

IM-OS

Improvised Music - Open Scores

Issue 1, Spring 2019

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Preface

Welcome to our readers!

"Open to Whom and to What?" is the title of an article from 1986 by Christian Wolff, American pioneer of openness in music scores. It analyses 3 different music examples. But the last words about this theme were not said in that article. Wolff's question is a brilliant prompter for looking at the abundance of open scores and their different kinds. Open scores have acquired a tradition of their own. But we believe there is a need for more information, for more exchange, for more thought-provoking and creativity-provoking *disagreements*. We have taken inspiration from the grand historical journal *Source Magazine* (1967-73), among other things.

For *whom* are open scores open? For musicians who seek something less restricted than the traditional repertoire, including contemporary music in standard notation - for non-musicians who are curious enough to try - for educators - for musicians who envisage opportunities for a niche career in the concert market - for composers and other artists wishing to expand traditional idioms - etc. It's like cooking: you can relate to it on many levels. You are welcome, all of you - we hope to create a forum to both broaden the interest and heighten the level of ambition.

For *what* are they open? For more sounds and structures. For human interaction. For not-predetermined processes, regardless whether they are called automatism, improvisation, intuitive music or something else.

We plan to issue this journal with approx. 20 pages 3 times a year. Use us, share us, write us!

Our heartfelt thanks to the composers that allowed us to quote and publish their work here.

CBN

Open Scores - what is this? A first aid kit for the study of "non-standard" notations.

Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen

Visual Impro Prompters

You can take absolutely any picture, or series of pictures, and play from it without any other regulation than your inspiration of the moment and do it together or alone. However, some composers like to make pictures that look like free visual art but have been intended for playing.

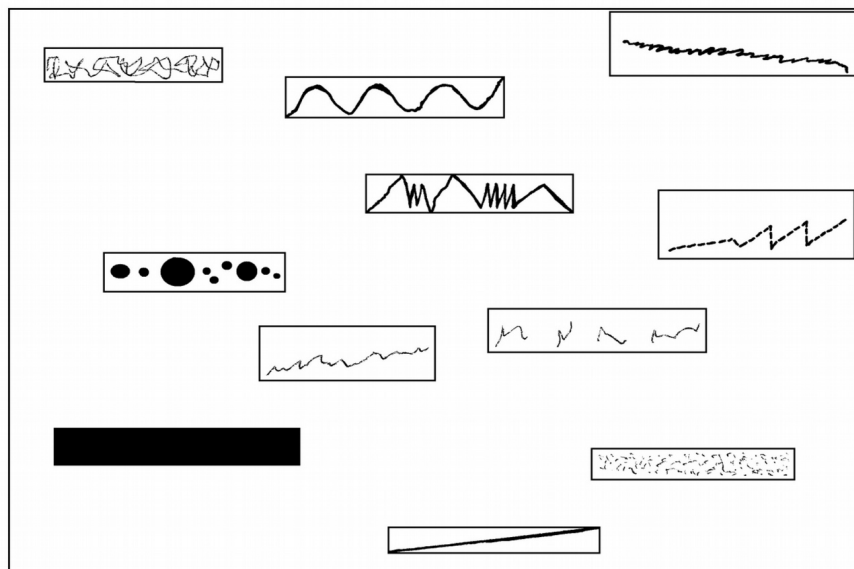


Fig. 1 - Alexis Porfiriadis (GR): *Graphic 8* from "DROPS FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLE" (2008-09). CC BY-NC-ND licence.



Fig. 2 - Erik Christensen (DK): *NECESSARY CONSEQUENCES OF UNFORESEEN STRUCTURAL CHANGES* (1977)

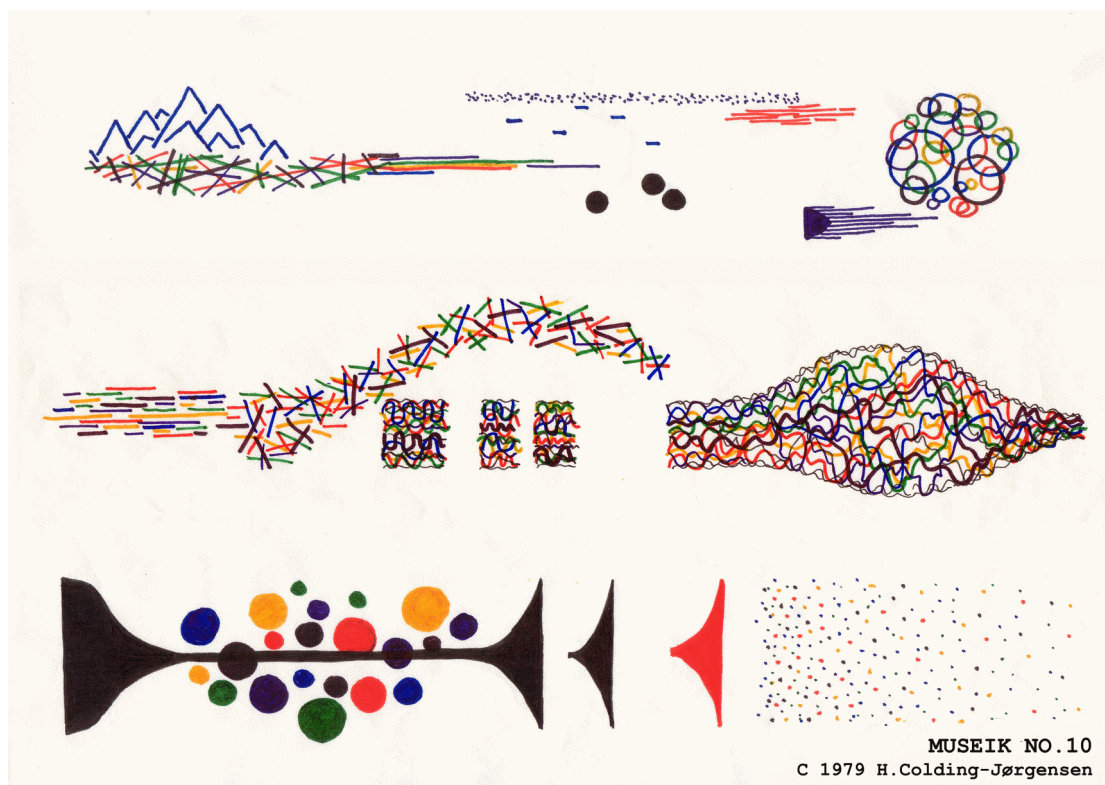
These could be called "graphic scores" in a pure form - simply pictures to be played from. Playing could in many cases take place without further agreements of any kind. These cited happen to have some minimal indications about its duration - the first is part of a larger work and is supposed to last 2 minutes. The second should have a precise time-frame fixed beforehand.

Did you notice the title of Fig.2? Titles may greatly influence playing if they exist, as may verbal instructions. So these examples already exhibit a little mixing of visuals with verbal language. But looking to the music, especially the second is free enough to make it unpredictable how it would sound when interpreted by different musicians. In all cases, their use is open to all kinds of musicians.

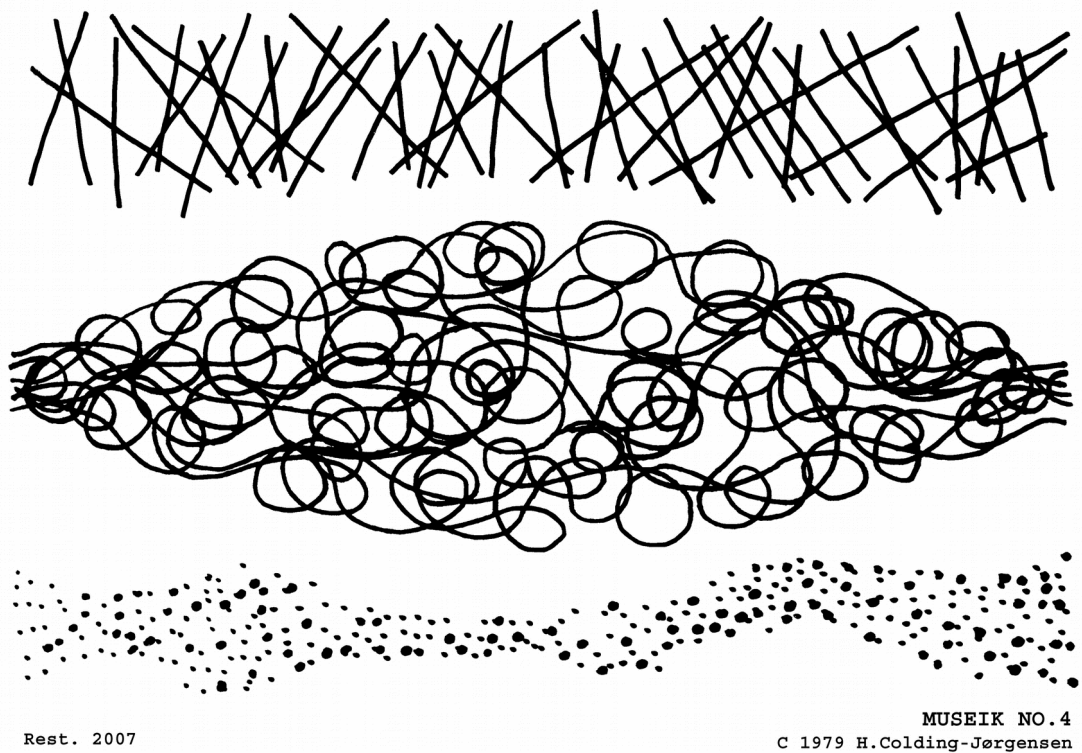
Pictures to be played freely are so to speak a "classic" form of open scores, like folk art. Their practise is effective in inspiring musicians into different moods, easy to have fun with and emerges over and over again everywhere.

Sign systems

Look again at Fig.1. Perhaps some elements will frequently be perceived by musicians as more "light" or "heavy" than others, the shape of lines might become reflected in moving pitches, and many little dots may become many little sounding particles. Working out such parallels can be found in many cases, with or without including explanations of symbols. It could look like a kind of visual language having some very basic and common characteristics. Fig. 3a shows a composition which was with a view to this. No verbal description of elements is given, but instead 9 different sheets provide selected elements in pure cultivation for rehearsing - or they could also be performed for themselves. 3b and 3c are some of these.



(3a)



(3b)

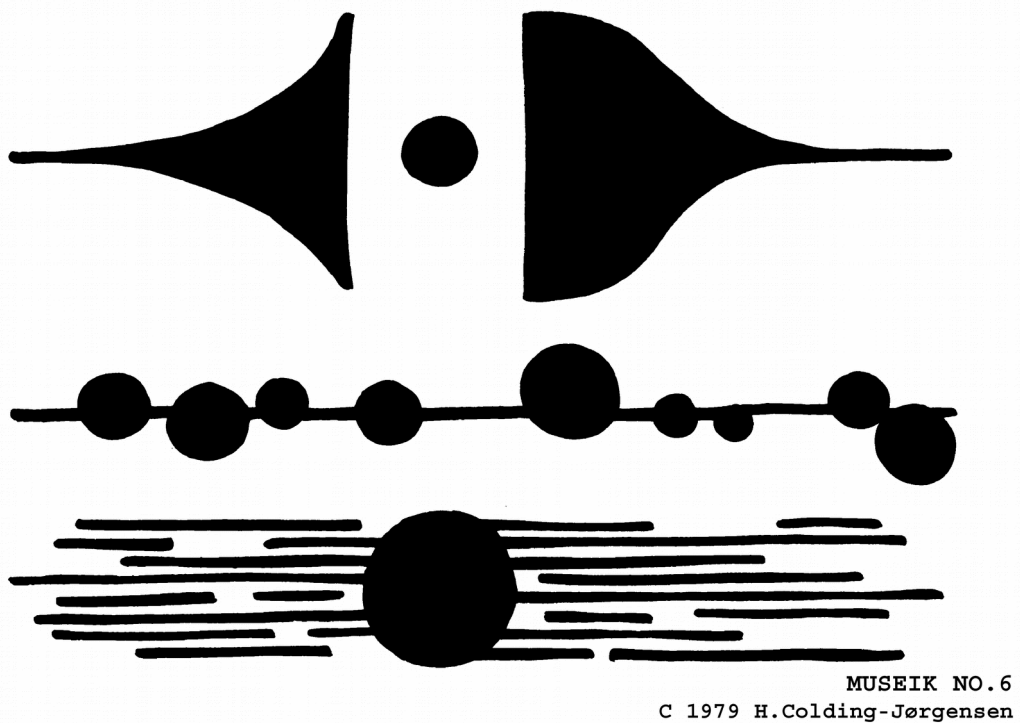


Fig. 3a - 3b - 3c From Henrik Colding-Jørgensen (DK): MUSEIK (1979, digital version 2007)

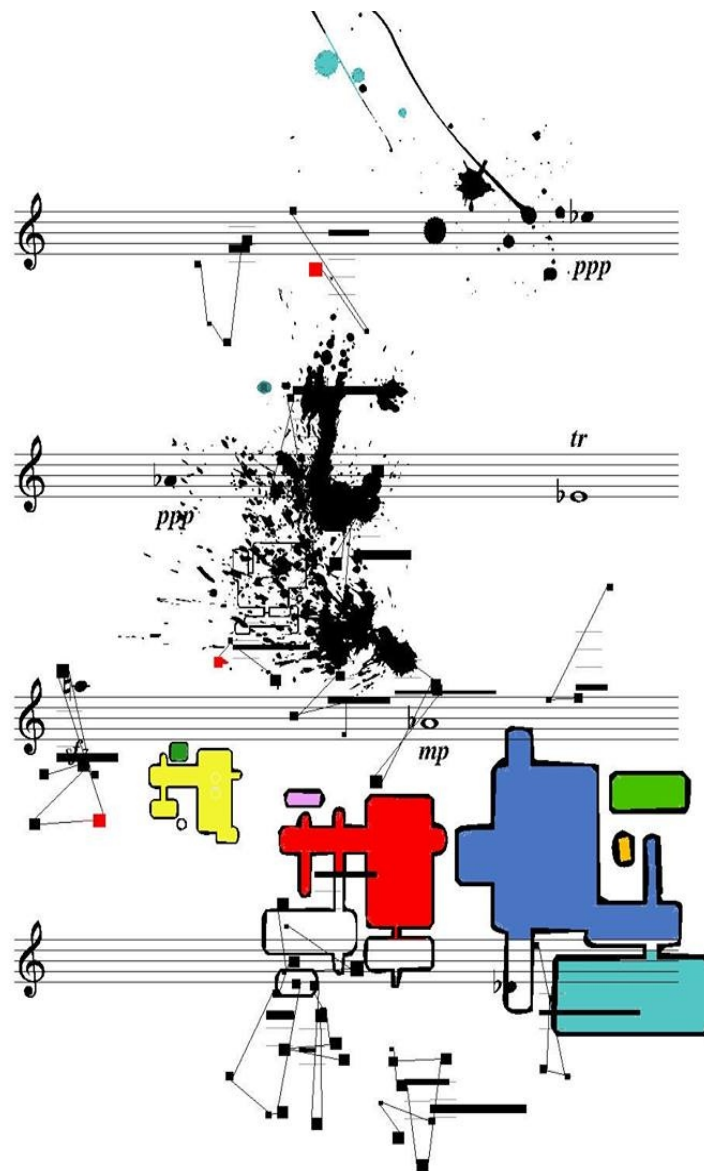


Fig. 4 Jukka-Pekka Kervinen (FIN): *Untitled for any solo instrument* (2017).

Often, composers make visual fun with the standard notation or take elements from it to some use. The musician may get some concrete indications from these "notes", but will often have to add a lot from her own imagination.

When composers wish for specific sounds or kinds of events to happen, they may invent special signs. Sometimes they can just add a smaller or bigger explanation list of symbols to their drawing. Whatever has been the case, in Fig. 4 Jukka-Pekka Kervinen explicitly assigns the black or white colour of noteheads and lengths of square noteheads to different durations. Contrasting to this he states that "Other graphic symbols are improvised, any manner you like". The musician is not to play traditionally from beginning to end either, but is supposed to jump around and play "events" (however defined) one after another freely.

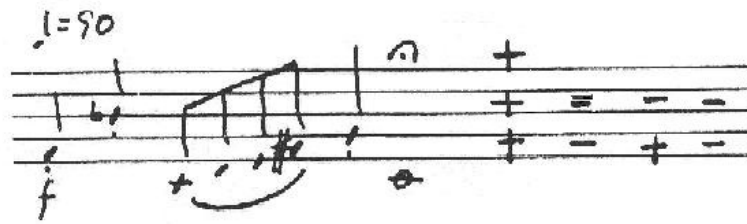


Fig. 5 Jørgen Lekfeldt (DK): *Springtime* (1977), excerpt

In Lekfeldt's *Foraar*, the melodic motif is to be repeated using the "plus-minus" notation system known from Stockhausen. First repetition is to have an increase in three parameters, as for instance tempo, dynamics, modification of timbre. Next repetition is to feature no change in one selected parameter and a decrease in another – etcetera.

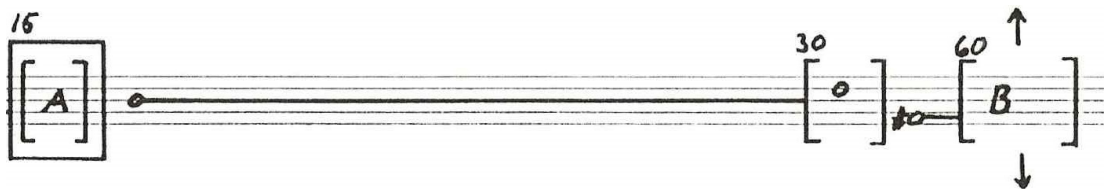


Fig. 6 Jørgen Lekfeldt (DK): *ARUA* (1977), excerpt. © www.edition-s.dk

Fig. 5 starts with a box with an "A" between square brackets. "A" means to use only untraditional sounds for the given instrument, square brackets mean an event ad libitum, and the closed box means a markedly individualistic way of playing. While numbers above boxes indicate duration in seconds, duration of the long sustained tones like the next one depends on the length taken up in centimeters on the paper. Then the tone inside square brackets is to be a central tone, together with other tones and sounds ad libitum. Finally, the "B" event inside square brackets. "B" means sound producing anywhere in the space with other means than the usual instrument.

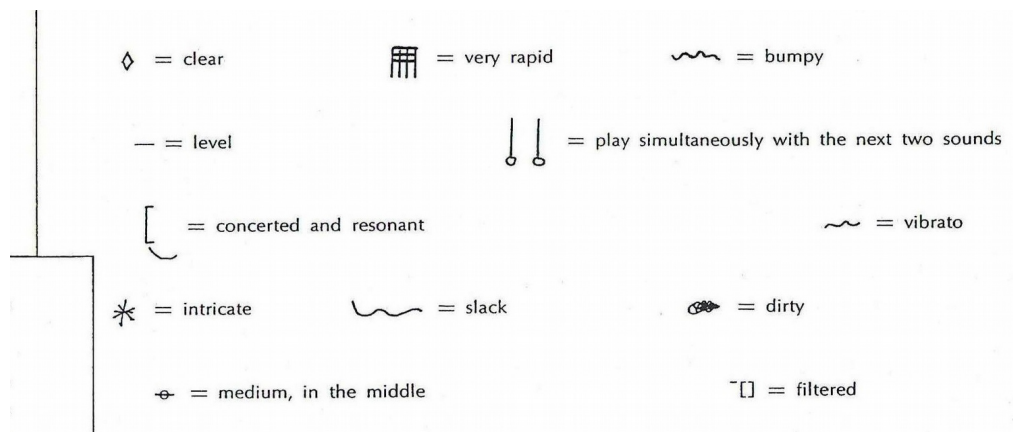


Fig. 7. Christian Wolff (USA): *Edges*, excerpt. © 1969 by C.F.Peters Corporation.

Fig. 7 shows just half of the explanation of symbols from Edges which also consists of one more page with the symbols spread out and instructions. They demand players to consider many signs together at any one time. This may sound demanding for players, and so it is. It becomes apparent that open scores may in some cases be very easy to approach and feel relaxing to play - and some may also require tough practise. The same thing applies to Stockhausen's plus-minus-notated pieces (like Kurzwellen and Spiral) which feature transformations to be carried out in 4 different parameters simultaneously.

Linear or non-linear?

Notice on Fig. 7 the sign for "play simultaneously with the next two sounds". This demands the player to interact directly with other players. In other words, the musical event is not defined by its sound, but by a way to act. Since Chr. Wolff, "interdependence" or interaction has become a possible focus in open scores. This is logical, because in untraditional music being improvised players must build up their common musical product by listening to each other. In the so-called game pieces, this is very obvious. There are rules, like in sports games, but there is not a pre-determined "story" or narrative. The description of the composition may be a formula instead of a timeline. The composition is a non-linear one. When playing from free graphics freely, this non-linearity is also in action: players look around in the picture in their own ways, and even if the piece has a certain character which might have been influenced by the graphics, the process is unpredictable.

HAND PIECE (WITH MEMORY FUNCTION)

A. Cues:

1. Hand down --> change music
2. Show 1-3 then indicate head --> memorize music (no change in the music which is played)
3. Show 1-3 then hand down --> recall and play memorized music
4. Show 5 then hand down --> End

B. Rules

- all (non) instruments are OK
- all members can show cue whenever
- on every cue, at the moment when hand down, next music section starts

Notes. Cues start by showing 1, 2 3 or 4 fingers. After the other players have noticed this, in cue number 2 and 3 one more number is given. "Show 1-3" etc. means: show one of the numbers 1, 2 or 3 with corresponding number of fingers. The piece lasts until someone gives the "end" cue.

Shiba Tetsu

Fig. 8 Shiba Tetsu (JAP): Hand Piece (with memory function) (around 1995)

Shiba Tetsu popularised the idea of game pieces in Japan, having been inspired from those by John Zorn. *Cobra* (1984) is an especially famous one. While this piece takes special pleasure in complicating the rules as much as possible at all and demands a hard and long rehearsal process, Tetsu's games are of the utmost simplicity and thus apt for educational activity.

The Role of Language

Stones

Make sounds with stones, draw sounds out of stones, using a number of sizes and kinds (and colors); for the most part discretely; sometimes in rapid sequences. For the most part striking stones with stones, but also stones on other surfaces (inside the open head of a drum, for instance) or other than struck (bowed, for instance, or amplified). Do not break anything.

Christian Wolff

Fig. 9 Chr. Wolff (USA): "Stones" from "Prose Collection" (1969-71)

Fig. 9 features gentle, yet also to some extent definite instructions. Note especially the expression "for the most part ... but also". This outlines some statistical proportion between the two kinds of action. Moreover, it also seems to invite the musician to give her overall attention to when and how much each kind is used. "If-then" relations are also made possible - they would be difficult or impossible to describe with purely graphical means. Infinite ways to describe both sound material, processes and complex relations exist with language.

A yet different way of using language is to use it to acquaint yourself with each others' way of perceiving the piece in question when rehearsing. Or maybe to even make some agreements concerning how to play. If one is not working on an existing piece but creating something new together, then an orally based piece can emerge. This may be effective, but the joy of sharing your plans are also worth considering, taking a little more effort to write it down.

Coda

Summing up a few keywords:

notational material	kind of process
free graphics sign systems verbal language	linear (narrative) non-linear (open; indeterminate; formula; game)

Below is one of my own pieces. You should by now be able to figure out for yourself how it fits into the table!

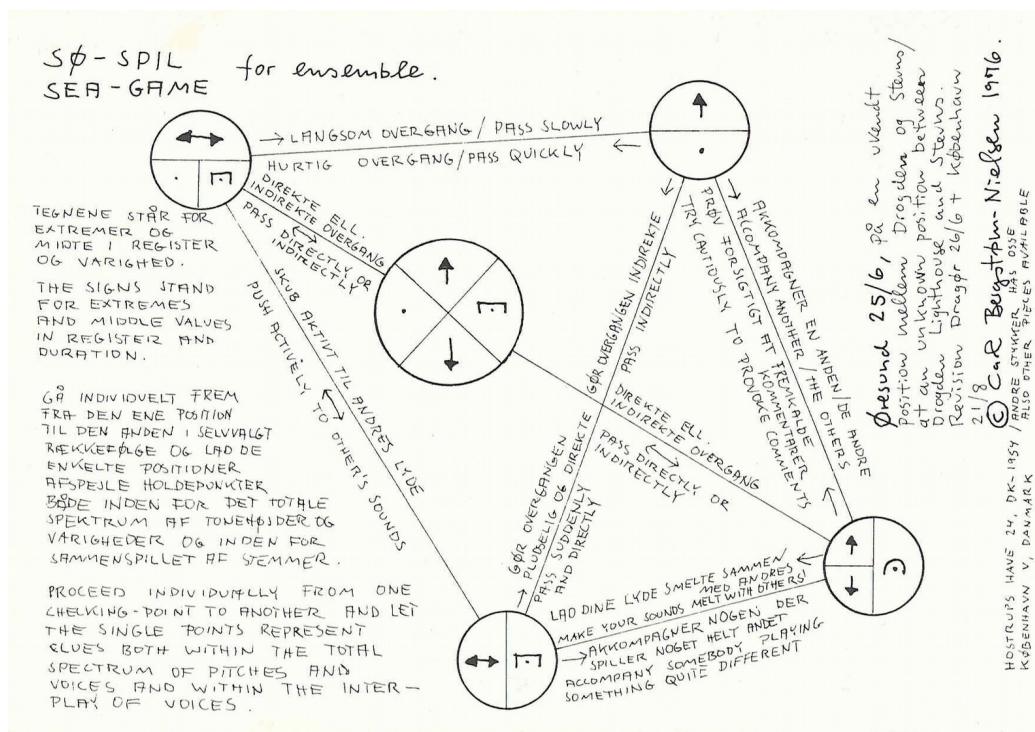


Fig. 10. Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen (DK): Sea-Game (1976).

Working with open scores over the years has given me the special pleasure of enjoying many different interpretations by different people, even through changing times and musical fashions. When I started to practise this kind of music back in the seventies in the Group for Intuitive Music in Copenhagen, we alternately played each others' pieces (and those by others) - a great way to deal in depth with each others' artistic visions and get to know each other in an ensemble.

I find it thought-provoking that the art of music differs from painting and writing by the fact that several musicians often perform together. Re-discovering the art of music composition, I believe, is a matter of inventing plans for creative action which, although it may start from someone's definite idea, is unfolded in teamwork.

Some sources and general literature

Sources of examples to be freely downloaded in full: Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 and 8 from IIMA (see URL below). Fig. 3 from <http://www.henrik.coldingj.dk/hcj-kompositioner/museik/museik.htm>. Fig. 9 from www.frogpeak.org/. Fig. 10 from www.archive.org

Bergstroem-Nielsen, Carl: Experimental improvisation practise and notation 1945-1999 (2002ff). An annotated bibliography. See also Addenda 2000- .

Cage, John (ed.): Notations. New York (Something Else Press), 1969.

Cox, Christopher: Every Sound You Can Imagine (2008). Online at IIMA:
www.intuitivemusic.dk/iima/cox_es.htm.

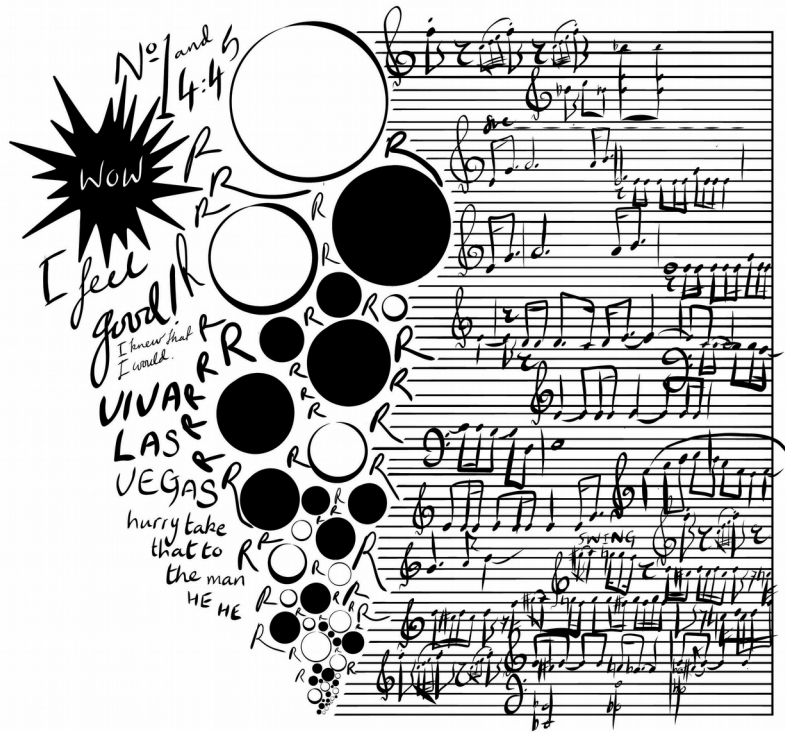
International Improvised Music Archive, IIMA. www.intuitivemusic.dk/iima
Compositions and texts.

Johnson, Roger (ed.): Scores. An anthology of New Music. USA (Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.), 1981.

Sauer, Theresa (ed): Notations 21, New York (Mark Batty Publishers), 2009.
Anthology of new kinds of notations from many composers internationally.

Amusement Arcade

Jacob Thompson-Bell



From "Selected Transcription Scores 2015-17" comprising 12 scores. According to the author's preface, Amusement Arcade depicts "a cacophony of music, clattering two pences, and children hoping to double their money".

Changeable Spring

Johan Toft

"Changeable Spring"

For 3-12 musicians, duration 7-12 minutes
Spring 95, composer copyright: Johan Toft

2nd edition
English version
Sheet # 1

Subtitle: Sun, wind, rain, snow, thunder, hail, clouds

- Graphic symbols are not to be played strictly say counting/playing each dot.
- Symbols are to be interpreted according to development and duration of the whole piece.
- Attention is paid to color and attitude of symbols.
- Attention is paid to vertical lines, indicating each groups' moment to enter or exit the sound picture.
- Turn this sheet to study and practise exercises for this category of notation.

Group 1: A cluster of red and yellow dots in the first column, followed by a red wavy line in the second column, and a blue wavy line in the third column.

Group 2: A blue wavy line in the first column, a yellow smiley face in the second column, and a red wavy line in the third column.

Group 3: A blue wavy line in the first column, a blue wavy line in the second column, and a yellow cone shape in the third column.

Group 1: A red wavy line in the first column, a yellow smiley face in the second column, and a blue wavy line in the third column.

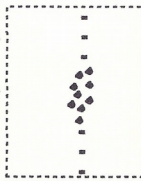
Group 2: A blue wavy line in the first column, a blue wavy line in the second column, and a red wavy line in the third column.

Group 3: A blue wavy line in the first column, a blue wavy line in the second column, and a yellow cone shape in the third column.

Exercises upon performing graphic notated music

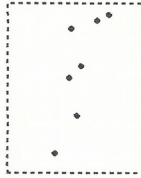
- Exercises are recommended as "warming up" rehearsals upon performing graphic notated music.
- Graphic notated music indicates the character of intuitive music, meaning a sound process where each musician intensively must play partly from within him/herself, partly according to co-players.
- Musicians are recommended to be silent 30 sec. before and after implementing an exercise.
- Being an exercise, musicians should pursue an average duration of each exercise to say 3-4 minutes.
- After each exercise, musicians should discuss the recent sound picture and development, also briefly expressing each individual interpretation of exercise, and the way it was performed soundwise.

Pulse-not pulse-pulse



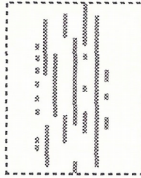
Initiating a heavy pulse, the sound-picture 'step by step turns into the opposite, further on it ends up with the heavy pulse.

Limitation



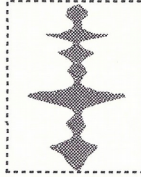
The exercise last for 2 minutes. Each musician has 7 sounds, a sound meaning a short phrase or preferably a very short sound.

Duration



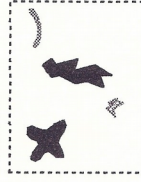
Make a sound, let it last as long as you feel, - then pause. Make a new sound, let it last as long as you feel. Continue.

Dynamic



Stay together, - music is ever developing energy- and volume-wise

Contrast



As you listen or play, you react to a certain sound/phrase, whereafter you perform the contrast/complementary sound/phrase.



"Changeable Spring" is composed by Mr. Johan Toft.
In case ensembles have questions concerning performing the music, do not hesitate to contact:
Johan Toft, Enghavegård, Herringe, DK-5750 Hinge, Denmark, ph/fax: +45 62 62 37 97

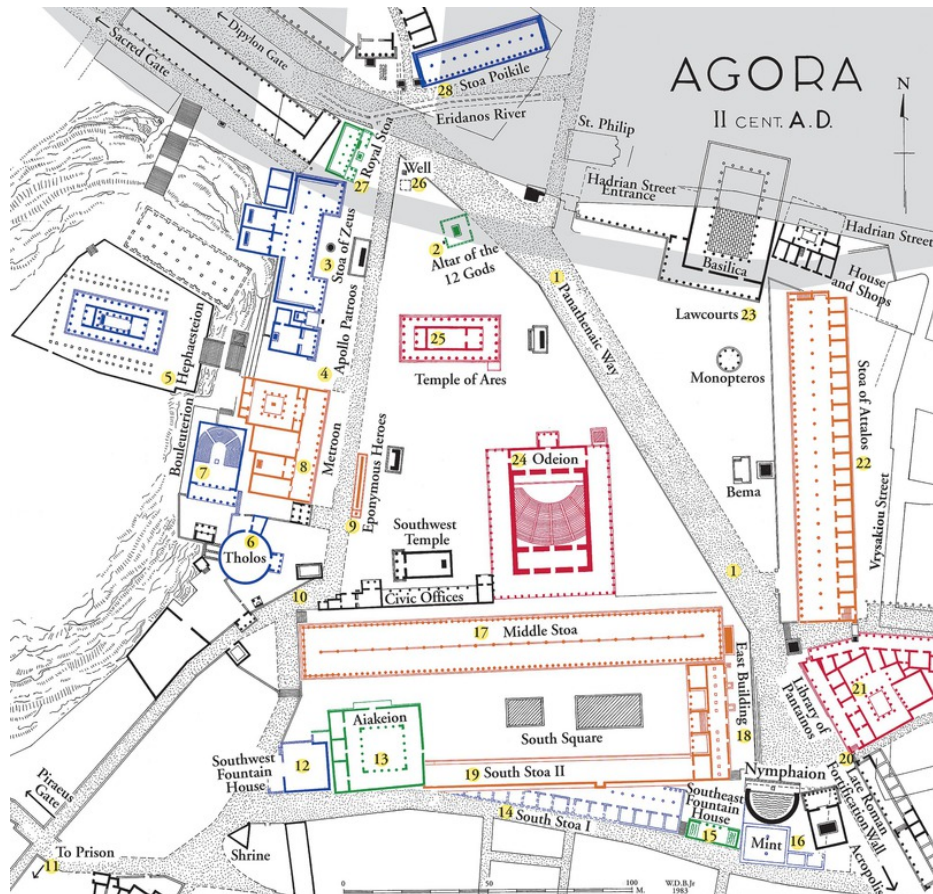
Athena, Aristotle, Helen (The Poem of Names, No. 3)

Michael Pisaro

To Christoph and Rasha

There are three parts (or roles) each played simultaneously. Duration is open, but is likely to be from about forty minutes to an hour.

1.) **Athena** maps the space of the performance. This is an activity in which essential landmarks and boundaries are created. Consider this map of the Agora from the 2nd century A.D.:



Temples, squares, passageways, offices, theaters, courts. Depending on the performing space, the basic areas of the city Athena designs might have some predetermined spots and avenues. These can also be created during the performance. The kind of city mapped may be determined by Athena. A college town or a district rich in temples or culture will obviously differ from a military encampment.

Consider the activities to be accomplished: transport of objects and exchange, meetings with other citizens, maintaining the functions of life, spiritual nourishment, performances, recreation, etc.

The scale of the city is open to interpretation. It may be spread throughout the space or scaled to the stage area. The city may be drawn, in real time, and projected. Alternatively, photographs or a film or video made in the city or town in which the performance takes place, one that reveals aspects of that city and its daily life, may be outlined or projected. This can be as simple as

showing and mapping a day's events or as complicated as revealing patterns of transport, meeting and exchange.

The work may have any kind of sonic accompaniment from music to sounds of the city or field recordings.

Time: Athena should run her city according to a schedule of the daily activities with pre-planned times (like a train schedule perhaps).

2.) **Aristotle** tests and sounds out animate and inanimate matter, in order find out something about the “internal life” or “soul” of the thing. A search should be made for things that exhibit various degrees of animation to be found in the area, from plants and animals to all forms of objects may be sought.

The potentiality of all soul seems to be associated with a body different from and more divine than the so-called elements. (...) For within the seed of everything there is present that which makes the seeds be fertile, the so-called hot. is is not re or that sort of potentiality, but the pneuma enclosed within the seed and within the foamy part—more precisely, the nature in the pneuma, which is analogous to the element that constitutes the stars.

(Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*)

Aristotle has a desk and works at trying to understand, through sound and movement, the properties of the things in front of him. Some kind of documentation (writing, drawing, photos) may be useful to him. It might be useful to organize the objects in the order of some sort of scale: increasing complexity, or heat or their inner sonic potential (as it might be appear to the performer).

Time: The discovery process is quick but careful. It moves at the rhythm of thought more than at any regular intervals.

3.) **Helen** writes, speaks and sings. She translates the given text from one language to another. It is provided here in English but it may move between any two languages. The translation could involve reading the passage in the first language, at first all the way through. But then line by line. After each line, the translating work is done on paper (this may be amplified), with Helen sounding out the words as she translate. Then the line is read in the new language.

Helen's text (from Book XXIV, page 451, in the translation by Alexander Pope):

*Ah, dearest friend! in whom the gods had join'd
The mildest manners with the bravest mind,
Now twice ten years (unhappy years) are o'er
Since Paris brought me to the Trojan shore,
(O had I perish'd, ere that form divine
Seduc'd this soft, this easy heart of mine!)
Yet was it ne'er my fate, from thee to find
A deed ungentle, or a word unkind.
When others cursed the authoress of their woe,
Thy pity check'd my sorrows in their flow.*

*If some proud brother eyed me with disdain,
Or scornful sister with her sweeping train,
Thy gentle accents soften'd all my pain.
For thee I mourn, and mourn myself in thee,
The wretched source of all this misery.
The fate I caused, for ever I bemoan;
Sad Helen has no friend, now thou art gone!
Through Troy's wide streets abandon'd shall I roam!
In Troy deserted, as abhorr'd at home!*

Any manner of reading is encouraged: slow, thoughtful, with occasional singing or humming, especially towards the end of the performance.

Time: The time is likely to be between ca. 2 and 4 minutes per line, with some time at the beginning and at the end.

May–July, 2018

