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Proposals from readers are invited

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EDITORIAL

Both in the art world and elsewhere, simple definitions are not always easy to make. A thing may be seen from several sides, and categories may overlap. Second part of my article about how to describe the openness in works for improvisors goes into analysis of some intricate, “borderline cases” in works by Miles Davis and Earle Brown.

There are always possibilities for discovering more composers who specialise in open scores, as the Small Notes in this issue attests to.

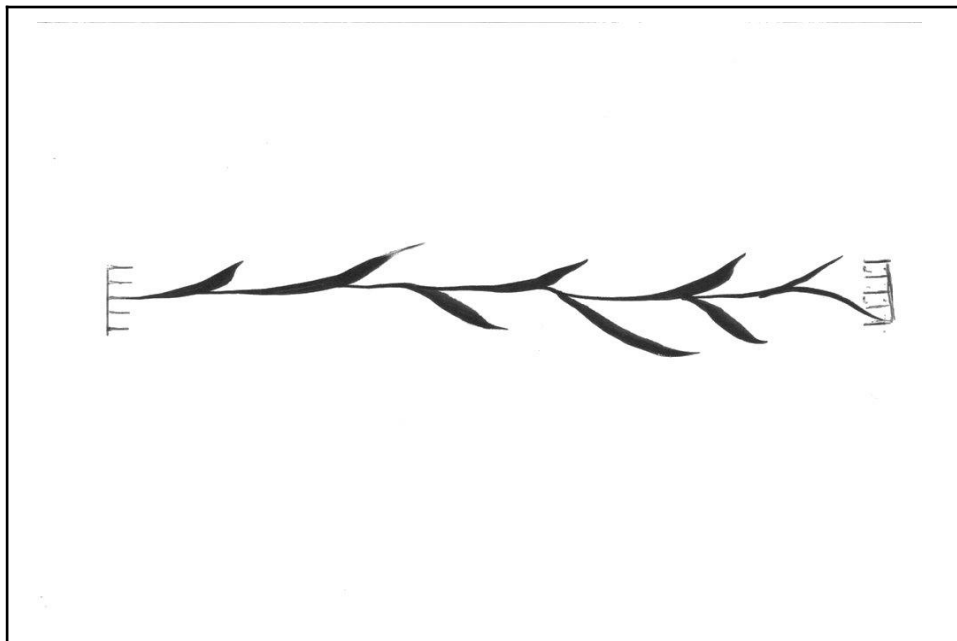
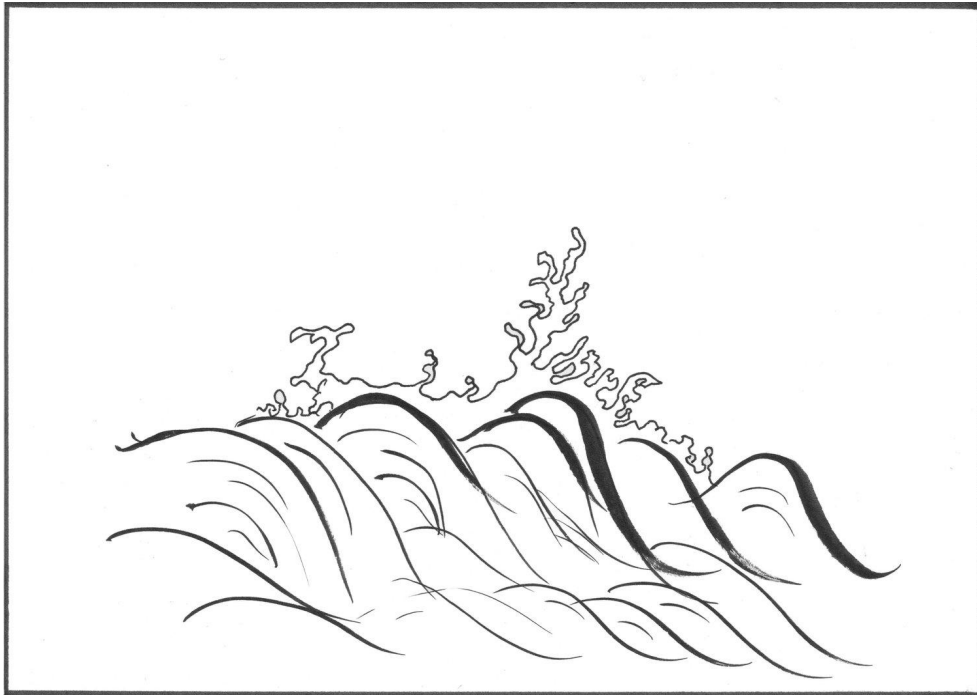
It occurred to me during working with this issue that a layouted journal is a little bit comparable to a score. You may leaf through it and you may go slowly through it. Please feel free to do both!

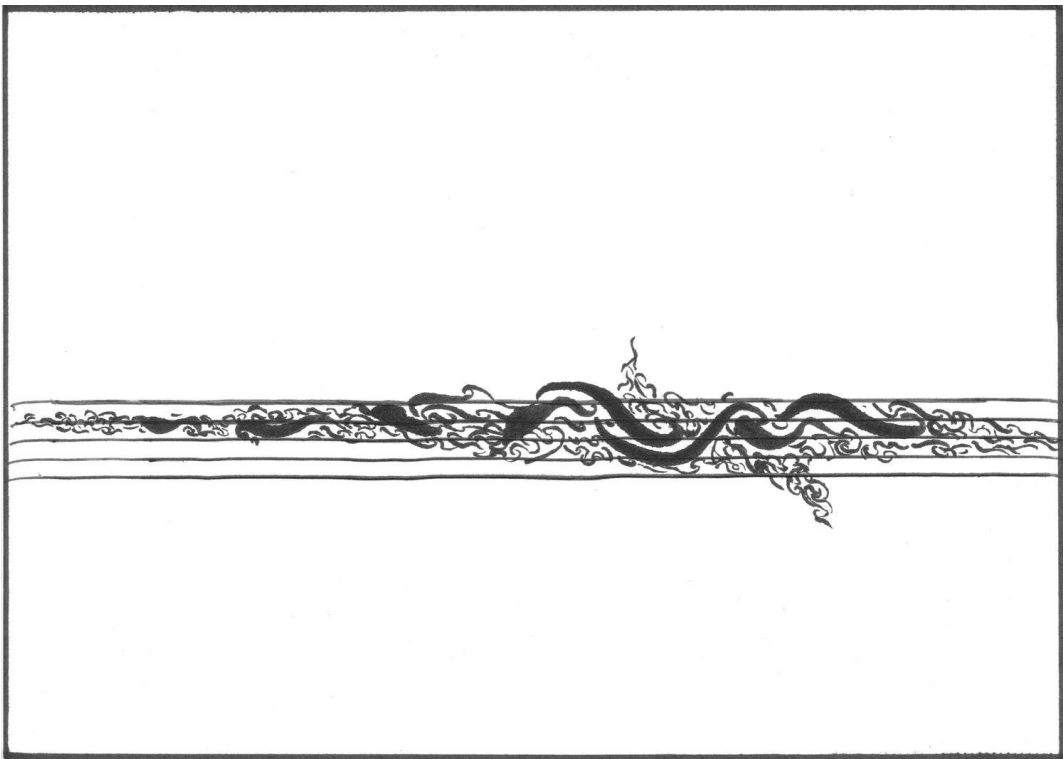
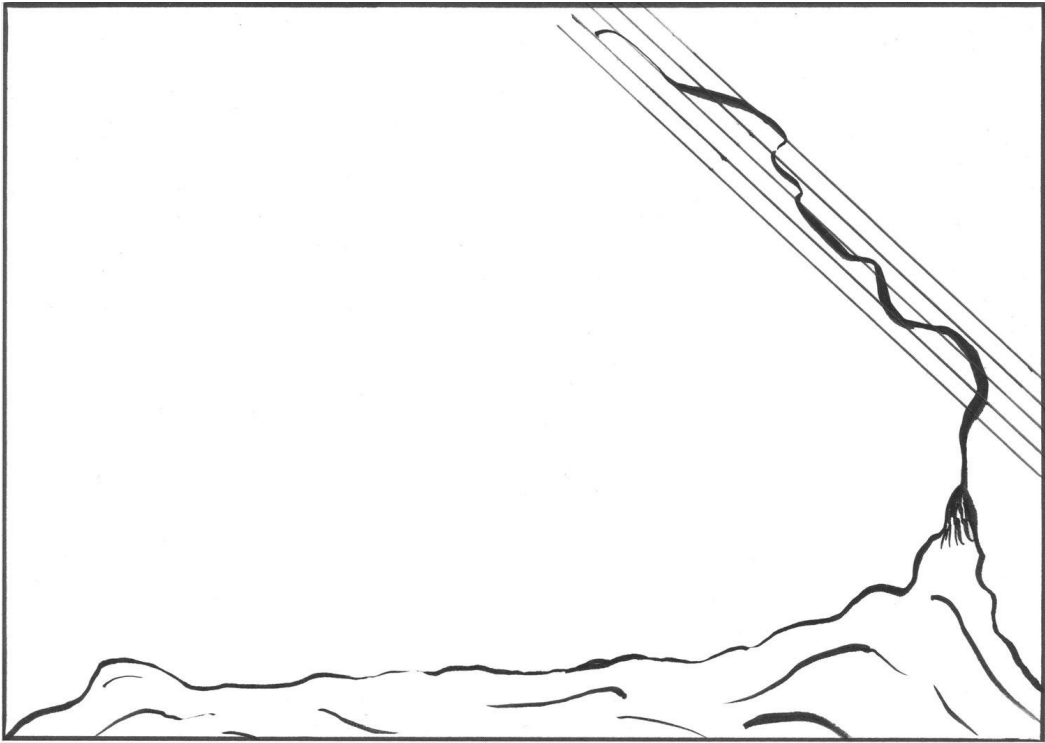
CBN

4 POSTCARDS

Anna Murray

More postcards can be found at <https://www.annamurraymusic.com>





RABR ANALYSIS - RATING DEGREES OF OPENNESS IN EXPERIMENTAL REPERTORY

Part 2

by Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen

Summary: "Openness" in experimental music is an imprecise notion. Works may be characterised according to Random Access and Broadness. The first describes whether, and how much, elements may be played independently of a fixed sequence. The second, how much latitude can exist in the interpretation of individual elements, if they can be discerned. Analysis of works by Chr. Wolff, Shiba Tetsu, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Stockhausen, Peter Schuback, Henrik Ehlend Rasmussen and Miles Davis exemplify different degrees, and combinations, of RA and BR. Even though a number of works may be "flexible" in ways that fall outside the scope of this method, it is hoped that it can contribute to an easier, and more differentiated, overview of the repertory in question.

HENRIK EHLAND RASMUSSEN: THE NATURE OF THE NOTES 2

The nature of the notes 2 *For an ensemble of melody instruments*

The musicians must stick to their individually chosen notes!

Start individually freely - notes in 2 sec. use very different pitch from the others, and play every note as an important manifested event

2 sec. Pause ad lib. 2 sec. etc.

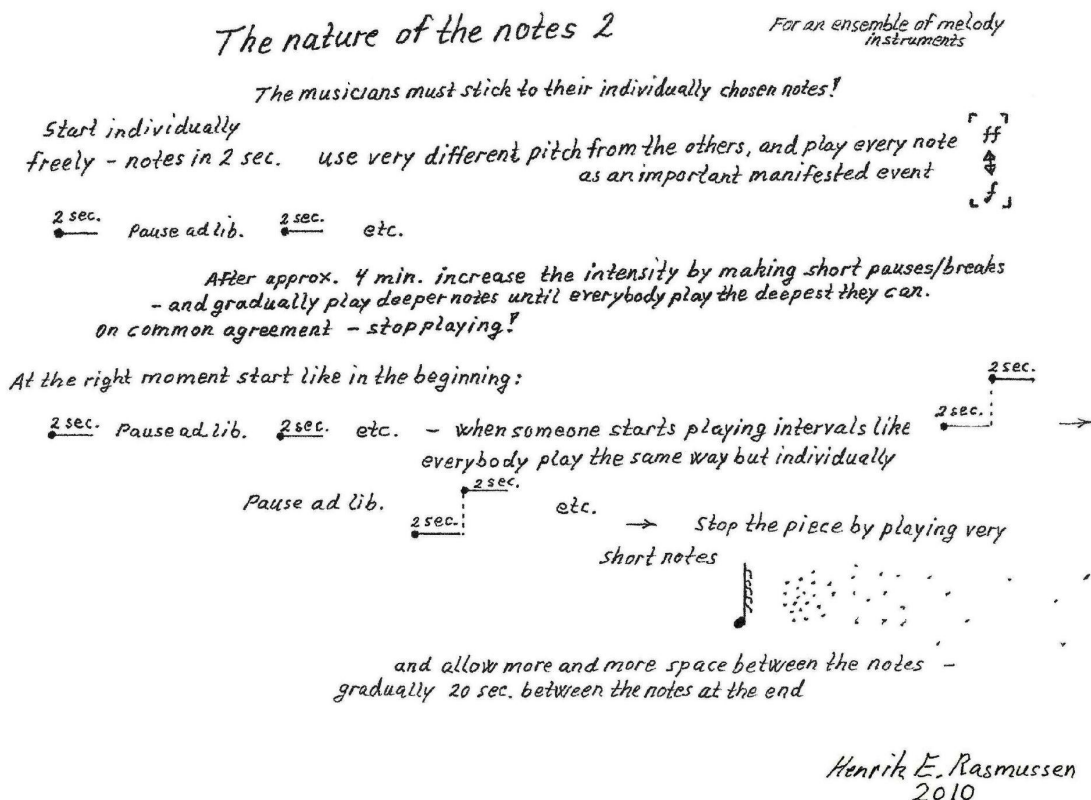
After approx. 4 min. increase the intensity by making short pauses/breaks - and gradually play deeper notes until everybody play the deepest they can. On common agreement - stop playing!

At the right moment start like in the beginning:

2 sec. Pause ad lib. 2 sec. etc. - when someone starts playing intervals like everybody play the same way but individually

Pause ad lib. 2 sec. etc. → Stop the piece by playing very short notes

and allow more and more space between the notes - gradually 20 sec. between the notes at the end



*Henrik E. Rasmussen
2010*

Fig.10. Henrik Ehlend Rasmussen: The Nature of the Notes 2. International Improvised Music Archive, shareware.

The illustration shows all of the published piece. As one can see reading the text, there is a development that includes points of synchronisation. They are defined by the statements: "After approx. 4 minutes..." - "At the right moment" and "when someone starts playing intervals like...", and "Stop the piece by... and allow more and more...". The material is reduced to single tones lasting 2 seconds, to combinations thereof and to extremely short notes. They combine with pauses in prescribed ways, and individually fixed pitches only vary after 4 minutes, at which time they gradually become deeper.

There are clear-cut elements, given from the composer as little models to be varied. They change into different ones, but there is no option to jump back and forth between them. Therefore there is no RA.

BR is limited by the reductionism and the obligations in some sections to achieve gradual common changes. However, the compositional framework is not tighter than allowing for improvisation to a higher degree than just a small one.²⁵

RABR assessment: there is a fixed sequence of sections in which an improvised use of defined elements is to take place. On this background, I rate the work as RABR [0,2].

25) The shifts/transitions are sometimes dependent on the context, demanding decisions of what is the "right moment" and when to take initiative to direct the music from single tones to intervals. These decisions have both individual and collective aspects, provided they are performed as was meant, without any single person in charge of triggering the change - see Bergstroem-Nielsen (2008) for a closer description. It can be discussed whether this makes the framework more flexible and thus pushes it slightly more in the direction of broadness in our sense (players are at liberty to finish the section the way they like, without being cut away), or whether it rather makes an additional demand of synchronisation. In any case, however, these conditions are only imposed at certain points (unlike Chr. Wolff's 1, 2 or 3 People) and often a relatively relaxed condition for improvisation can be expected.

BORDERLINE CASES

In this chapter, two works will be reviewed that present challenges to the idea of RABR analysis.

MILES DAVIS: So What (1959 and later versions)

(MED. SWG) **SO WHAT** 399.
- MILES DAVIS

(BASS LINE ON)

D-7 (TRIAN)

1. 2.

E \flat -7 (DOR.)

D.S. al f

SOLO IN ENTIRE FORM:
 D-7 | E \flat -7 | D-7
 16 | 8 | 8

Fig.11 Miles Davis (2016): So What, anonymous rendition in a handwriting suggesting The Real BOOK

A well-known evergreen, the work probably exists in innumerable recorded versions including remixes and cover versions. This analysis deals solely with how it was treated by the author and his band members. 5 recordings plus a sheet music version have been taken into consideration for this analysis (Davis 1959a, 1959b, 1964a, 1964b, 2016).

The *formal scheme* is the same for 1959a and 1959b:

Intro - 8 bars (slow, piano and bass tightly synchronised) Theme/form - 16 bars (first 8 repeated) over D minor + 8 over E flat minor + 8 bars D minor (ABA)

Solos over entire form without intro

Bass transition 8 bars

Theme again (see above) with fade-out or thinning out extending the last section.

A peculiar feature is the static harmonics, beginning with 16 bars - and if several rounds are played in a solo, there will be 24 bars of D minor in a row.

Constant features found in the recordings:

- All recordings keep faithfully to the 16+8+8 bar harmonic scheme where applicable.
- The instrumental sequence of solos always started with the trumpet of Davis, followed by saxophone(s), then piano - in 1959b with a concluding trumpet solo. Judging from this sample of four recordings, it seems there is a strict hierarchy in which the bandleader can take absolute priority, wind instruments are more important than others and bass as well as drum set receive no solos at all, even though their improvisatory contributions are also important throughout.

Variable features found in the recordings:

- arrangements were changing. 1959b had the piano introduction transcribed for brass band (presumably by the TV programme) - and after that time it was abolished. The bass transition at the end also disappeared. Tempos were faster in the later recordings.

- Durations of solos varied. The live recordings featured longer versions than 1959a and 1950b.

- Solos are always approached as individual creations - there is absolutely no imitation of earlier ones or "accretion", as far as their overall shape and coherence of details concerns.

The sheet music version:

See fig.10 above. It appears to be a stripped-down, simplified model of the piece and it would be advisable to supplement it by listening, which is probably also common usage.²⁶ The section based on E flat has a repetition sign which seems to be a direct error.

Discussion of openness aspects: the work takes a new shape at each recording. Part of this openness seems to rely on preconception - arrangement and sequence of solos. As there seems to be no spontaneously positioned solos decided during playing, there is no RA aspect (although it could, with other musicians who felt for it, likely appear). Duration of solos could conceivably vary out of the situation in a more direct way and thus be a dimension of BR. And as mentioned above, they strongly appear in contrast to the arranged elements as reserved places for free improvisation. The slow harmonic changes support this assumed openness.

26) It can be noted that the official website, milesdavis.com, has no references to written music.

The endings of the Herbie Hancock piano solos in both 1964 recordings make elegant and surprisingly-sounding gradual transformations of their material into the theme - in two different versions. This demands coordinated support from the others. Exactly this trait appears clearly pre-arranged but does not change the overall impression that even that part of the process was part of a freely flowing improvisation.²⁷

A hierarchy of instruments seems to determine whether the BR degree would be, say, 1 (slight, although indispensable) or 2 (decisively contributing) or maybe even 3 (very much contributing). The degree of virtuosity to easily fulfil the basic requirements of keeping sync with the bar scheme at strategic points also plays a role as to how "free" the musician can be.

As already stated, the object of this analysis was limited to selected recordings from 1959 and 1964 of one work. Other practises may well exist with different authors and at different times, including for how this work is re-performed.

RABR assessment: BR varies with the status of the musician and his/her place in a hierarchy of instruments. I would place the work between RABR [0,1] and RABR [0,3] depending on the musician's place in the hierarchies and on training. For comparisons of RABR gradings, the average of [0,2] can be used with some reservation.

27) There is in any case a process of "landing", that is, arriving at the right place harmonically and metrically after the solo. Here, just a motivic aspect has been added. Cf. the analysis of Wolff and the complexity encountered there.

EARLE BROWN: December 1952 from Folio (1952, publ. 1961)

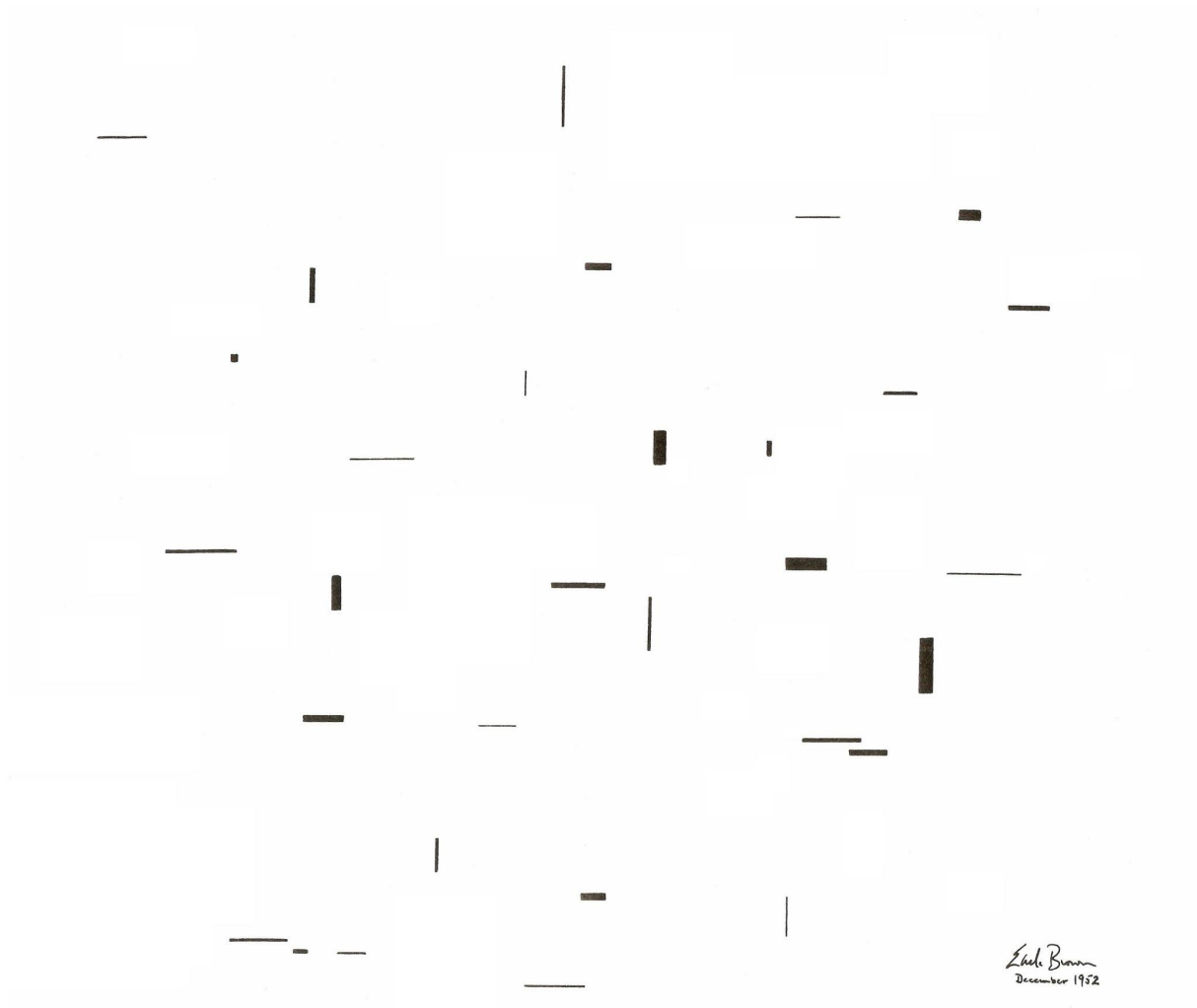


Fig.12 Earle Brown: December 1952 playing score from Folio. Copyright 1961 by Associated Music Publishers.

Among graphic scores, this is in all probability the most cited at all in articles and books.

The instruction text reads as follows in its entirety:²⁸

"The composition may be performed in any direction from any point in the defined space for any length of time and may be performed from any of the four rotational positions in any sequence. In a performance utilising only three dimensions as active (vertical, horizontal, and time), the thickness of the event indicates the relative intensity and/or (where applicable instrumentally) clusters. Where all four dimensions are active, the relative thickness and length of events are functions of their conceptual position on a plane perpendicular to the vertical and horizontal plane of the score. In the latter case all of the characteristics of sound and their relationships to each other are subject to continual transformation and modification. It is primarily intended that performances be made directly from this graphic "implication" (one for each performer) and that no further preliminary defining of the events, other than agreements to total performance time, take place. Further defining of the events is not prohibited however, provided that the imposed determinate system is implicit in the score and in these notes".

This text is preceded by a "note and sketch" describing the composer's vision of a three- or four-dimensional musical space for the performer to move within or to set in motion.

28) It seems, however, that in earlier times a number of writers have not been aware of the instructions in the published edition and have perceived the work as free graphics for any kind of use. With the recent academic interest in experimental music, this picture has changed - see my overview of literature in Bergstroem-Nielsen (2002ffA) and (2002ffB). Storesund (2017) provides a brilliant practical introduction for musicians.

As I understand the instructions, one must in all cases read the picture in a freely chosen, yet systematic manner, letting up and down on the paper correspond to pitch and letting thickness correspond to dynamics, maybe to clusters on keyed instruments. An advanced way would be to imagine the picture or the player in motion so that the relative position of elements to each other changes. It is essential that the elements are perceived as single elements which are clearly differentiated from each other according to "vertical, horizontal, and time", and performance should first and foremost take place directly from playing the picture, with only principles, not details, being fixed in advance.

Looking for the RA aspect, which are then the elements one might permute, thinking of a basic two-dimensional version? An amount of analytical activity from the performer is required here. One could simply see each sound as accessible in the RA way. Or maybe lines or rows could be freely chosen along the way. It would also matter whether one allows for choosing one element several times and for leaving out some - albeit, as I understand it, within the "systematic manner". One could also choose a system leaving no RA at all, but in the interest of mapping possibilities, I will consider it to be of medium value.

If more than three dimensions are to be employed, and one wishes to activate the imagined "plane perpendicular to the vertical and horizontal plane of the score" and practise "continual transformation and modification", then it seems one should assume an imaginary axis going into space and decide how to undertake a "journey" through them while reading and performing.

As we can see, much attention to the details and how they relate to each other is required by the instructions. Indiscriminate sound masses have no place here. And as elements are to be carefully weighed so as to balance together with all the others, how much broadness is left for the performer in their interpretation - in other words, how much arbitrariness could be allowed in, say, one single sound? For keyboard instruments, there is some variety of ways one cluster can be realised, for instance, how tight - whether chromatic or other. For melody instruments, this variety does

not exist, but even if a somewhat definite placement of pitch, for instance, between "highest" and "lowest", is aimed for, then the actual pitch may be chosen in performance to hit some intervallic combinations rather than others, and there may be several solutions to this - also an element of chance (applying to several dimensions) which can influence subsequent choices. Importantly, the dimension of timbre is not at all mentioned in the instructions. There is an open field here - timbral variety could be accomplished in traditional ways, for instance by a voice singing different vowels, with bowed string instruments placing their bow differently, or just by alternating instruments. With the considerable developments since the composition year of 1952 in extended techniques and electronics, the field expands further.²⁹ Considering the last part of the instruction stressing that playing should primarily take place from the graphic score itself, there is in any case a general limit to how fixed versions can be.

If this piece appeared a "borderline case" for the RABR method, it seems to be so because of the openness to, or necessity for, arranging or at least decision-taking before the performance. But if we imagine this as having taken place already, then it emerges that both random access and broadness aspects can exist within certain limits.

RABR assessment: On the background of the above, I rate this work to be RABR [2,2].

29) Historic considerations taking pointillistic, serialist music of the fifties into account as well as the impression of the black/white print could suggest a performance which does not indulge in many contrasting colours. But again, there is no constraint that performances should sound "historic".

SUMMARY OF EXAMPLES WITH SOME ADDITIONAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS

Looking back at the examples treated so far, the table below provides overviews both regarding RA and BR properties, and includes indications of what led to the evaluation in question.

RA descending		BR descending	
GALLERY EXAMPLES		GALLERY EXAMPLES	
[4,3] Wolff: Stones	Texture and soundmaking both have prescriptions one can alternate between ad libitum	[1,4] Schuback: Panurge	Graphic symbols for ad libitum interpretation.
[4,2] Tetsu: Hand Piece	New sections of circumscribed categories can be generated anytime by cueing	[4,3] Wolff: Stones	Strongly ambiguous descriptions of sound textures within a dichotomy.
[4,0] Wolff: For 1,2 or 3 People	Pages can be played in any order and elements can be played in "any convenient sequence	[2,3] Karlheinz Stockhausen: Connection (Verbindung)	Elements are described ambiguously with verbal means, yet they must be differentiated from each other.

RA descending		BR descending	
GALLERY EXAMPLES		GALLERY EXAMPLES	
[3,0] Roman Haubenstein-Ramati: Interpolation	Labyrinth offering many choices for the first section. Second part offers unlimited choices.	[4,2] Tetsu: Hand Piece	Material is generated from free improvisation and may be subjected to constraints through attempted recallings
[2,3] Karlheinz Stockhausen: Connection (Verbindung)	Second part of the piece prescribes elements to be mixed freely.	[0,2] HR The Nature of the Notes 2	Clear frames are set for the kinds of material / figures to be played, but they leave room for improvising details.
[1,4] Schuback: Panurge	Cycles to be played with some freedoms of choice.	[4,0] Wolff: For 1,2 or 3 People	Even if there are no clefs and many ambiguous symbols, strong sight-reading obligations are placed on the musicians.
[0,2] Rasmussen: The Nature of the Notes 2	Fixed sequence of sections.	[3,0] Roman Haubenstein-Ramati: Interpolation	Optical notation with fixed details.
BORDERLINE CASES		BORDERLINE CASES	
[2,2] Brown 52	Choices appear to be possible within performance of the score in a "systematic manner"	[2,2] Brown 52	Within a given conceptual framework, details may be carried out freely.

RA descending		BR descending	
BORDERLINE CASES		BORDERLINE CASES	
[0,2] Davis	As presented by Davis and his band, there seems to be no practice for influencing the formal arrangement during performance.	[0,2] Davis	There is considerable freedom in the details within formal and harmonic requirements, depending on training and place in the hierarchy.

Table 1: Overview of examples

After analysis of those works placed as "borderline cases", it appeared that Brown was less problematic than first assumed. While descriptions of how to perform the piece are highly ambiguous, they were found to lead to results that could then be defined in outline. Since the final performing plan relies on the performer, an estimate of relevant RABR degrees had to be employed with some latitude. Investigating Davis revealed that the piece could only undergo this kind of analysis with certain reservations. This will be discussed further in the concluding section.

The works exemplify all degrees of both RA and BR, except degree 1 of BR. For illustration of this degree, an instance could be found in Hans Werner Henze's *El Cimarron* which uses an ensemble with a singing and reciting soloist. Part of the material is described as "improvised passage suggested by the curve". These curves often have vivid movements, and observed closely, many details must be followed in proportion to the time limit. They may last 10 seconds or less. In this way the sight-reading obligation is considerable, yet there is markedly more room for spontaneous impulses during performance than when following traditional notation. On the other hand, the situation is much more fixed than in the BR 2 Rasmussen and Tetsu examples above. One additional example of BR 1 could be playing of jazz

standard melodies (not free solos as in the Davis examples) which allow for some free variation and embellishment.

New developments in notation were crucial in the development of the "classical avantgarde". Notation devices offering degrees of BR 2 and higher are much more diverse and versatile than the present small gallery may suggest.³⁰

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The two axes in RABR analysis, Random Access and Broadness and the degrees they can assume, have now been illustrated by examples. This should make it possible to gather a concrete idea of how this form of analysis designates the repertoire in question. Being the author, I cannot evaluate the usefulness of the method from the outside, but it does seem to me that some complexity reduction has been achieved in distinguishing between the two kinds of openness and degrees of them.

BR is closely connected to the expansion of musical material into all kinds of sound in classical and jazz avantgarde as well, and the BR perspective in jazz is moreover connected to an unbroken tradition of improvisation. Looking historically from a meta-perspective, the emancipation of the individual and human subjectivity since Enlightenment was an essential background, followed up further by tendencies to loosen up hierarchies since the nineteen fifties.³¹ One could say that *RA breaks away from fixed narratives*. However, it may be valuable to keep in mind, as Haubenstock-Ramati can remind us, that a "fixed narrative" is only one limited form of music structure - the variation form within the classical tradition also extends back in time and represents diverse elements, each potentially being equally close, or

30) See Bergstrøm-Nielsen ((2002ffA and (2002ffB), categories E1 and E2, for lists of literature providing examples.

31) Sancho-Velazques (2001) elaborates breathtakingly on several key aspects of this through the history of improvisation during the nineteenth century and its dependence on social and political tendencies.

distant, to a central model. *BR breaks away from fixed details* - that is, the tendency in classical music to write "everything" down.³² These changes affect what Eco called the "intellectual authority" of the composer.

The performance focus within music research is still a new one when connected to music works having a composer.³³ Works may be "flexible" in ways that do not affect performance,³⁴ and, to be sure, RABR aspects do not exist in isolation. Yet updates seem inevitable as to recognising the creative role of the musician, especially within "classical" avantgarde - not least in order to let a historical heritage come alive by combining the insights and virtuosities of composer as well as performer roles, even if more persons start to mix these roles more informally. Research into free improvisation is a great advance, but free improvisation cannot stand alone, if the resources of Western experimental improvisation is to be thrown light at in a comprehensive way.

The RABR analysis proceeds chiefly from an eclectic performer's view, focusing not only on what the musician can do for the composer, but also on what the composer can do for the musician! Choices may depend on habits, training and, maybe not least, on the moment's need for fresh inspiration. Classical musicians wishing for guidance can for instance keep to the low degrees especially of BR, and improvisors who will only now and then accept to play a preconceived piece at all also have good chances with high BR values, avoiding what they might perceive as "invasive" in Fell's terms.

32) Eco 1989 points out that learned reading practice could involve a "polyphonic" juxtaposition of different points of view, such as literal, moral, allegorical and analogical (p.5) - an openness to possible different meanings of the text.

33) Some important works are Müller (1994) and Storesund (2017). See also the category G3.1 in Bergstroem-Nielsen (202ffB) which lists some more, recent works of this kind from the growing literature.

34) Cf. the mutations observed through the different versions of "So What", cf. the various uses of improvisation described by Polaschegg (2007) and not least how musicians may take over part of the composers' job (Porfiriadis 2016).

Overviewing several dimensions was a primary idea for the RABR method. When both kinds of openness are present, there is a place for the "creative co-creator" in Gresser's term.³⁵ However, works without segmentation can have a BR value assigned and co-influence on structure may very well exist even if not measurable by an RA approach. And works with fixed details can be assigned a RA degree.

Examples can be seen as starting-points for further orientation into the RABR perspective. One cannot of course generalise from them to the total production of their authors or conclude from the present article that those mentioned are more important than others.

Which are the limitations of this analysis form? The method was inspired from "classical avantgarde" and based on properties which have been important parts of its development - so important that they seem capable of being generalised as dimensions. These dimensions embody ideals of equality in creative production and of performers being able to make radical choices. This set of notions may in principle differ highly from those of jazz musicians, or of other orally based traditions. As we have seen, there were reservations concerning Davis, not out of a lack of BR aspect, but because both training and musicians' place in a hierarchy and its relatively fixed roles mattered.³⁶ This applies to much jazz and to other popular music forms and must be taken into account. It is imaginable, however, that RA also could occur in free versions of a piece like the one analysed, determining solos during performance by cueing or simply by musical action.

35) See above in the second section about backgrounds of the RABR method.

36) The training aspect in sight-reading also matters much in Wolff's For 1, 2 or 3 people.

Apart from the determination of RA and BR numbers, *further matters may be described for additional clarification:*

- Are there few or many RA elements to choose from? This may, but does not always have to, affect the degree of RA. However, the situation of having many or few elements may feel different for the performer. The more elements, the more specification of possible choices - you may compare the analysis of Wolff: Stones and Tetsu with very few elements - and Wolff: For 1, 2 or 3 people with many elements.

- How long or short time spans are associated with BR and is the context of other tasks complex or simple? The shorter the time span and the more complexity, the more the openness can feel limited for the performer - compare for instance Wolff: For 1 2 or 3 people with Schuback's piece.

- To which degree does a set of RABR numbers express an average - in other words, how homogenous or heterogenous are these two kinds of openness during the performance process and through possible different versions, as observed in the Stockhausen, Haubenstock-Ramati, Tetsu, Davis and Brown examples?

- If the work requires arranging or decision-taking prior to performance: how do choices taken narrow down or expand the degrees as observed in the example of Davis and Brown?

How accurate and accessible is the method? It is based on individual assessment, although informed by comparative insight. Assessing appears not to be a simple task, it requires a thorough understanding of the work's functioning, all relevant circumstances for possible version should be taken into account for the analysis, and some further comments may supplement the number assignment. There can be no full objectiveness, as criteria cannot be fully exact and works may present highly individual properties, and as decisions may have to be taken regarding how to

understand the directions of a work. It can provide orientation, indicate whether much or little and in which respect a work is open.

RABR places its systematic focus exclusively on performance and its co-creative opportunities, keeping its focus on what happens in real time. Being two-dimensional and operational, it goes beyond vague concepts like "freedom", "openness" etc. and attempts to make possible an outlook which can be both comprehensive and specific as required, whether one searches as a performer or a researcher.

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SMALL NOTES



“I’m a composer, musician and artist specialising in graphic scores, collaborative processes and improvisation”, Anna Murray writes at the social site ko-fi:

<https://ko-fi.com/annamurray> . At her homepage <https://www.annamurraymusic.com> there is a collection of graphic postcards like those which can be found at the beginning of this issue.

Deborah Carruthers is another composer featuring graphic scores on the net. About her score “reading between the lines” she writes:

It is not a free improvisation.

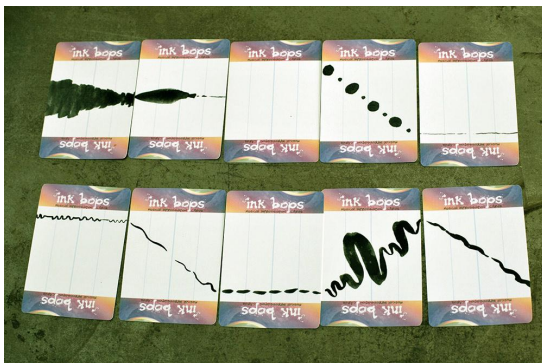
Structured improvisations provide a framework to examine ideas, themes, and sound.

See the video at

<https://www.deborahcarruthers.com/> under “More” in the menu.



Ellen Burr, flutist and composer, declares “Ahh... Improvisation is my pride and joy” followed by considerations of how to teach it - and showcases her “Ink Bops Improvisational Cards” at <https://ellenburr.com/improvisation/>



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