Performing musical silence: markers, gestures, and embodiments

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Chapter 3. A Noisy Archive of Eloquent Silences

Introduction to the Noisy Archive

This archive attempts to depict some of the great variety and complexity involved in performing silences. It is a starting point for those interested in musical silences, presenting a flexible and constantly evolving search for an understanding of performed silences.

In Chapter 1, I covered existing terms for silences. In Chapter 2, I discussed potential markers for studying performed silence. This archive will give a more detailed idea of the various markers, as I have defined them in Chapter 2, through concrete examples from my practice. These examples will illuminate the use and kinds of visible and audible markers, the potential multidimensionality of performed silences, and the role of silence as both connector and separator, which I conceptualize with the terms "not/knot." The archive will also testify to the incredible heterogeny of performed silences and their resistance to taxonomies, for the silences offer no easy synthesis.

This archive is a noisy archive. It is noisy in the sense of being unpredictable and irregular, like a staticky television signal or an intermittent radio transmission from outer space. It departs in all directions. However, not everything could be included: silence news, silencing, sociological silence, public silence, scientific silence, silence technologies, silencing as a weapon, silence as a political tool, interstellar silence, the pandemic silences—these are examples of directions in which this research could have departed. To write specifically about performed silences, I had to silence a great number of related silences.

Moreover, I had to make choices about which repertoire to include. I studied silences and absences in rock music, bebop, heavy metal, air-guitar competitions, Merce Cunningham's choreography, Samuel Beckett's texts, and the Sankai Juku dance company. In the end, most of the

A non-exhaustive list of additional artists, artworks, and art forms that may be helpful for further explorations of musical silences:

Jean Barraqué: piano sonata

Samuel Beckett

Pierre Boulez: *Notations* and the Third Piano Sonata

John Cage: *Songbooks, Ryoanji,* and *Waiting*

Contact Improvisation (physical movement) practice

Tan Dun: *Circle with Four Trios, Conductor, and Audience*

Ron Ford: *Open* for accordion and assistant

Eugène Ionesco

Vanessa Lann

György Ligeti: *Touches Bloquées* piano étude

George Maciunas: *Solo for Violin*

Olivier Messiaen: *Catalogue d'oiseaux*

Thierry de Mey: *Silence must Be!*

Meredith Monk

Noh drama

Pauline Oliveros, especially her *Deep Listening* exercises

Salvatore Sciarrino, for example the clarinet part in *Lo spazio inverso*

Sankai Juku dance theater

Giacinto Scelsi

Karlheinz Stockhausen: *Klavierstücke IX* and *X*

The Wandelweiser Group, especially Bin Li and Radu Malfatti

Eugène Ysaÿe: the opening of the Sonata for Violin in A minor

works in the archive are pieces that I have a personal and tactile connection with, ones for which my hands know each nuance. My approach[24] to each silence begins with playing, so I did not include topics for which I had insufficient experiential data (see above sidebar, however for many more directions).

This personal approach is fundamentally aligned with the tenets of artistic research: research that is conducted through the creative act of making and critically examining that making. Such an approach can contribute insights to the scholarly discourse on silence within the realm of musicology and performance studies as well as to practical knowledge for composers and performers.

How to Use the Archive

Each example in the archive focuses on a particular aspect of performed silence, presenting a type of silence, a marker, a knot or a not, a specific notation, or a performative problem—concepts explored and explained in Chapters 1 and 2. For each of the examples, I have created at least one miniature video essay, in which I address—from a pianist's point of view—*how* the silence should or could be performed and what types of experience a particular way of performing might engender for the performer and the audience.

Even if they are made at different moments in the research process, the videos represent a creative research method as well as an experimental artistic output, such that the video essays in the overall research project were a combination of:

- a source from which research questions emerged;
- experiments and test cases; and
- illustrations of arguments.

The videos were filmed in my practice studio, an acoustically imperfect room. The artifacts of real life often intrude, such as the sounds of traffic and birds and clanking radiators. These videos are speculative, exploratory, and personal. They are themselves launching points for further questioning and study. The videos are accompanied by supporting text and media,

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[24] Unquestionably, this adds a bias to my research. My choice of repertoire has been shaped by teachers, competitions, and programmers. These external guide rails were mixed with my personal and idiosyncratic predilection for a type of Dada-esque theatricality. The Western European avant-garde idiom in which I was trained rarely included materials of other cultures and non-western approaches. Hopefully, these biases in my early outlook are somewhat tempered by my subsequent work in broadcasting, my teaching experiences, and my theoretical and historical explorations.

which may include scores, screenshots, personal anecdotes ("intermissions"), and links to related performances.

As discussed in Chapter 2, eloquent silences enable the performer to communicate with the listener. This chapter draws together a wide variety of examples of performed silence in which the performer communicates silence in different eloquent ways.

For convenience, this chapter differentiates these silences into five parts. Each part contains related examples of performed silences, which are loosely grouped by their commonalities. The grouping, in which I am deliberately stretching the definition of silence, is based on notation, ranging from precisely-notated to non-notated silences.

- Part 1. *Integrated silences* (silences that are fully notated and integrated into a musical score)
- Part 2. *Absence art* ("conceptual" works made of silence)
- Part 3. *Silent discourse* (hidden voices, partially notated, often with textual explanations)
- Part 4. *Silences arising from the work or its context* (non-notated audience silences arising from rituals, context, and behaviors; that frame or shape our experience)
- Part 5. *Silencings* (non-notated social, cultural, or political silences)

Part 1: Integrated Silences

Integrated silences form part of the artwork and are notated via durationally precise rests. These rests are integrated into the overall notation of the composition. In most of cases, these silences are already part of a compositional intention (as in the Chopin example). How they are mediated is often unspecified in the score (unidimensional rests), and therein lies the relevance of examining the multidimensionality of eloquent silences and the means through which performers embody them.

3.1.1 Yearning Silence—Frederic Chopin: Ninth Nocturne opus 32, no. 1

NOTATION: quarter-note and half-note rests, with or without fermatas

MARKERS: visible: often swooping, curving arm gestures that seem to summon or prepare the nostalgic silences; contextual: performance traditions

► EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916399?c=5

Frederick Chopin frequently emphasized yearning and nostalgia, especially in the ending to his ninth Nocturne. The example is entirely unbarred, suggesting the *tempo rubato* freedoms of a cadenza. The successive pauses seem to summon longing, yearning, nostalgia, surprise, anguish, despair, or regret. This intense compression of emotions into a few rests is made possible by the complexity of the note passages in between and the tensions already set up in the exposition. In this fragment, the note passages between the silences are characterized by chromaticism, anticipation, or suspension in the melodic runs and unstable chords. Each rest

is inextricably linked to the notes around it, in a context of tension and release. This type of freely rubato writing contrasts with the regularity of the preceding three pages, but is certainly characteristic of Chopin, as in his *Impromptus*. In the quoted example, the right hand suggests the melodic potential of a violin, complete with pauses for upbows; it could equally well be reminiscent of an oboe or clarinet, with quick passages punctuated by pauses for breath. The pauses "speak" along with the notes. Unlike examples in 20th-century music, these silences do not seem to have their own tangibility. Whatever instrument is evoked here needs breath-like pauses, and the pauses contain a directionality as they lead fluidly, and in rubato timing, to the next melodic flourish.

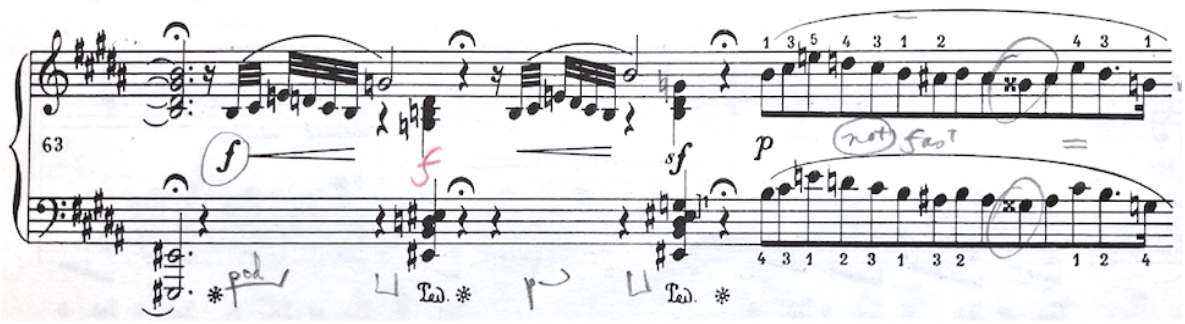

Figure 41: excerpt from the ending of the ninth Nocturne (Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1965)

The first rest on the last line might imply a function of drawing out, pulling or extending. The last rest creeps in with finality, announcing the end of the composition. American novelist Amor Towles writes of a (fictional) performance of the ending of this nocturne:

> Whatever personal sense of heartache Chopin had hoped to express through this little composition—whether it had been prompted by a loss of love, or simply the sweet anguish one feels when witnessing a mist on a meadow in the morning—it was right there [...] one hundred years after the composer's death. (Towles, 2016, p. 326)

Each rest offers evidence for the multidimensionality of performed silence. The rests seem to function as pregnant silence, anticipatory silence, surprise silence, and breathing. The first two fermata rests in the example above imply a beat and are almost accented in their performance. The results could describe heartache, loss or sweet anguish. But they also serve a breathing, interrupting function, a catching of breath in the melody.

A pianist might choose to embody this catch in several ways. One option is to focus on the relaxation of tension in a reaction against the sudden G7° chord that has preceded the rest. Another embodiment might be more of a visual bounce with the hands, emphasizing the accentuation of the rest. So the rests could be interpreted as drawing the line through, pulling Chopin's gradual melodic ascension upwards. Or rather focusing on the interruptions, on the

thwarting of expectations, which also characterizes the melodic ascent. Other interpretations are just as possible, for example, one in which the pedal is held down to reinforce the dissonance of the minor 7th interval (G to E#). In this case, gestures would still be possible but might be embodied in a more drawn-out or languorous manner.

Each of Chopin's silences in this coda seems to summon a different type of nostalgia, knotting and weaving the phrases together. Similarly, the silences seem anticipated and prepared by the notes.

3.1.2 Pantomimed Silence—George Crumb: *Vox Balaenae*

NOTATION: Innovative notation precisely indicates the manner of embodying silent notes.

MARKERS: visible and (in)audible: The fingers play in pantomime, hovering above the keys, moving without playing; notational: "Hold attitude" suggests staying still and maintaining a position.

▶ CRUMB EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916402?c=6

In this example from *Vox Balaenae* (1971), George Crumb is carefully scripting silence and has precisely notated the desired embodiment. Note the indications of gesture on the last, inaudible phrase: "play in pantomime," "hold attitude," as well as the very precise indication of timings underneath the fermatas (5 and 7 seconds, respectively). Crumb is creating a *visible* echo of the previous phrase. This is a silence that must be *seen* in order to be *heard*.

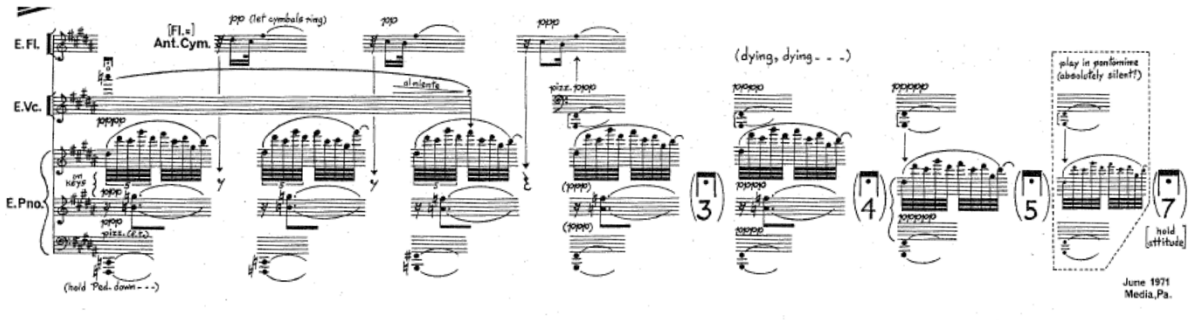

Figure 42: the ending of George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae* (Edition Peters, 1971)

I have performed this piece many times, but I find it extremely difficult to end convincingly. The disembodied playing of the last unhearable notes can easily look artificial on stage. But like many of Crumb's musical ideas, it becomes a question of theatricality. Emphasizing the gesture makes it more effective. It is the opposite of Morton Feldman's world (*Intermission 6*) of subtly still silences. In Crumb's magical world, the performer must theatrically embody the silence.[25] In Feldman's more austere sound world, the performer usually seeks physical

[25] Crumb uses the same technique in *Apparition* (Besingrand, 2023, p. 52).

stillness and a minimum of gesture. And yet, both experiences could be described as dreamlike, probably due to the relative lengths of the silences.

Crumb has created a literal marker for silence: a pantomime of playing, which is acoustically silent, although visually not so. His ending critically reflects our capacity for retroactive hearing (connection) and a drawing out of the frame at the end of the composition (disconnection); these silences are (therefore) simultaneously not and knot.

3.1.3 A Field of Silence—Tom Johnson: *Imaginary Music*

NOTATION: random rests are distributed on a field of white, floating around three notes.

MARKERS: The three notes can be interpreted as markers, which make the silence audible or tangible. Or the white space or the traffic can be audible/contextual markers for silence. The white space on the page offers a notational marker for silence.

▶ JOHNSON EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916405?c=7

Tom Johnson's book of pictures, *Imaginary Music,* is intended as a Cage- and Fluxus-influenced book of nonsense notations. These whimsical drawings stretch conceptual limits by creating unplayable music meant to be looked at and admired. Deliberately unframed, the score lacks a timeline and has neither a beginning nor an end.

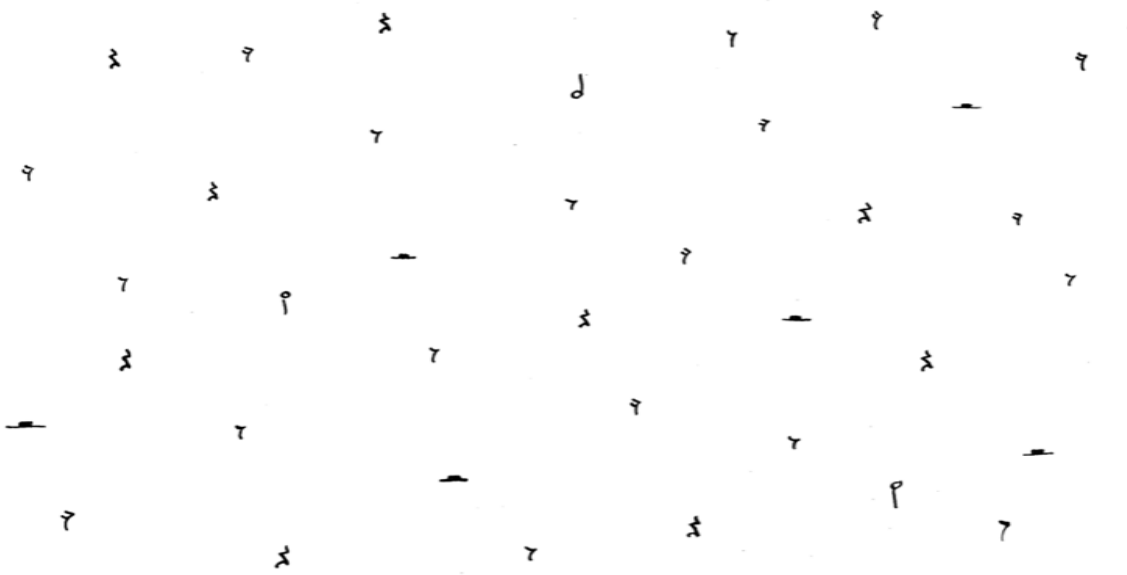

Figure 43: *Quiet Music for an Imaginary Celeste*, by Tom Johnson (Editions 75, 1974)

Quiet Music for an Imaginary Celeste consists of forty rests and three half-notes evenly distributed on the page. It is cheekily decorative but simultaneously cries out to be performed. Johnson cites turn-of-the-19th-century Parisian provocateur Alphonse Allais as an influence

(Johnson, 2015, p. 46). Like Allais, he initially intended his experiments more as graphic design than as musical works.[26]

Like Dieter Schnebel's imaginary compositions, this score uses the icons of silence (rests) as graphic elements to be whimsically played with. Johnson's drawings have no indicated beginning and end; they exist abstractly as directionless random fields, potentially extending far beyond the page. The score looks a bit like a crowd of musicians on their day off, hanging around for a picnic in a field of silence.

I have interpreted the three half-notes variously as a cue for three musicians or a cue for three sounds—the resonant bowls in this video. Those three half-notes are perhaps the gestural and audible markers that highlight the silences around them. The white space in my video is the space between the plants, although the plants themselves or the traffic noise in the video might be the white space. The work leaves much space for imagination. Perhaps the traffic noise is the knot that holds this particular video performance together. It is the background to the background.

In terms of the dimensions of silence, this particular score also offers a perspective on silence's source: the spatial layout[27] of the rests on the page, and the lack of a clear frame, both suggest that silence is going on everywhere, all around us; and that it is composed of small bits of information.

3.1.4 Interruptive silences—Robert Eidschun: *Specks*

NOTATION: classical rests

MARKERS: embodied: performative choice to articulate interruptions by bodily freezes, deliberately staring at the score

► EIDSCHUN EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916408?c=8

Specks is a composition that Robert Eidschun wrote for me, in which silence plays equally a structural and an interruptive role. The rests occupy a lot of the composition, and indeed, for every set of notes, there appears to be a balancing set of rests. These serve an interrupting and a connecting function for the individual short phrases of notes.

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[26] However, many anti-establishment French composers of the 1990s (such as Denis Chouillet, Dominique Clément, Jean-Charles François and Ernst H. Papier) were influenced by Johnson's scores, interpreting them as *real*, not *imaginary* music, and even performing them, un-silencing these pages by interpreting them onstage.

[27] Intriguingly, there is visible white space (*ma*) between the rests, which could mean that the rests sound in one manner, and the spaces between the rests sound in a different manner.

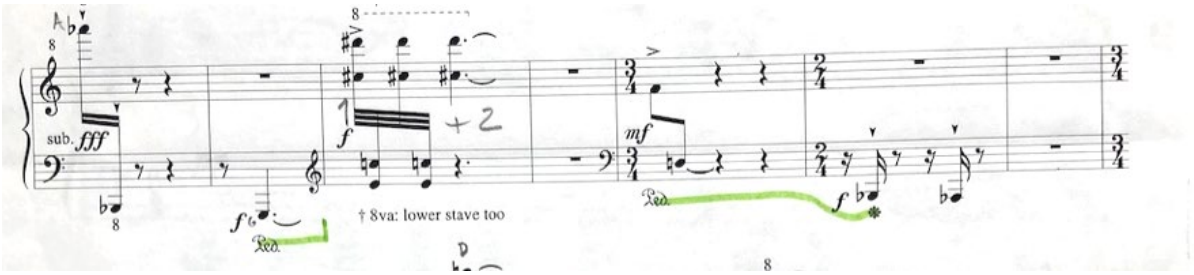

Figure 44: second line from *Specks* (Eidschun, 1999)

Interruptions have the power to help us remember something that has just happened. They signal one's brain in such a way that one later recalls the event better than if it had not been interrupted. Composer and sound artist Paul Craenen writes about cuts and interruptions never being absolute but always affording a kind of "bleeding" or "afterglow" of the interrupted events (Craenen, 2024). This might suggest a small-scale version of DJ Jacques van Zyl's black noise or even an alternate interpretation of composer George Antheil's hectic silences.

3.1.5 Morton Feldman: *Intermission 6*

NOTATION: white space on the page (ma)

MARKERS: embodied: performer's choice of gesture, which might evoke (not impose) silence; contextual: stillness

▶ FELDMAN EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916411?c=9

About the experience of listening to Feldman, English musician David Toop writes:

> [...] washed by infinitely subtle traditions of tone that linger after the echoes of repetition, the room becomes silent sound, the memory of sound and the future of sound. (Toop, 2005, p. 93)

From Toop's viewpoint, silence in Feldman's music is about place, memory, and potential. These are expressed through a sonic vocabulary of non-action, non-moving. Many people remember his music as "silent." Yet Feldman requests the use of the pedal during the performance of the white spaces so that the sound seldom stops; there is always a very quiet sound, always something.

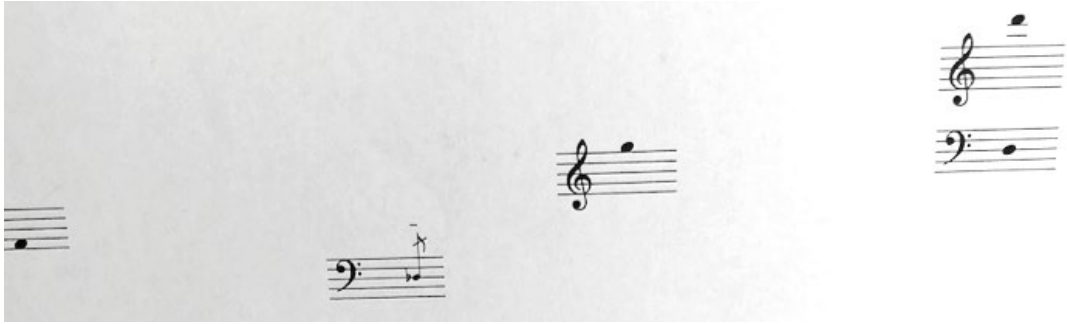

Figure 45: excerpt from *Intermission 6* (Peters, 1953)

The absence of detail and the withholding of information between sounding and silent music in Feldman's scores is what creates the knot, the connection between events. Indeed, my experience as a performer suggests that this music is about time; about slowing time down and relishing the feel, the tangibility, and the long-term elongated relationships between sounds. In that sense, my experience as a performer differs from Toop's observations: from my point of view, the room does *not* become silent sound, because I know that the next note will inevitably come. The listener's experience is different, for there is less certitude of the arrival of the next note. For them, this is an artwork in which the *not* aspect of silence is much stronger than the *knot*. The distance between the notes is so far that the connecting characteristics of silence are strained. And as Toop says, the memory of sound (which is probably not silence) is also strong for the listener. This gives these silences a retroactively "descriptive" function; these silences summon themselves.

3.1.6 Nostalgic Silences—Denis Chouillet: *Je me souviens n°4*

NOTATION: no rests notated; silence perceived behind the artwork

MARKERS: audible: notes and durations potentially; contextual: nostalgia

► CHOUILLET EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916414?c=10

In Denis Chouillet's composition *Je me souviens N° 4*, there are no rests, no pauses, no barlines. The end of the piece tapers off without a notated conclusion. Yet memory is not necessarily stillness, and certainly not silence—it can be nagging, repetitive. The drawn-out sounds and the leitmotif of the descending sixth interval create an atmosphere of silence as if it were a silence lying "beneath the chatter of words" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 214). When performing this piece, I try to be very subtle about embodied markers, not drawing attention to my gestures. The silences are relative ones that lie beneath the notes.

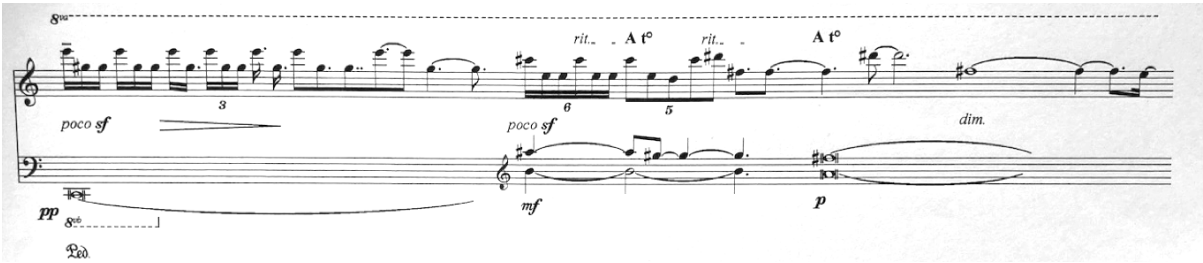

Figure 46: excerpt from *Je me souviens N° 4* (Chouillet, 2010)

Part 2: Inherent Silence: Works Made of Silence

Each of the artworks in this second part provides instruction(s) for silence. Those of the compositions which do contain notes or sounds only do so with reference to the silences which are the topic of the artwork. Other commonalities are that (almost) all of them are composed, meaning that there is a notated score and often detailed instructions for the performer. They usually imply performance in a specific situation by practiced musicians or actors. These are works of "inherent silence" which belong to the broader category of "absence art."

The term absence art is drawn from the writings of Belarusian philosopher Anna Farrenikova. Although she readily acknowledges that even John Cage's *4'33"* is not about absence *per se*, she classifies it as a seminal work of absence art nonetheless. I mention her terminology because she highlights a clear interdisciplinary connection between visual examples such as Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* and musical examples such as Abramović's *The Artist is Present* or Cage's *4'33"*.

> Controversy is the bread and butter of absence art and there is also controversy in what should count as absence art. John Cage's piece is famously cited as a piece of absence art, but a closer read of his explanation suggests that it's more about what fills the gap, than about what's gone. (Farrenikova, 2019, p. 257)

These inherently silent pieces are full of implied constraints and often far less silent than they initially seem. The composers frequently push the audience towards specific listening approaches. Each of these works has a very specific stance on silence, which (as with conceptual artworks in other disciplines) engages with the societal and the political.

3.2.1 The Benchmark for Silence—John Cage: *4'33"*

NOTATION: multiple versions over three decades: text only; proportional notation; "TACET"; and numerical (timed) versions.

MARKERS: many possibilities for audible, contextual, and visible markers

For an analysis of embodiment in performances of Cage's work, see Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Conducting Silence—Anders Jallén: *Solokonsert för dirigent*

NOTATION: staves and barlines with logically notated rests, rests suggest specific embodiments

MARKERS: The performance consists of visually embodied markers, on top of the contextual markers of microphones, tuxedo, backdrop, baton, formality, etc.

▶ JALLEN EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916418?c=13

I enjoy performing this humorous gestured performance for hands, arms, face, and body, including the baffling punchline of one sound. That sound is a sigh ("Aaaah"), five-sixths of the way through the piece, one that highlights the ongoing silence of the absent orchestra and the possibly frustrated condition of the solo conductor.

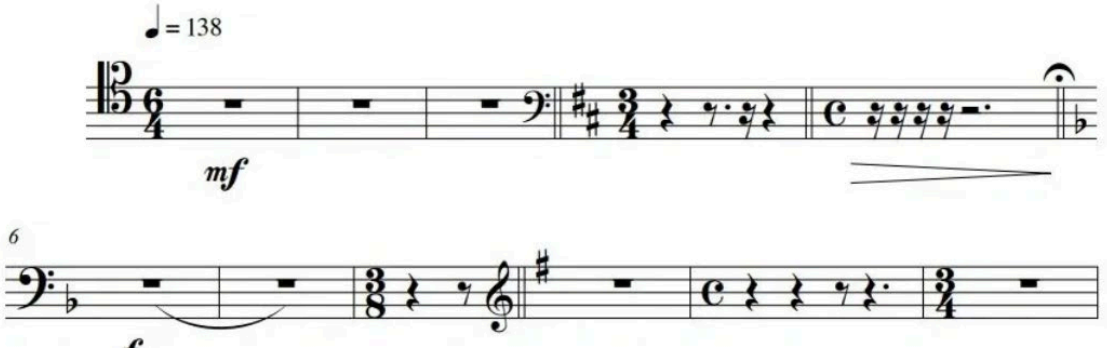

Figure 47: *Solokonsert*, first two lines (Jallén, 1979/ed. 2020)

While I am performing it, the audience seems to become the orchestra, uncertain or embarrassed that I am addressing them. Although I am facing them, I am, in fact, imagining an orchestra in my mind or reflecting (on that orchestra?).

Apparently, I am summoning silence; but not necessarily! Once, an audience member began to sing along, figuring that all these energetic cues were a call to action. I was astonished and delighted as this created a new line of thought—that the piece, intended for silence, might instead cause music to arise spontaneously. The audience member assumed they should be the musician and hence became one. My silence, illustrated by my embodiments, called forth sound. This was a wonderful moment, as the listener became the creator. Silence rarely summons sound so directly.

In his *Solokonsert,* Jallén echoes Schnebel's composition *Nostalgie* (1962) and multiple works of Mauricio Kagel. Jallén also foreshadows Tan Dun's *Circle with Four Trios, Conductor, and Audience* (1992), in which the leader conducts the musicians and audience in moments of silence. All of these works involve silent but highly embodied conducting. In these compositions, practicing the conducting means thinking like a choreographer. Without sounded notes, without musicians to respond, communication is entirely different. Time and gesture become the two most important ingredients for the interpreter. Craenen's evaluation of *Nostalgie* could apply equally well to *Solokonsert:*

> *Nostalgie* presents a subject immersed in his or her own musical imagination. This allows an equally personal imaginary music to resound in the minds of each individual audience member. (Craenen, 2014, p. 50)

There is a paradox: the gestures are for sounds/counting, calling forth imaginary sounds in the mind of the audience, whereas the notation is for silence. The visually noisy but audibly silent embodiments should communicate to the audience potential soundings or, even better, potential silences. An unfollowed conductor or an orchestra-less conductor are both made silent.

3.2.3 Dadaist Silences—Erwin Schulhoff: *In futurum*

NOTATION: staves and barlines with many different rests

MARKERS: visible: potentially hyper-active gestures; notational: title and typography suggesting Dadaist embodiments; context: commentary on war

▶ SCHULHOFF EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916423?c=14

Composed in 1919, the third *Pittoresk* by composer Erwin Schulhoff is dedicated to Georg Grosz, a key figure of Dada. This miniature is titled *In futurum* and consists of rests and text instructions. Musicologist Esteban Buch argues in his article "Seeing the Sound of Silence in the Great War" that, as in the Dada movement itself, the brutal legacy of war comes through in this artwork (Buch, 2018, p. 104).

As with George Antheil's *Ballet mécanique*, *In futurum* overwhelms the pianist with rests, using dozens where one would suffice. Antheil's use of rests is logical, if surprising. But Schulhoff's deliberately florid, baroque notation produces a confused reaction in the performer, who has to struggle to express the rhythmic complexity—or choose not to.

> Schulhoff's piece arguably challenges the very notion of boundary. Rather, it is the negative of a non-silent piece of music, where time itself—historical and musical time—is pictured through its own negative, *Zeitmaß-Zeitlos*. In this sense, it is very much like a photographic negative. (Buch, 2018, p. 109)

Buch's point is excellent: rather than being specifically about silence, the piece is the negative of a musical composition. Rests are substituted for notes, and smiley faces are substituted for rubato and other performative interpretations.

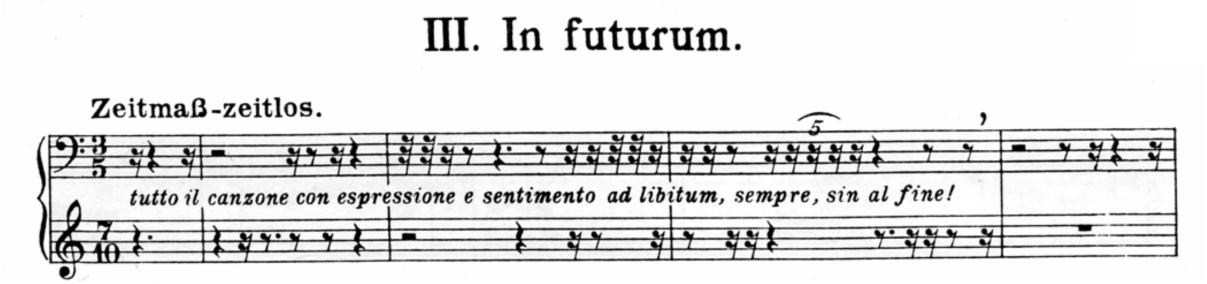

Figure 48: Erwin Schulhoff, *In futurum* (Verlag Jatho, 1932)

Schulhoff's score is detailed—perhaps too detailed; it is fussy and confusing. Each rest is descriptive of a pulse or a beat, but attempting to interpret the rests "accurately" can slow down the performance, for example, at the end of the sixth line, where there are just too many brief rests in a row. But is accuracy even a goal to be achieved? Perhaps not. After all, the score is marked "timeless," and the meter indication is 3/5 for the right hand and an equally absurd 7/10 for the left hand, even though most of the bars are really in 4/4.

Potential markers (a smiling silent performer? a frowning one?) are also created by the notation. Hence, I tend to give it a Dadaist theatrical flair in concert, complete with costume and exaggerated gestures. These markers become descriptive of the silences' absurdity.

Part 3: Silent Discourse

Part 3 discusses silences that are concealed. Every musical work, no matter how abstract, contains subtexts, hidden histories, and stories of its origins and creator(s). Sometimes, they are expressed in musicological texts, program notes, or pre-concert lectures. Sometimes the audience is already aware of subtexts prior to the performance. Mostly the subtext served a silent function, communicating unspoken or unheard ideas from the composer to the performer. Subtexts could be as simple as the word "Andante" at the beginning of a Mozart sonata or as complex as the notebooks of Beethoven, which were not intended to be public but have become an essential component of the shared knowledge surrounding his artistic output.

The silent subtexts in my examples are notated solely for the performer (and thus not for the audience) and are the inner voices of silent discourse. Dutch-Cypriot composer Yannis Kyriakides summarizes the inner voice as an ever-active part of the self:

> [...] the less conspicuous inner voice [...] which varies a great deal from person to person, is the elusive inner voice of thought, that I call 'silent discourse'; the voice that is in constant dialogue with different aspects of the self, ever active in the process of trying to comprehend and respond to situations on the conscious horizon. (Kyriakides, 2017, p. 38)

Silent discourse includes hidden lines, subtexts, invisible footnotes, and thoughts that liberate the performer to express more of what is being felt during a performance. Audibly or visually expressing these subtexts or sub-tunes during a performance might give rise to a multi-dimensional experience of un-silencing. Or it might ruin the composer's intentions. The metaphorical silences in this part are often literally silent but not necessarily accompanied by acoustic silence. This means that a silent discourse may well occur during a section of musical notes. The inner voice is silent, but the audience cannot hear that it is silent; they can only know it if they are informed in advance.

3.3.1 Concealed Melody—Robert Schumann: *Humoreske*

NOTATION: an extra inner staff that resembles a vocal melody but is not meant to be played on the keyboard

MARKERS: notational: the score itself, aided by the explanatory text; contextual: historical including commentary by Clara Schumann

▶ SCHUMANN EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916426?c=16

In *Humoreske* Opus 20 for piano (1839), Robert Schumann added a silent melody to be thought or silently hummed by the pianist. This line, whether the height of romanticism or subtly avant-garde, he labeled *Innere Stimme*:

> This melody is intended to be sensed inwardly, 'as one often does when one's heart is full while playing,' as Clara [Schumann] explained. The soprano line, or the 'outer'

> voice, traces out this inaudible inner voice, trailing behind it by just a fraction like a shadow missing its subject, an echo without a source. (Lin, 2020)

According to modern interpretive ideas, the performer is not supposed to perform (neither sing nor hum) but rather to internalize and imagine this inner voice. The modern audience is usually not even aware that the inner voice exists. It is a silent counterpoint to the piano parts, a kind of hauntology in which a ghostly voice from the past merges with the present.

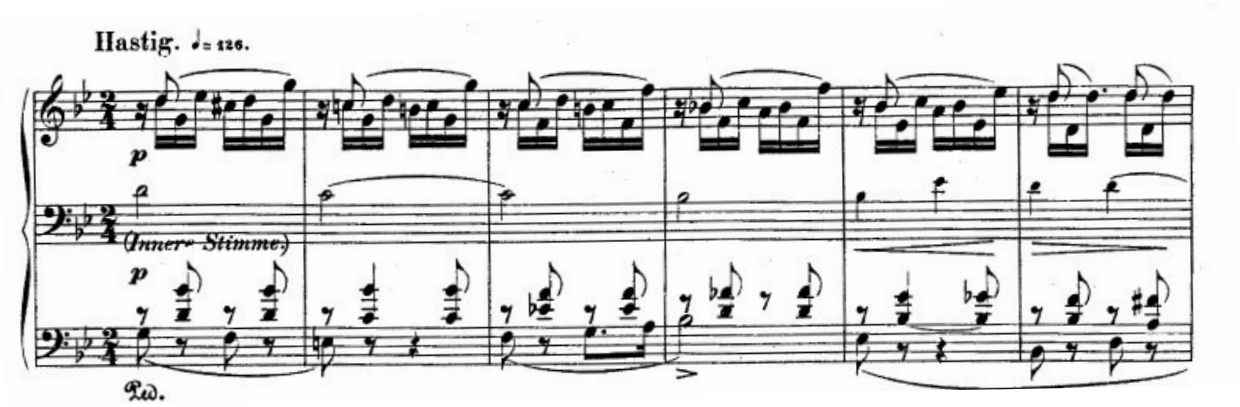

Figure 49: excerpt from page 8 of *Humoreske* by Robert Schumann (Edition Peters, 2002)

The pianist must apparently know and feel the *Innere Stimme*, feeling it fundamentally below and within the played notes of the two outer staves. The same musical passage returns later, towards the end of the work, but *without* the inner voice, creating an "absence of absence," according to music writer Douglas Murphy. He gives a related example from the 20th century: "It also occurs in jazz—Charlie Parker 'weaving' his way around a standard melody, suggesting it without ever playing it directly" (Murphy, 2008).

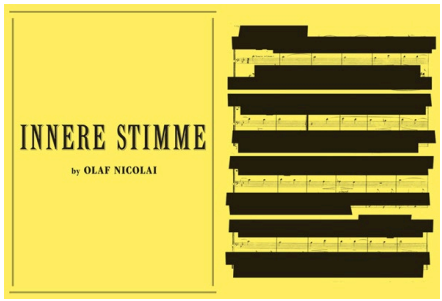

Figure 50: *Innere Stimme*, by Olaf Nicolai. Based on *Humoreske* by Robert Schumann (Roma Publications: 2010)

Just as jazz audiences today will recognize the hidden theme, audiences for Schumann's performances would have been familiar (at least in his inner circle) with this phenomenon. Indeed, the inclusion of secret melodies was common, and their group of artists and musicians (including Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann) often circulated themes and melodies in their correspondence (Berry, 2014). Thus, it is more than likely that Schumann's audience would have been familiar with the hidden tune.

Perhaps it was even performed at the time. In these contrasting examples, Richter includes the hidden melody, while Horowitz does not.

AUDIO LINK: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916426#tool-3046280

Audio example: Sviatoslav Richter performing *Humoreske* (Sviatoslav Richter Edition, Vol. 3, Melodiya reissue, 2008)

AUDIO LINK: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916426#tool-3046287

Audio example: Vladimir Horowitz performing *Humoreske* (live performance: Washington, April 22, 1979)

As a performer, every composition I learn acquires a dense layer of instructions, notes, references, cues, and memories, which coalesce over time into my artistic and embodied knowledge of the piece. When I perform the music, all these different layers run along in my head, like the parallel *pistes* running through a multi-track tape recorder. Even if the audience only hears the performance of the primary notes printed in the score, all of the other tracks continue in my mind. These ever-active voices are in constant dialogue, as the composer Yannis Kyriakides points out, interacting with the different aspects of the self that they represent (Kyriakides, 2017, p. 38). Yet, for all their activity, they are effectively silent tracks, unheard by the audience.

I have chosen to include this example because silence is implied through something else: the notation of a melodic line. But Schumann's parallel world could also be categorized as a meta-silence: the silence/silencing itself is not notated yet arises from the work. Working with the idea of meta-silence, the image shows a graphical response to Schumann's score by performance/sound artist Olaf Nicolai. He deliberately confuses eloquent silence and silencing as if Schumann's concept were about censorship. He has blacked out the performable score, leaving only the absent voice visible. The blackouts are definitely "not": any connective knots have been hidden by ink. Even the instructions are effaced.

3.3.2 Unsilenced Practicing—David Dramm: *Ruby*

NOTATION: Silence is partially notated but primarily arises from the sounds.

MARKERS: visible: metronome, composed gestures; audible: metronome

▶ DRAMM EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916439?c=17

Ruby highlights silence by playing with a metronome, which is normally taboo on stage. Metronomes are intended only for practice. The audience never hears or sees a metronome.[28] It stays in the practice room. And a composition played with a metronome belongs in the practice room. It should thus be a composition without an audience. But that is not the composer's intention, for the notation makes clear that this is a piece meant to be seen as much as it is heard.

[28] Mauricio Kagel's *MM51* (1976) is also scored for piano and metronome. Other works which use metronomes are György Ligeti's *Poème symphonique* (1962) and Ned McGowan's *Sydney Polypulse* (2019).

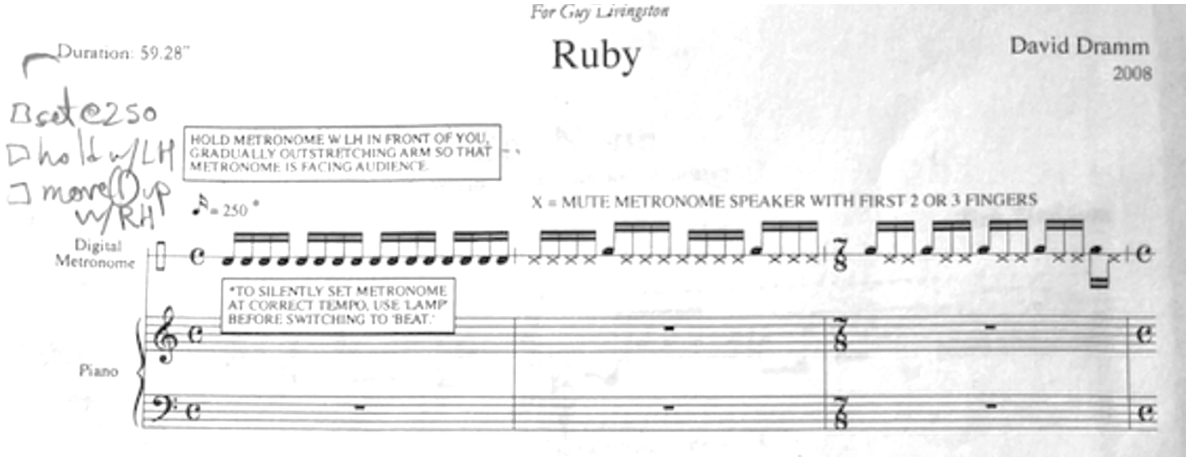

Figure 51: the first line of David Dramm's *Ruby* (Dramm, 2008)

At first, the metronome hardly seems a marker for silence, but gradually, its audible presence emphasizes the silences in the piano score. And its visible presence, too. Embodiment is of supreme importance in this performance (and is notated). Dramm specifies how and where the pianist's arm should be held (raised, in front, "gradually outstretching arm so that metronome is facing audience") and that the metronome (called a *Ruby*) should descend gradually during the diminuendo at the end. In the performance, I add gestural swoops with my left hand to emphasize the rhythmic syncopations, thus generating additional markers that suggest the connectivity of the silences.

3.3.3 Introspection—Louis Andriessen: *Not [an] Anfang*

NOTATION: non-notated silences based on the composer's explanation

MARKERS: audible: humming as a marker for silence or silencing; contextual: composer's explanation

▶ ANDRIESSEN EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916443?c=18

Composer Louis Andriessen wrote this piece for me during intermission at a concert in 1997. Could this be an illustration of what a composer hears during the compositional process? The fact that the piece was written on a program with no forethought is also a reminder of the constant music that runs through the minds of most musicians, especially composers. This sort of instant composition, written as fast as Andriessen could notate it and fitting into the limited space of a program booklet, is like a Polaroid photo of the moment: the composer's non-stop inner voice is briefly frozen in time.

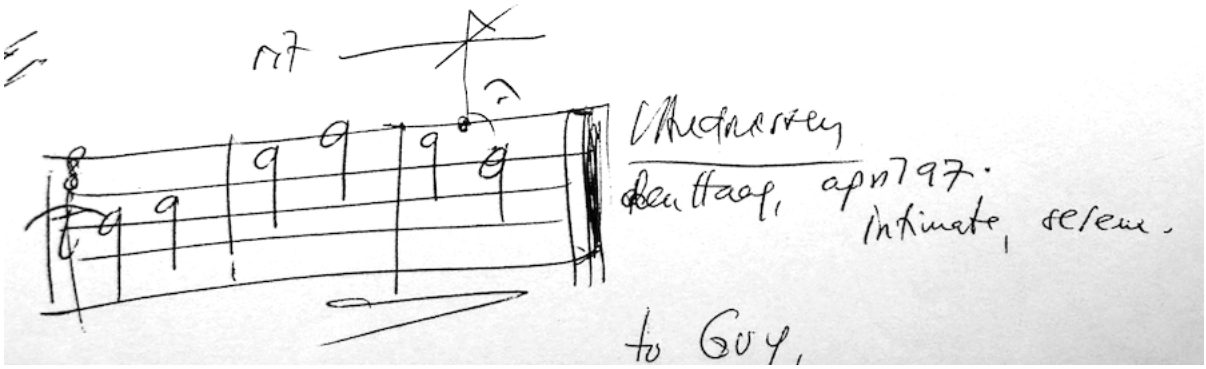

Figure 52: last line of *Not [an] Anfang* by Louis Andriessen (Andriessen, 1997)

The dimensions of this silence are intimate, serene, and poignant; the marker for silence is less obvious but might consist of the humming itself that precedes the end. The connections between the piano phrases are performed silence, made nostalgic, bittersweet, and even tragic by the cessation of the humming. These are knots of silence, holding the simple tune together.

3.3.4 Dadaist Voices—Erik Satie: *Avant-dernières pensées*

NOTATION: "secret" text messages in the printed score

MARKERS: notational: The performer must choose whether to make the written text audible. The audience might not know of the silences nor of any potential markers.

▶ SATIE EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916446?c=19

French composer Erik Satie was fond of leaving secret messages in his scores: written instructions or sketches indicating feelings, emotions, or sometimes complete nonsense.

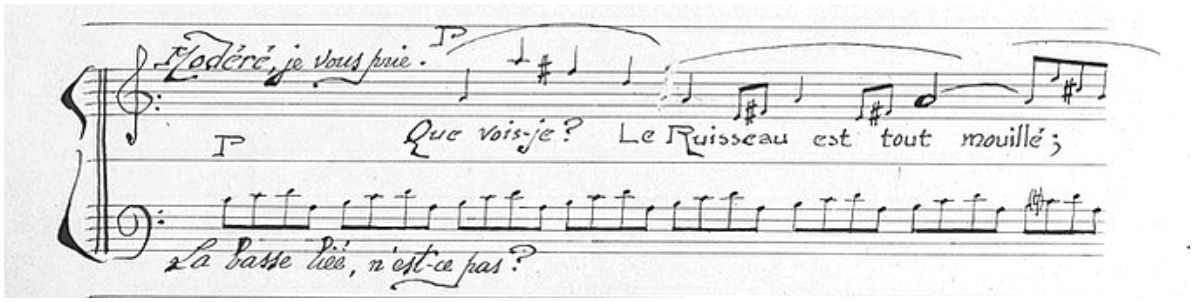

Figure 53: Erik Satie: *Avant-Dernières Pensées*, first line with sarcastic Dadaist text ("Moderately, I pray you," "What do I see?", "The bass is legato, isn't it?", "The stream is all wet") (Satie, 1915) (https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52500023h/f8.item)

Musicologist Ornella Volta (Satie & Volta, 1989) maintains that these aphoristic memos were not intended to be performed, yet they are very much notes to the performer, and Satie might have intended them to merit extra attention, even if the texts were not directly read during the

performance. He deliberately fomented silent thoughts—a piece of mental music to be "interpreted" parallel to the notes written on the page.

Here, Satie writes, "*la basse liée, n'est-ce pas ?*" ("The bass is legato, isn't it?"), thus suggesting a direct and intimate connection between the composer and performer. The pianist implicitly (though silently) might reply, "Of course it is." Whether or not the audience knows this is happening, it creates an interrelationship, a different kind of knot that binds composer and performer in a secret.

Part 4: Silences that Arise from the Work or Context (Meta-Silences)

Silences that arise from the work are not notated. This section offers examples of silences that are induced in the audience via the notes, the repetition, and the flow of the composition. These silences do not arise from notated rests, and the composition is not necessarily composed of silences. Sometimes, the performance itself or the context can summon silence.

In Chapter 1, I suggested the term meta-silences to describe non-notated audience silences that usually arise from ritual or behavioral norms. These might be the audience's respectful silence before, during, and after a performance (the silence of decorum); or the awed silence after a particularly moving concert; or the silence which is engendered by intensely spiritual music; or the calm that comes from meditative music; or the inner peace which can arise from parameter-based (minimalist) music. These silences have a ritual, societal, or contextual origin. Costumes, lighting, and décor might play a role too. So does the behavior of an audience as a group. Often, the markers are visible, as in the high vaulting of a cathedral or the shadowy layers of wood inside a Japanese temple.

3.4.1 Foreground and Background—Arvo Pärt and Renaissance Vocal Music

NOTATION: notes and commas, but not necessarily rests

MARKERS: contextual: ritual and architecture might create the markers for silence; audible: slow tempo, repetition

▶ PSALOM AUDIO RECORDING: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/editor?research=1712958&weave=2916472

This example is from Psalom for four saxophones by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Noted Pärt interpreter Paul Hillier comments:

> So many of his works incorporate such frequent and sometimes extensive silences that they become thematic in effect and must be 'played.' (Hillier, 1997, p. 199)

By "played," I think that Hillier means that the silences are not there to be counted, but rather to be felt, stretched, and interpreted by the performers. The silences in Pärt are precisely notated, but in reality, they are played as highly malleable. They are both elastic and tangible.

Giving an insight into singing both the music of Pärt and the vocal music that inspired him, American musicologist and singer Laura Prichard writes:

> One of the strange things about singing Renaissance music for me has always been holding your own 'part' and counting the rests before you come in with your own voice part. You would think that your head would be full of 'sound' during that time—but if there is no written cue, I have always felt a strong sense of 'silence' due to my own part being a rest—and not so much a sense of listening to the other performers until I can start to make sound myself. (L. Prichard, 2021, private correspondence)

Prichard's silence is an invisible, unshareable, perhaps *alone* silence—the silence within a piece of music that is being performed around you and within which you sometimes have your own voice and sometimes not. A similar experience was already described in the late medieval period by music theorist Franco Colonis:

> [...] Colonis links the role of silence to the listener-performer: namely, the observation of '*vox amissa*'. When a certain voice is silent (*vox amissa*), the singer is to listen to the sounding voices ('*vox prolata*'). Silence here is an active mode of listening, not merely a kind of passive emptiness. (Hodkinson, 2007, p. 28)

In our era, the music of Pärt induces us to listen to the *vox prolata,* the sounding voices, much in the same way Pérotin did 800 years earlier in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris. But in recordings of either composer's work, these particular silences lose substantial impact—the listener should be in the space with the performers. And not just any space: a particular reverberant space, which will let one experience the silence more intensely. This may be ironic because that same reverberation prevents the notes from fading away; their persistence after the musicians stop singing is what draws us into the spiritual experience of silence.

> The use of silence in Pärt's music has been commented upon often enough, generally as contributing to a perception of the music's spiritual nature. (Hillier, 1997, p. 199)

Indeed, silences contribute to the music's spiritual nature—as do Pärt's compositional elements of repetition, slowness, simple percussion, clear vibrato-less singing, and much space between the notes.

In *Thresholds*, music philosopher Marcel Cobussen suggests that Pärt's music gives *occasion* for silence to occur (Cobussen, 2008, p. 117), a very different experience than the perspective Cage gives us of presenting the sound(s) of silence. Evidence for this suggestion might come from the choice of venue. In Cage's sound world, a performance of *4'33"* can happen anywhere; but in Pärt's world, a venue with resonance is essential. For its experience of silence, his music relies on architecture—enormous rooms and stone cathedrals. In a dull and non-resonant

room, his silences will sound empty. Hence, in my terminology, Pärt's silences are often architectural silences (see Chapter 2). The situatedness of the architectural venue gives it power, echo, and resonance. The architecture becomes a major influence in the resulting performance, reflecting the sound back to musicians and listeners.

I am not arguing that silence *per se* does not exist in Pärt's music. Rather, I am arguing that there are two major kinds of silence in his music, both of which contain a fair amount of sound:

- Firstly, the non-notated and intangible silence behind the music, which is a spiritual or mystical experience amplified by the ritual and architectural context;
- Secondly, the notated and very tangible resonant silence developed through the long rests, which relies on the architecture for its impact. Due to the extended resonance of the space, this performed silence is usually audible as reverberation, hence also non-silence.

As Cobussen remarks, the most intriguing and powerful silences around Pärt's music are not the notated rests nor their interpretation. The most powerful silences are those to which the music gives affordance: a spiritual silence beyond the sensual.

> Pärt's carefully constructed music is searching for silence, searching for that which is beyond the sensual. His music is orbiting around silence, around an empty place, circling around 'something' that it can never reach or achieve and what music itself is not. (Cobussen, 2008, p. 117)

The music of Pärt and other composers often inspires a spiritual stillness. Whether the silence appears to be behind the music or the music behind the silence, the result is similar: an experience of stillness, a surrender to the music and the silence before and behind it. The music *gives us silence* so that we may *live* the silence through the sounds. "Mastery and expertise play their part, but also of utmost importance is a moment of surrender that cannot be planned" (Cobussen, 2008, p. 121).

3.4.2 Post-performance Silences—Bruckner/Mahler/Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris

NOTATION: none

MARKERS: contextual, behavioral, audible, architectural: These meta-silences are marked by the audience's collective or ritual behavior; the last notes are almost inaudible; the conductor keeps his arms raised as an embodied marker for silence; the players hold instruments in position; the concert hall hides the sounds of the outside world; and the audience plays a role by sitting in silence; the acoustics resonate.

The architecture surrounding a performance can generate many striking effects, especially where it affords the possibility for post-performance silences. Here is a story told by Sean Street, Professor Emeritus of Radio at Bournemouth University, in which he recalls his most powerful memory of silence (listen to the original story).

PERSONAL STORY

In May 1967, I went to a concert at Notre Dame de Paris: in the last moments of the Bruckner *Te Deum*, the sound blazes out. And the building was an instrument: the building was joining in. And you only realized that when the music stopped.

At the end, there seemed to be this huge reverberation that seemed to go on and on and on […]. I remember us all sitting there before the applause. Everybody just sat stunned, listening to this sound fading into silence and the building, and out into the nooks and crannies far up above us, and far beyond us into the dark shadows we couldn't see; the sound still filtering through—like mercury, like water.

And eventually, silence came, and we waited, and then… we didn't want to break that silence, but we did, with applause, because it was sensational. And I wondered for years, "Was that as long as it was?"

The next time I really thought about it was the night Notre Dame burned. […] I just thought back to that moment, and I thought of that acoustic that I could see being destroyed in front of me.

And on a whim I went online and looked on eBay and looked to see if I could get a recording of that night—did it exist? Yes! So I sat and timed the reverberation as it is on this record, which is probably not a true representation, not perhaps as strong as it would've been in the building itself. And it's between four and five seconds. And then the silence. But it's enough to remind me of that building contributing to the piece and the silence after it. (Street, in Livingston, 2017)

Intrigued, I bought the record in a second-hand shop, but as a result of the era and the difficulty of recording live in a cathedral, the audio is hissy and blurred. The reverberation time is nonetheless immense. Meanwhile, the flawed, noisy audio overlaps with my own recollections of taping in that space, truly a recording engineer's nightmare.

► AUDIO DISCUSSION: ABC engineer Russell Stapleton describes recording inside the Cathedral of Notre Dame (Stapleton, in Livingston, 2017): https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916475#tool-2927788

The silence inside a great building after a performance is intensely physical. Is it the sense of awe at music that moves us to create silence ourselves? Note that the audience was collectively unwilling to break the silence. There is a notable shift in attention as the music fades away to ethereal silence. That shift in attention is key to observing silence—the participants (audience and performers) suddenly become aware of the room after the last note. Space and the memory of music are fused into one sensorial experience.

Silence brackets the ending of Bruckner's *Te Deum*, as performed in the cathedral. The building is a container for certain silences, and most importantly, the architectural acoustic creates a build-up to the experience of silence just after the final "blazing" chords. Here there is no gesture, no performative silence, but framing is present and tangible. The silence is the end-frame (the right bookend) for the music; but the silence itself is also framed by the architecture, by the situation, and by the sounds around it (music before; applause after).

The audience is bodily affected by the framing of the music. Also, the audience is bodily affecting the silence. With a thousand people in the congregation, the reverberant energy is dampened. Hence, the silence experience is affected on multiple levels: by the music that preceded it; by the architecture that surrounds it; and by the physicality of the audience that listens to it. The markers are environmental, architectural, acoustic, social, and audible.

But this example does not have to be inside Notre Dame, and it does not have to be composed by Bruckner. The same post-performance effect, heightened by romantic symphonic music, can be experienced in many large halls with long reverberation times.

> [...] conductors' and musicians' gestures are used to enhance the musical effect at the end of the work, often by exaggerating actual gestures needed to execute the final passage. In fact, in the case of the decrescendo, the conductor and the players may actually continue their motions (without producing sounds) to give the illusion of sounds continuing past where we can hear them. (Judkins, 1997, p. 46)

The post-performance silence is not notated. It is a meta-silence in the sense that it may be anticipated, but not predicted. The musicians may work towards this effect by creating illusions of sound past the point at which the audience can hear them. The conductor may hold his arms or baton outstretched to draw out the moment theatrically. Importantly for this type of silence, the audience itself is also participating, working at non-clapping, being silent in order to feel the silence. This group silence is experienced collectively by both the musicians and the audience.

A gigantic work on symphonic scale can lead to awesome silence. Here is an example from a review of Mahler's *Ninth Symphony* as performed in Lucerne:

> As the violins began the slow winding-down and decomposition of the final pages, the texture thinned to a spectral web. Several times, the music seemed almost to stutter to an exhausted halt. At last, the strings whispered the final phrase, almost inaudibly. And nothing happened. Abbado kept his arms raised, the players held their instruments in position. I almost forgot to breathe. Then, slowly, he lowered his hands and the musicians put down their instruments. And still nothing happened. The rapt audience sat in silence, unwilling to break the mood, for maybe two minutes—an eternity in the concert hall. At last the applause started and went

> on even longer than the silence. It was an extraordinary end to an extraordinary concert. (Gent, 2010)

The reviewer lists a host of visible and audible markers that summon the meta-silence: the last notes are almost inaudible; the conductor keeps his arms raised as a marker for silence; the players hold their instruments in position, still performing, yet no longer the notated score; the concert hall hides the sounds of the outside world; and the audience plays a role as well, by sitting in rapt silence. This suspension seems as if the group's collective will (musicians, conductor, audience) *holds* time in their embodiment of silence; holding time fast so that it stops.

3.4.3 Silence as Holding Space—AMM: Final Performance

NOTATION: none: improvised

MARKERS: architectural and contextual, including hall, audience, history; behavioral: audience

Although improvisational performance is mostly not within the purview of my research, I did have a discussion with composer and improviser Richard Barrett, who referred me to this review. This text describes the final performance in London of the legendary AMM ensemble. Particularly interesting is the description of the closing silence as a "holding space" that marks a journey to a bright nowhere.

> The last music AMM made together was silence. After an hour or so, Rowe having fallen quiet a minute or so before, Prévost, too, came to a pause, and they both sat poised, the music, the musicians, and the audience alike all deciding whether or not it should continue, before the applause broke in. Heavily inflected by the framing, the history, the circumstances and the occasion of the concert, that silence was not just about absence or farewell. […] AMM is made up, not only of the music and those who play it, but also the space in which they make it, space which includes everyone else in that room. And in that closing silence, it felt as if AMM was opening up not only to everyone in the room, but to all the listeners and players not in the room, living and dead. […] This ending was not just an ending, but a holding space, in Prévost's words, 'marking a journey to a bright nowhere,' sometimes brighter and sometimes dimmer, but visible on the horizon still. (Grundy, 2022)

Note the inclusion of the audience as part of the room's soundscape. The embodiment of silence at the end of the AMM concert highlights how sound, space, and bodily experiences are deeply interconnected. Both the physical and architectural dimensions of silence play a role in musical expression and experience. The silence here serves multiple framing functions: bringing a historical era to a close, finishing the concert, and paying tribute to the non-present players in the room. And these functions are valid for both the performers and the audience, who together share that final silence.

3.4.4 Silence and Flow—John Adams: *China Gates*

NOTATION: notes (no rests)

MARKERS: potentially institutional, contextual, and behavioral markers

▶ EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916483?c=29

China Gates by John Adams is a piece that lives permanently in a static now-ness, with almost no beginning or end. There are no rests in this piece. It would be absurd to suggest that it includes quantifiable silence. Although sometimes the left hand has a short break from playing, that is only in order to be able to jump to another location on the keyboard. The right hand does not have one single rest in the entire piece.

One could speak of the silence behind the music in a piece like this, or one could also speak of inner silence.

> The sound of music is not [...] opposed, but rather parallel to silence. It is as though the sounds of music were being driven over the surface of silence. Music is silence, which in dreaming begins to sound. (Picard, 1952, p. 27)

What Swiss writer and philosopher Max Picard seems to be suggesting is that silence is a surface that gives rise to music as time moves across it. The music floats above the silence, pushed along by time. Flow, or inner peace, is extremely useful if the performer can use it to enable the rhythms. If, as the pianist, you can let your hands feel the rhythms, as one hand moves in fives and the other in sevens, and as long as you do not overthink it, then muscle memory will take over. This can lead to a form of inner peace for both performer and listener, a peace that is often associated with silence.

3.4.5 Endings—Eric de Clercq: *24 means to an end*

NOTATION: rests copied from Chopin

MARKERS: visual: dramatic gestures, endings in a romantic pianistic style; contextual: music decontextualized

▶ EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916487?c=30

These 24 consecutive endings are sourced from the collection of the 24 Nocturnes by Chopin. But Chopin's intensely romantic notes lose their meaning due to this recontextualization. Made from endings, the artwork should have a sense of finality, but it never does. Twenty-four endings after each other *are not* a means to an end. Rather, the result seems unfinished.

There are lots of rests in the score, mostly after the endings, but not always. These rests can be performed with exaggerated gestures as if each one were a *finale*. But that does not work well performatively. In my experience, the composition seems to function better if the performer tries to play the excerpts together, not separately. Should the last ending be much more radical, gestural, and theatrical? Or should they all be the same? The artwork might best keep going in a circle like Satie's *Vexations*—it would never have to end.

3.4.6 The Space Between—Alan Frederick Shockley: *Cold Springs Branch, 10 p.m.*

NOTATION: classical notes, without rests

MARKERS: The bell note itself is an audible marker.

► SHOCKLEY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916491?c=31

The piano bell effect that I perform in Alan Frederick Shockley's composition is similar in function and mood to the real bell used in Pärt's *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten*.

► PÄRT AUDIO EXCERPT: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916491#tool-2928758

As with the piano piece by Shockley, the interest of the bell in Pärt's *Cantus* lies not only in its sound but in the space between the sounds. These bells are markers for the silence behind, and the silences are markers for the bells. This is an example of using sounds to "play" silence, thus engendering intensely connective and strongly knotted silences.

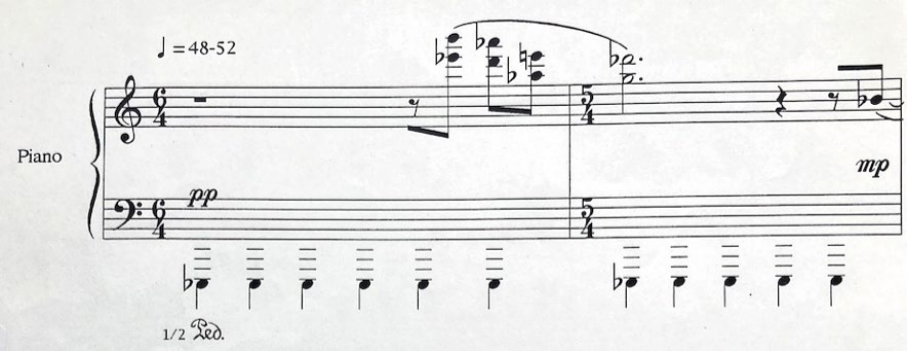

Figure 54: opening bars of *Cold Springs Branch, 10 p.m.* (Shockley, 1999)

Part 5: Silencings

When the performer is silenced, that silence appears at the interstices of *silencing* and *silence*. This can happen in many situations. Sometimes, a performer can be silenced by losing agency or creative control. Douglas Kahn has argued that John Cage's *4'33"* aggressively silences the performer. Sometimes, a performer can be silenced by the complex demands of the score (by losing virtuosity or ability), as in the examples of Newt Hinton or Dmitri Kourliandski presented here. Or the performer can be silenced by larger societal forces: racism, cancellation, or censorship. Shostakovich's creative brilliance was silenced by Stalin in 1936 after the premiere of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (Fitzpatrick, 1992, p. 188). Paul Robeson's touring career as a singer was silenced by the US State Department due to his race and his communist sympathies (Slate, 2014, p. 86).

A comprehensive coverage of silencing in all its musical forms is impossible here because of the enormity of the topic. This section gives a few representative examples of artworks about silencing from my practice. There are also other situations in which I have been silenced by not being allowed to perform (someone else was chosen, a festival was canceled, money was

withdrawn). Of course, there is a considerable distinction between the social or political silencing of artists versus creating performances about the topic of silencing as a free artist.

3.5.1 Silenced by the Audience—Tom Johnson: *Lecture with Repetition*

NOTATION: Simple text instructions create a socially complex interaction.

MARKERS: contextual, behavioral, ritual: The audience yells out instructional commands to the performers.

- EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916504#tool-2926336
- PERFORMANCE VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916504#tool-2926342

Experimental composer Tom Johnson's work is influenced by the Dadaists and the French Situationists. During the spoken-word performance of *Lecture with Repetition*, which must be read from a script, the audience can yell "More!" to have performers continue or "Enough!" to make the performers stop the phrase they are performing and skip to the next sentence. This piece's unusual means of control (commands from the audience) serves to disrupt the performer—a micro-political silencing in which the audience temporarily takes control of the performer's actions.

Sometimes, many people are calling out simultaneously, with conflicting instructions: "More!", "More!!", Enough!!!". The performer must make a rapid choice of which audience instructions to follow, resulting in a sensation (for the performer) of temporarily regaining control. But this sense of surety is invariably upset during the next sentence by more "More!"s and further "Enough!"s. The performance becomes increasingly unstable as the audience gains control.

3.5.2 Silencing of Black Voices—Pamela Z: *Notice of Baggage Inspection*

NOTATION: graphic and standard notation, plus composer's explanatory note

MARKERS: audible: soundtrack, voiceover; contextual: racism

- EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916507#tool-2926351
- VIDEO INTERPRETATION: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916507#tool-2926352
- Z AUDIO PERFORMANCE: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916507#tool-2927250

California composer Pamela Z has experimented in opera and electronics with documenting the silencing of Black voices, especially her own. She wrote me a piano-vocal composition entitled *Notice of Baggage Inspection* (2009) about the censorship/surveillance she is subjected to while traveling.

In this audio sample, one hears the text from a Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) warning, which she repeatedly found placed in her suitcase on arrival. The TSA is the notoriously suspicious agency that scans baggage in American airports. Her baggage was always searched. Thus, a printed card with this text stared out of her luggage every time she arrived in a new place.

The performance encompasses different aspects of silence. The story begins with silencing due to racism. This was enacted by the TSA and marked by the inspection card in her luggage. In turn, this is enacted by the pianist simultaneous with a soundtrack recorded by the composer. Z has used the TSA text (which she has read in her voice, thus un-silencing herself) to illustrate her story of silencing. The silencing is not notated (a meta-silence), although there is a text that narrates it and a card that marks it.

Z's second approach to silence is an acoustic one. Eloquent silence, marked by audible rests and dramatic pauses, plays an important rhetorical role in the composition, emphasizing the bureaucracy and Kafkaesque arbitrariness of the TSA's inspection cards.

3.5.3 Unsilenced Melody—T.J. Anderson: *Watermelon Revisited*

NOTATION: standard notation

MARKERS: history, context, memory

- ANDERSON EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916510#tool-2926358
- ANDERSON AUDIO PERFORMANCE: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916510#tool-2926362

T.J. Anderson's *Watermelon Revisited* is a piano piece written for me, based on a longer work by the composer. In this composition about historical-cultural silencing, the title and the music evoke racism in Washington, DC. The melody, only faintly suggested in this miniature, comes from a song that watermelon vendors (who were primarily Black) would sing as they wandered the streets of the South, selling their wares in the hot summer days a century ago.

- STREET VENDOR SONG: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916510#tool-2927269

Due to the association with Black vendors, "watermelon" later became a derogatory and racist term for Blacks. Anderson addresses this directly in his music, quoting part of an original street melody, but only the ending, as if it were an echo. The fragmented song, arising from the abstract dissonance of the first page and its mix of nostalgia and distress, are elements that Anderson uses to evoke silencing.

3.5.4 Silenced by the Instrument—Dmitri Kourliandski: *Surface*

NOTATION: graphic notation and composer's explanatory text

MARKERS: simultaneously visible and audible: hands, arms, and physical (un)successful efforts of the performer

- KOURLIANDSKI EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916513#tool-2926368
- KOURLIANDSKI ANIMATION: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916513#tool-2926372

Russian composer Dmitri Kourliandski's *Surface* is a graphic notation work on two pages, lasting sixty seconds in total. The performer may choose four areas of the piano case (the wooden cabinet) and then stroked with their fingertips to generate a high-pitched rubbing sound. There is an element of failure built-in to the piece, because it is very difficult to coax these sounds out of the piano case, and most of the strokes will be thus silent.

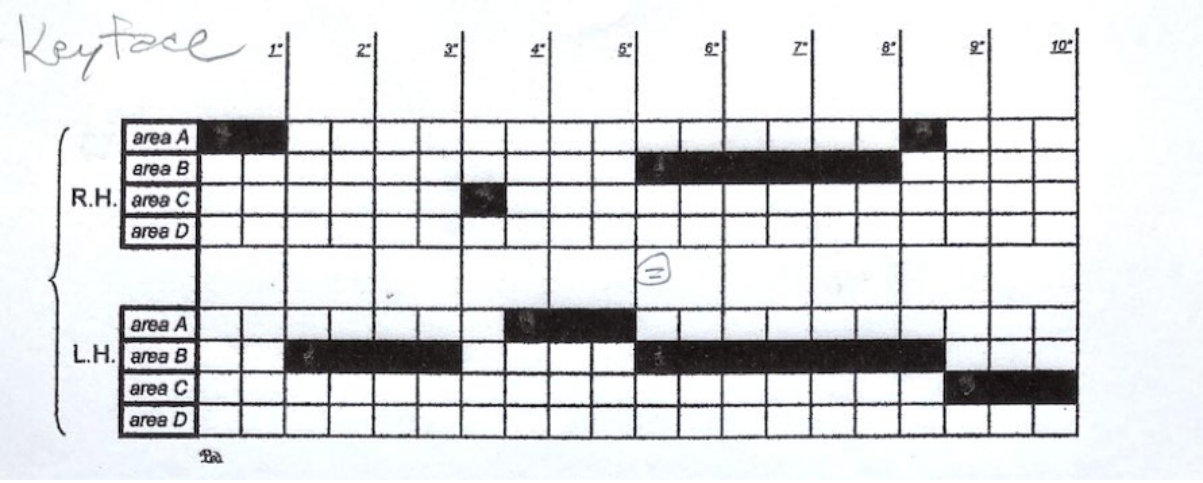

Figure 55: the first line of *Surface* (Kourliandski, 2009)

Attaining the stable result that Kourliandski hopes for is quite possible after an hour in the practice room, but difficult onstage with an unknown instrument. Hence, the work offers an affordance for silence to occur, independent of the performer's will. Kourliandski is aware of the complexity of producing sound from the surface, but he also relishes the unusual technique that will potentially create excitement (squeaking or silence) onstage. It is a highly gestural piece. Because the filled squares represent gestures (not notes and not sounds) every black square on the page is embodied by the performer's back, arms, hands, and fingertips. However, speaking of markers *per se* is difficult because the performer cannot predict which gestures will result in silence and which will result in squeaks.

The knot/not model works perfectly to describe these silences. They are disconnective "nots." When a silence happens, it is because a sound is *not* happening. There is no connection, no knot, made between sounds or silences. The disconnections are attempted connections, a push-pull between gestural skill and embodied luck.

3.5.5 Silenced through Restraint—Newt Hinton: *Piece of Cake*

NOTATION: written instructions are added to Chopin's 24th piano étude.

MARKERS: visible, symbolic: handcuffs as markers for silencing; audible: wrong notes mark the unplayable place of the original notation

▶ HINTON EXPLANATORY VIDEO: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1712958/2916516#tool-2926378

This re-composition of Chopin's famous piano étude (opus 25, number 12) raises intriguing questions about virtuosity and the transparency of the performance. The silence is intrinsic to the composition, but the silencing makes it noisy too. I am deliberately taking a broad view of the concept of silence. Indeed in this example, I am stretching the concept of silence, but perhaps there is no border, perhaps it can always be stretched further. The silencing of the

performer makes the performance louder since the struggle to play as many correct notes as possible—without sacrificing speed—leads to a clumsy and awkward performance. The metal handcuffs are to be calibrated in such a way that the performer can only reach a 9th, rather than the customary 10th that separates the left and right arpeggi throughout most of Chopin's composition. The performer becomes extremely present. The attempt to preserve virtuosity in the classical sense should make the performer transparent when playing Chopin. Hinton's version is the opposite. The illusion of effortlessness is lost due to the handcuffs. The audience recognizes the original Chopin and expects it to sound impeccable. This silencing is thus metaphorical: silence is not audible, but the performer's skills are silenced.

Figure 56: the author performing *Piece of Cake* (Hinton, 1997)

3.5.6 Failure—Audience Refusing to Applaud

NOTATION: none

MARKERS: behavioral: meta-silence as a construct exterior to the artwork; audible: traditional performer silence before concert

The accustomed silence on the part of the audience during a classical concert (the silence of decorum) is usually encouraged, but if it is extended too far, it can be an awful experience. During a Dada-themed concert I gave in Germany in 2015, the audience did not understand what I was doing onstage, and they made it tangible by doing nothing—no applause, no noises, no cheers, no sighs, no laughter. After each composition on the program, there was silence. It was a physical, palpable, heavy silence. Yet (and this was strange to me) they did not leave the concert hall. So they had their own behavioral code: on the one hand, no applause (to indicate their disapproval), but on the other hand, no departures, no noise (to indicate their respect (either for me or—more likely—for the concertgoing ritual)). I interpreted the silence as a failure on my part to engage with the audience. The performance was of Dada artworks, themselves obscure and potentially confusing. In retrospect, I feel that their silence marked my own failure to communicate effectively.

From that moment on, I added a new element to the show, a prelude in which I would walk through the audience engaging with individual concert-goers and inviting them into the bizarre comedy of Dadaism. Traditionally the classical performer is silent and invisible before the show. Instead, I made my voice heard and also gave the audience a voice as I wandered amongst the seats, "selling" paper ice-creams and useless Dada souvenirs.

Figure 57: As a response to the silent German audience and as a way of un-silencing myself pre-performance, I began interacting with audience members before each show, selling useless Dada treats and souvenirs. This was also a way to un-silence the audience, giving them also more voice, and more agency in the performance.