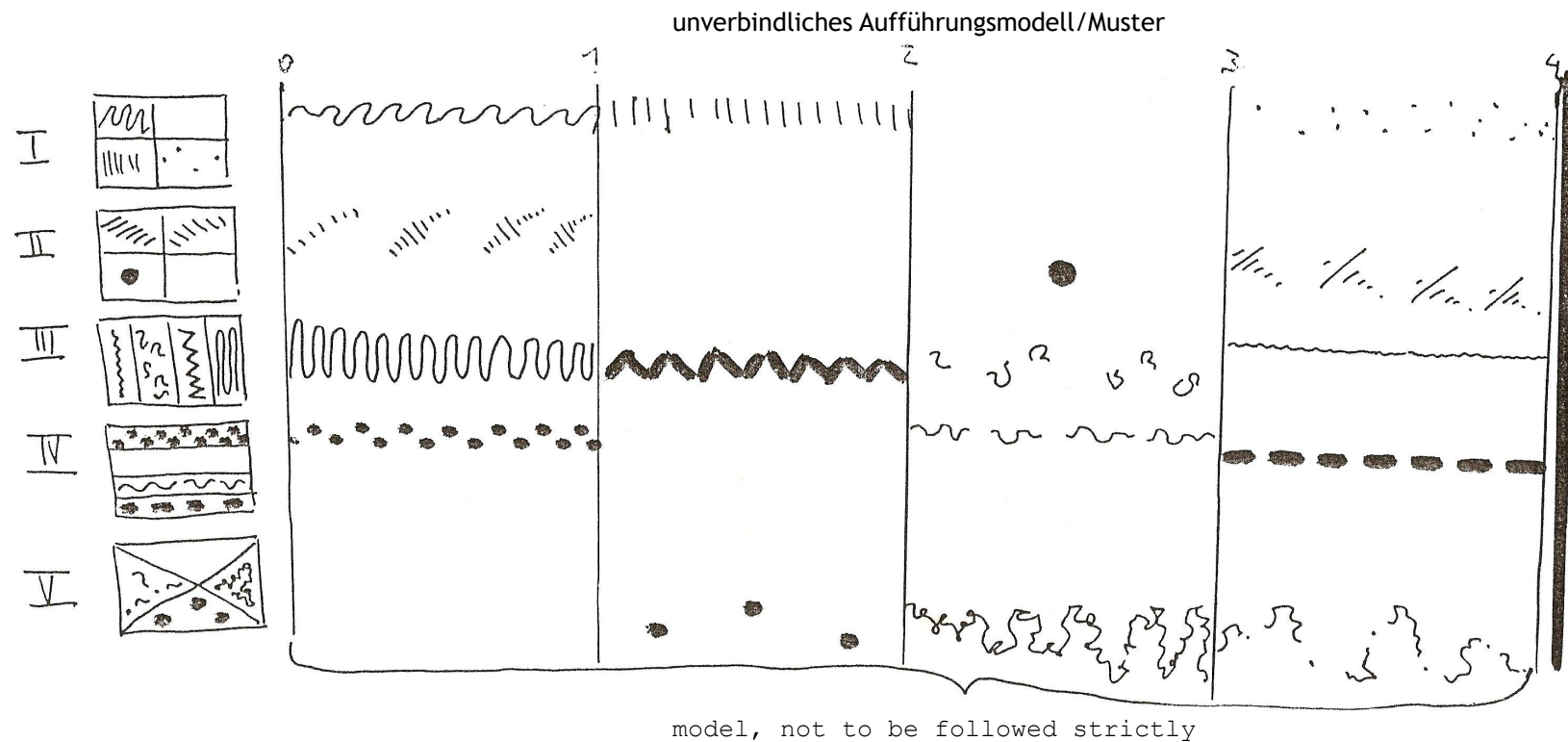
1995

4 MINUTEN FOUR MINUTES

.....

Jeder Spieler legt vor Stückbeginn seine 4 Strukturen fest, dabei kann auch 1 x Stille sein. Nach jeweils 1 Minute (Stoppuhr bzw. Wechsel von einem Spieler angezeigt) werden die Strukturen gewechselt.

Each player decides before starting to play on four structures, of which one could also be silent. Structures change every minute - by using stop-watch or by following a player.



Dieses Stück wurde im Rahmen der deutsch/französischen Coproduktion: Improvisation, musique et danse 1995 von Musikern und Tänzern aufgeführt.

This Piece was performed in 1995 by musicians and dancers as part of the German/French Coproduction: Improvisation, musique et danse.

3 INTENSITÄTEN THREE INTENSITIES

.....

Dieses Stück ist ein Klangband bestehend aus 3 Abschnitten unterschiedlicher Dichte / musikalischer Intensität - wenig dicht - mittlere dichte - sehr dicht. Die Reihenfolge der Dichten sind von den Interpreten vorher gemeinsam festgelegt. Der einzelne Interpret muss musikalische Strukturen finden, die die vorgegebenen Intensitäten treffend klanglich umsetzen. Die Dauer der jeweiligen Fläche wird vorher verbal festgelegt (kurze-mittlere-lange dauer), die Übergänge können fließend sein.

This piece is a texture consisting of three sections having different density / musical intensity: not very dense - middle density - very dense. Sequence of the different densities is to be determined beforehand by a common discussion among the interpreters. Each interpreter must find musical structures which effectively translate the given intensities. Duration of each structure is determined verbally beforehand (short - middle - long duration); transitions may be gradual.



Gemeinsamer Beginn
Common start

Gemeinsamer Schluss
Common ending
