

Creating Words With Music

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JOHNSON COUNTY LIBRARY



Writing Music!

- Every composer has a different process
- Every medium is approached a little differently
- Sometimes ideas flow, sometimes they don't
- Editing is key!



Classical Music, pre-1850s:

- All about form and convention
- Small and large forms
- Music theory “rules”



Rondo Form

A B A C A D A

Phrase Model for Harmony

Tonic (I chord) – Predominant (ii, IV) – Dominant (V) – Tonic (I)
stable – variation – tension – stable



Classical Music, 1850-today

- (Almost) anything goes!
- Form and harmony can be a starting place
- Rules or no rules at all
- Experimental, traditional, everything in between



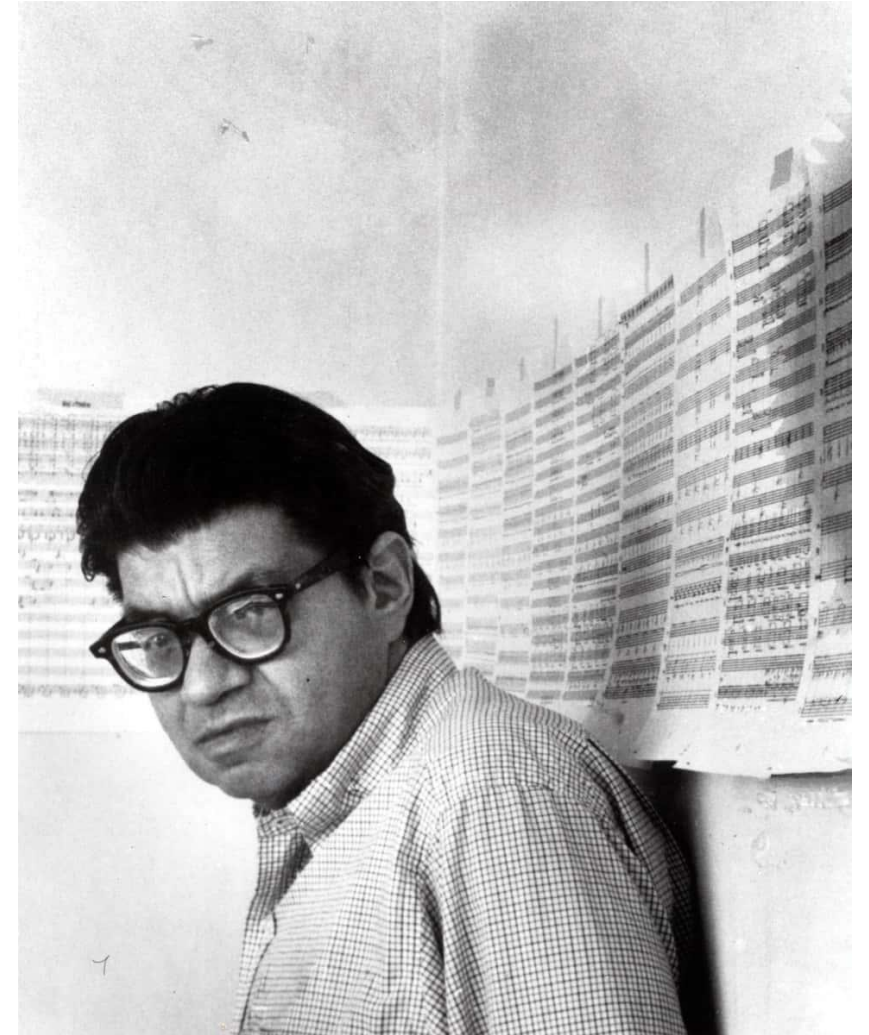
Different Types of Aleatoric Music

- Chance Music – random processes create a fixed score
- Improvisation
- Mobile form
- Graphic notation



Mobile Form

- Composer provides different elements
- Performer chooses the order or timing
- Morton Feldman, *Intermission VI*

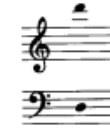
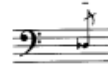


1926 - 1987



Intermission 6 (for 1 or 2 Pianos)

Morton Feldman
(1953)



Composition begins with any sound and proceeds to any other. With a minimum of attack, hold each sound until barely audible. Grace notes are not played too quickly. All sounds are to be

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Mobile Form Writing Exercise

- Write “snippets,” spread out across your page
 - As many as you want
 - Each snippet as long or short as you want
 - Leave some space around them
- Find someone to trade with
- Create a “performance” of these snippets
 - Draw lines between or number the snippets to choose form
 - Repeat different ones, if you wish
- Share?



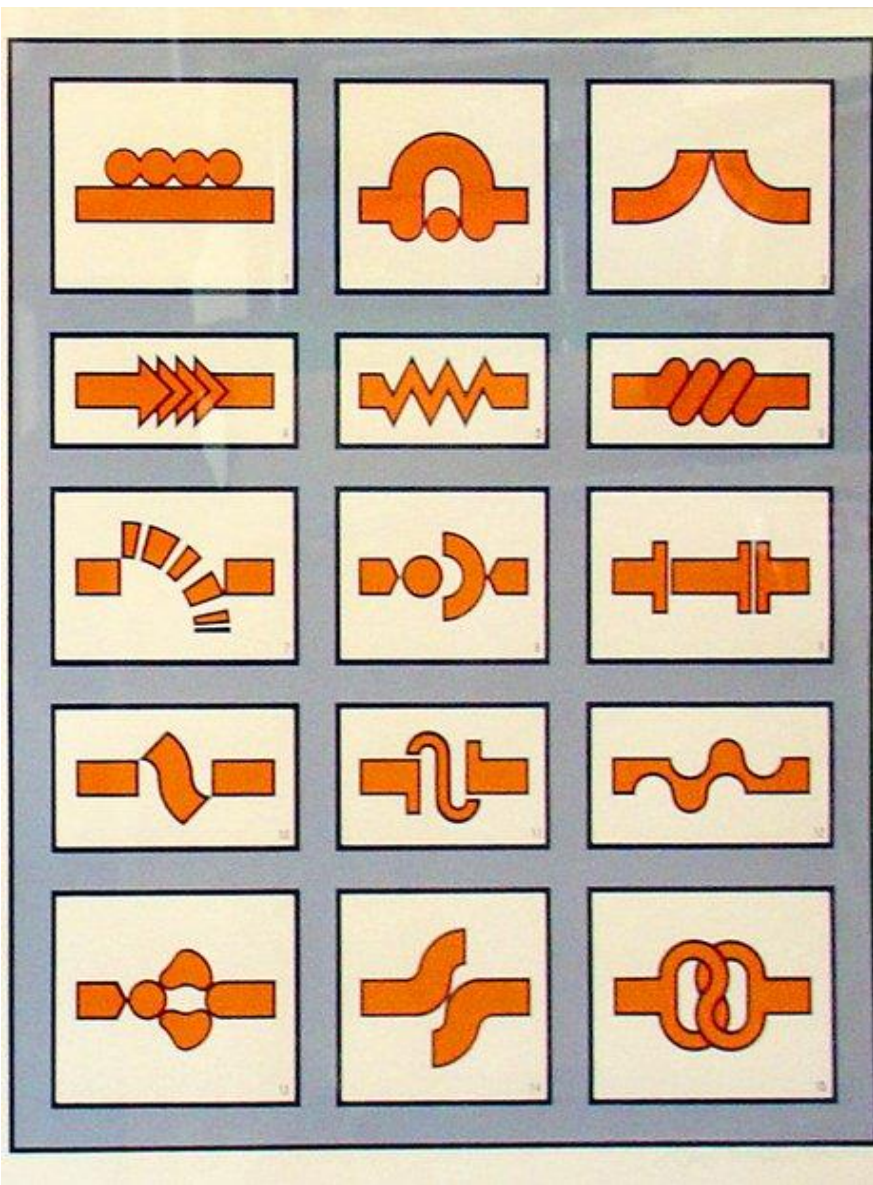
Brian Eno, *Music for Airports*, 1978



Graphic Scores

- Untraditional notation
- Precise and technical or very vague and artistic
- Performer interpretation





Tom Phillips, *Ornamentik*, 1968

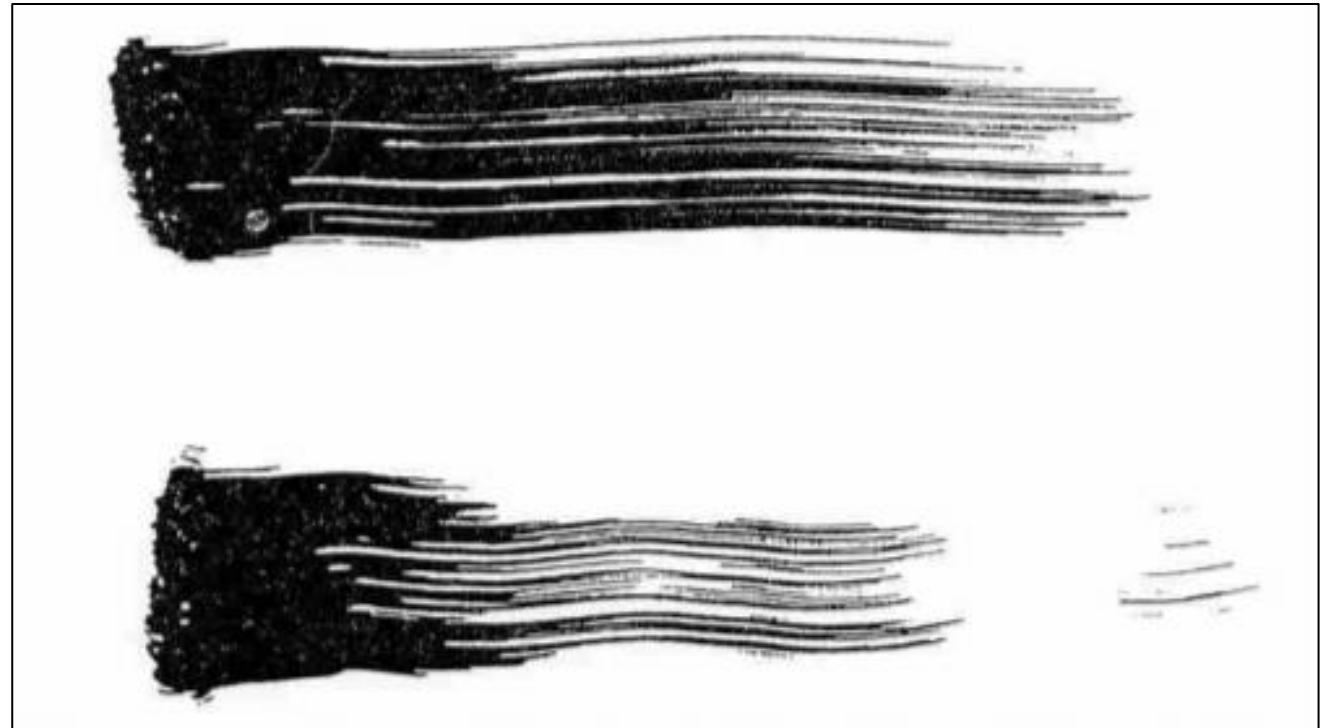


Joanna Ward, *Before/beyond (a page in a book)*, 2020



Using Graphic “Scores” as Drafting

- Sketching form of piece through lines/shape
- Represent different elements



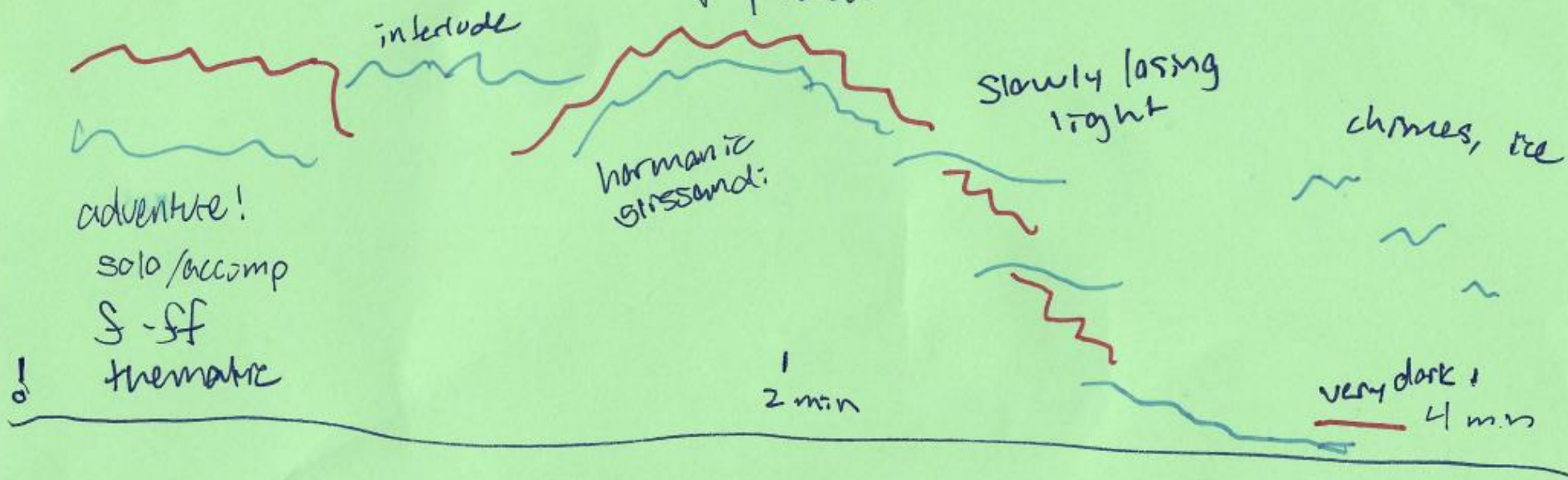
Kaija Saariaho, *Verblendungen*, 1987



POLAR NIGHT

from piano

bass trombone
+ piano



stillness
slow

rising insanity!

light re-emerges

calm OR triumph?

theme from
beginning but
subdued,
changed

regain
energy

Sketching Exercise

- Make your own “graphic score” sketch for a piece of writing
- Think of 1-3 elements
 - Pacing, intensity, emotion, language, etc.
- Represent those elements through line or shape
- Sketch how they change throughout time
- Add in words and/or phrases that occur to you when sketching



Arvo Pärt, *Spiegel im Spiegel*, 1978



Closing Questions, Comments?

