

politics, autonomy, improvisation, free will, and constraints

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“If there isn’t a good reason for the way your piece ends, there probably isn’t a good reason for it starting.”

“I think lock-picking is one of the purest forms of improvisation.”

concerto pour la main droite (for ivan)

play

The image displays a musical score for the right hand of a concerto, consisting of four staves. Each staff begins with a red vertical line. Above each staff, there are rhythmic markings and fingerings. The markings include numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, often with a slash and a number below (e.g., 1/8, 2/8, 3/8, 4/8, 5/8). Some markings are grouped together, such as 1 3/8 8 or 2 4/8 8. The rhythmic notation is represented by a series of horizontal lines and vertical stems, indicating the timing and duration of notes. The fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 placed above the notes. The score is presented in a clean, minimalist style with a white background and black text and lines.

https://davidpocknee.ricercata.org/compositions/e052_concerto/build/index.html

“The only real piece of political music is when Schopenhauer lent his opera glasses to a soldier to use as a rifle scope to shoot protesters.”

“Is an orchestra totalitarian? Can two people be anarchy?”

There is no more obvious expression of power than the performance of a conductor. Every detail of his public behaviour throws light on the nature of power. Someone who knew nothing about power could discover all its attributes, one after another, by careful observation of a conductor.

- Elias Canetti *Crowds and Power* (1960)

... [C]onductor and orchestra in themselves constitute a kind of microcosm in which social tensions recur and can be concretely studied – something comparable, for example, to a community or municipality as a sociological research object permitting extrapolations on society, which is never tangible as such.

... The histrionics at the podium are easy to credit with the dictatorial capacity for frothing at the mouth at will. It is astonishing that the Nazis did not persecute conductors as they did soothsayers, for competing with their own charisma.

- Theodor Adorno *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1962)

It is a very simple form of anarchy because two of us were working together, but independently. I was not telling David Tudor what to do, nor was he telling me what to do, and anything that either of us did worked with everything the other did.

- John Cage (interview with Richard Kostelanetz, 1988)

John Cage and Christian Wolff's music and free-improvisation are often seen as politically anarchistic. But what would a Libertarian music sound like? The same?

Early John Cage: “All sounds are equal.”

Late John Cage: “. . .but some sounds are more equal than others.”

“My favourite piece of autonomous art is the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.”

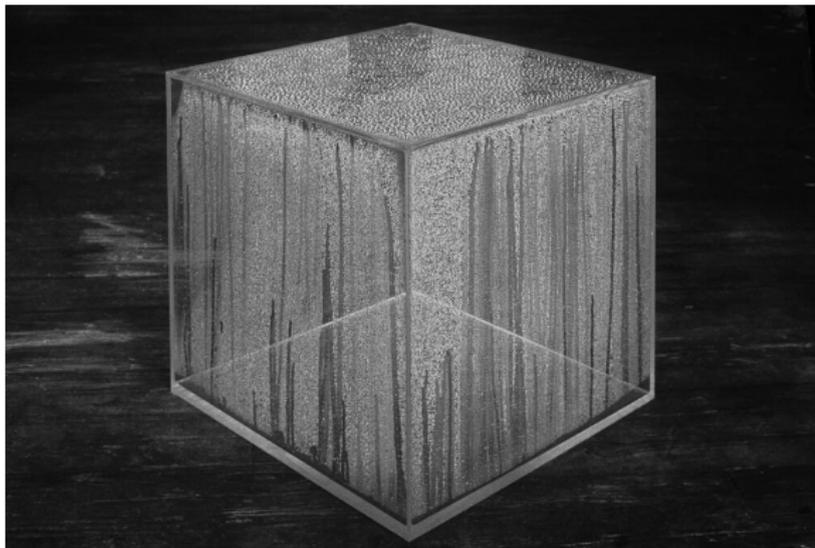
“The only interesting performance of Cornelis Cardew’s *Treatise* is the sound of the score being printed.”

autonomy

The image displays a highly complex and abstract musical score. It features multiple staves with various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is highly abstract and dense, with many overlapping lines and symbols. At the bottom right, the number '183' is visible.

<https://mtmn.ricercata.org/>

autonomy



- Hans Haacke *Condensation Cube* (1963-1968)

improvisation

“To understand free improvisation, first we must understand what it means to be free.”

improvisation

We must distinguish freedom from voluntarism. Voluntarism understands freedom as the property of an act of will exercised by a self. In order for an act to qualify as free in the voluntarist sense, neither the self nor its act can be determined by antecedent causes. In this regard, the free act of will erupts ex-nihilo: it is supposed to be un-determined, whether by psychological dispositions or physical processes. It is the product of a "will" that voluntarism absolutizes into an occult force exercised by a sovereign self. Freedom is construed as the attribute of the determination generated by this self. Freedom in this sense is objectionably metaphysical insofar as it invokes entities and forces that are dubitable, at the very least.

improvisation

“The only real improvisation is being born.
Everything after that is just the regurgitation of
learned behaviours.”

improvisation

“The best living improviser is a cult leader.”

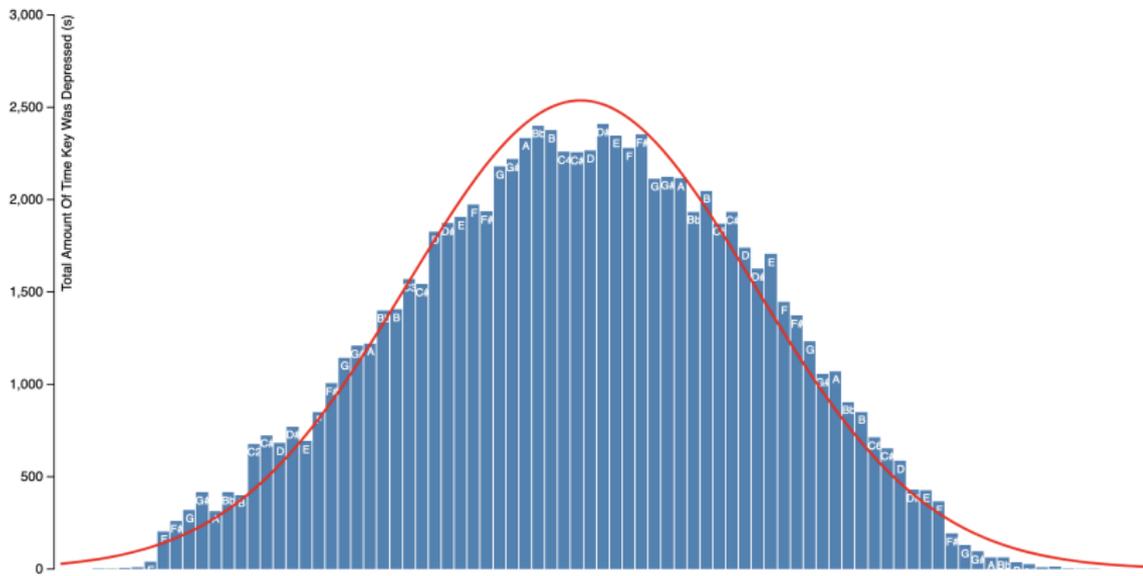
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqiU-0ny89Y>

“If Beethoven was such a genius, why do his piano works approach the normal curve?”

free will

Fig. 6. Total duration each piano key is depressed for over all thirty-two Sonatas

Raw Data Re-adjusted for Harmonic Key Usage Normal Distribution



<http://cerenem.ricercata.org/articles/beethoven/page03.html#Section3-2>

free will

...Target searched through its giant consumer database to determine what patterns of purchasing correlate with the eventual appearance of female shoppers on its list of customers with babies ... Then Target's researchers determined what patterns of advertising were the most effective, conducting controlled experiments by creating different combinations of advertising appeals. The potentially intrusive character of this type of research was indicated by an anecdote reported to the New York Times about a man who complained to Target after his teenage daughter started receiving advertisements for baby products: it turned out that the store knew before he did that his daughter was pregnant.

- Mark Andrejevic *Infoglut*

“An audience is just a mob waiting to happen.”

Economics (2017 Version)

For 6-10 players of any instrument with controllable pitch, volume and dynamics

Written for the *Kick The Can* protest concert

"In art as in life, those with the most money control the cultural agenda"

Set-up

All players should sit or stand with page 2 of the score in front of them.

All players should be able to reach everybody else's page 2.

Instructions

The circles on your page 2 indicate how you should modify the sound you are playing.

When money is placed in one of your circles you must modify your sound in that way.

e.g. if 5 Euro Cents are placed in your **Dynamics: Louder** circle, then you must play louder.

Speed is the time between the attacks of notes. The amount of time you sustain each attack for is the **Duration**.

The higher the amount of money placed in a circle, the more you must modify your sound.

You can place any amount of money into another player's circle at any time in the piece.

Money in your circles can be placed in another player's circle.

However, you cannot move any money *into* your own circles – instead, you must wait for the market to deliver it.

Performance

All players empty any money in their pockets into a pile in front of them.

All players start by playing sounds:

in the middle range of their instrument,

mezzo piano,

every quarter-note at around $\downarrow=80$, unsynchronised with the other players,

with each note lasting half of the duration between attacks (i.e. one 8th-note at $\downarrow=80$).

After the first piece of money has been moved, players have the option to slightly vary their parameters.

Small variations within all parameters are allowed,

e.g. pitches can be a collection of alternated pitches in the required range.

However, these variations should be small enough such that

even the addition of the smallest piece of currency will still result in a noticeable change.

Pitches need not be equally-tempered.

Chords can be used, but only if all participating instruments are capable of playing chords of that size and dynamic.

The piece can finish upon a monopoly being reached, stasis, chaos, systemic collapse, or a fixed time-limit

(5-10mins has been the average performance length so far).

It is best to make a note of how much money you put into the piece before starting. This prevents fights.

Players can ask the audience for money. This is a form of public subsidy.

This piece can also be performed using any money substitutes, such as: alcohol, property, or sexual favours.

David Pocknee

Den Haag, March 2010
revised Den Haag, April 2010
and Manchester, June 2017

My Suggestions/Things to Consider

Avoid a staid, measured performance;
you are participating in a
dynamic, chaotic and unpredictable system.
But don't try to make it funny.

In a DEN HAAG AÉÉ STAR\$ ENSEMBÉE
performance on 7 June 2010,
at Studio Loos in The Hague,
the audience organically got involved
in the piece and started competing with each other
and the performers, placing their
credit cards, car keys, wallets etc.
in the circles on the performer's scores.
In the audio recording you can
even hear the Zoom recorder being
picked up and used as currency.
It was beautiful chaos.
This happened naturally, though,
through creating an open, welcoming and
anarchic performance environment.
Don't try and force this outcome.

Pitch

Dynamics

Speed

Duration

HIGHER

LOUDER

FASTER

SHORTER

LOWER

SOFTER

SLOWER

LONGER

Masahiro Miwa's *Reverse Simulation Music* is as free as Machaut's Isorhythmic Motets.

<https://youtu.be/K0C6i0JogEw?t=137>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc6xQkZ_gn8

***Parameters IX:
The Obscure Moon Lighting An Obscure World***

David Pocknee

Flip a coin to decide if you will flip the coin again.

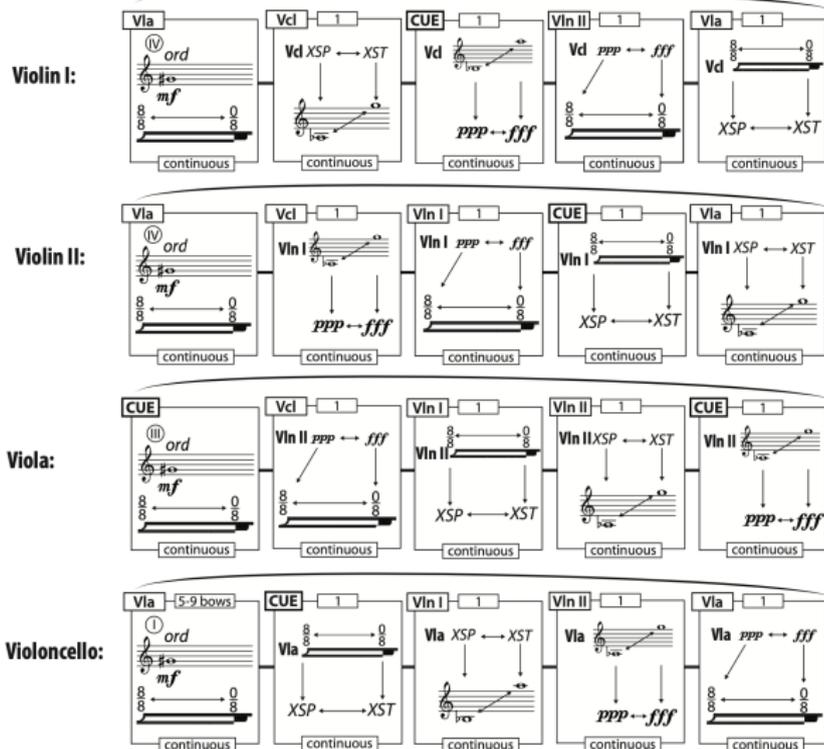
Parameters I: The Myth Of Liberal Democracy

(Version 2)
August 2012

for String Quartet
(2010 - 2012)

David Pocknee

Movement I



improvisation

“Selfhood is tyrannical precisely insofar as it is merely a congerie of drives. ”

- Ray Brassier *Unfree Improvisation/Compulsive Freedom*

http://www.mattin.org/essays/unfree_improvisation-compulsive_freedom.html

free will

Cotard Etude #5: Parameters VI: Codex

for String Quartet

Two men and two women sit in a small circle, close enough that they can all reach each other's genitals.

They sit in the (clockwise) order: man 1- woman 1 - woman 2 – man 2.

This piece consists of 36 movements and a Coda.

Movements with a line of asterisks between them should be performed with a small break (approximately the length of the exhalation of a lungful of air).

All other movements should be performed *attacca*.

The start of each movement is cued by one of the performers, indicated at the start of each movement. Their indication to start the movement, also cues the end of the previous movement, which can last as long as they decide.

If there is a gap between movements, the performer who cues the following movement should give a cue to both end the previous movement as well as a cue to end the pause between them.

Movement I or the Coda can be performed separately.

I

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1

woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2

woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2

man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1

free will

“Humans do not have free will. But just because you didn’t build the rollercoaster does not mean you can’t have fun riding it.”

constraints

“If you ever walk into a friend’s house and they own all the same books you do, this is a failure of your friendship.”

“Art is a raft.”

“God moves through me because God is the system,
and the system moves through me.”