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John Cage's *Freeman Etudes*:

Their role in Practice and Performance for Violinists

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
in Music

by

Xenia Deviatkina-Loh

2020

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2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

John Cage's *Freeman Etudes*:
Their role in Practice and Performance for Violinists

by

Xenia Deviatkina-Loh

Doctor of Musical Arts

In Music

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Movses Pogossian, Chair

In this dissertation, I examine the *Freeman Etudes* composed by American composer, artist, writer, and philosopher, John Cage (1912-1992). Written towards the end of his life, the *Freeman Etudes* maturely encapsulates the versatile qualities of Cage's compositional mannerism — his love affair with Orientalism and Aleatoricism. Unfortunately, this collection of solo violin etudes are rarely performed by modern violinists. There is scant scholarly discourse regarding this collection when considering the amount of scholarship centred on John Cage. The primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate the rationale behind *Freeman Etudes*' elusiveness and argue that this collection could be of more relevance for violinists of today.

The dissertation of Xenia Deviatkina-Loh is approved.

Che-Yen Chen

Ian Krouse

Martin M. Monti

Moses Pogossian, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

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Also, many thanks in particular to the Ian Potter Cultural Trust Fund of Australia; and Friends of Strings Award, Greenschlpoon, and the Edna and Yu Shan Han Foundation of UCLA. The financial support they have provided me made my education at the University possible.

PREFACE

When I first began attending UCLA, I learned about the existence of John Cage's *Freeman Etudes*. Other than being informed of its infamous technical demands, I was unaware of the piece. As a result, these *Etudes* were neglected for more pressing repertoire. By 2018, my career goals in violin performance began to solidify — I would devote the majority of my musical livelihood to modern music. I chose John Cage's *Freeman Etudes* as the focus of my doctoral studies for personal and practical reasons. Personally, the fact that it is mentally and technically challenging beguiles me considerably. On a practical level, I felt that due to my more modern inclinations, a comprehensive investigation into John Cage and his notorious *Freeman Etudes* only benefits me long term — both as performer and educator.

BIOGRAPHY

Winner of the 2009 Gisborne International Music Competition, **Xenia Deviatkina-Loh** has been soloist, recitalist, and collaborative artist in various venues across Australia, New Zealand, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Venues include the Sydney Opera House, Wigmore Hall, Horncastle Arena, Shanghai Concert Hall, and Los Angeles Country Museum of Art. Ms Deviatkina-Loh also frequently performs with major ensembles and concert series around Los Angeles, including the Dilijan Chamber Music Series, MEC (Monday Evening Concerts), Cracow Duo, and Synchrony. She was a part of the symposium “Inside the Gearbox: John Adams @ 70”, and most recently, she presented in a conference hosted by AWMAT (Alliance of Women in Media Arts and Technology).

Ms Deviatkina-Loh completed her Bachelors of Music Performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music under the tutelage of Professor Alice Waten. Upon graduating in 2012, she spent the summer of 2013 working with Professor Boris Kuschnir. She furthered her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London under Professor György Pauk, achieving her Master of Arts degree. In 2017, she completed her Master of Music degree at the University of California, Los Angeles under the guidance of Professors Movses Pogossian, Guillaume Sutre, and Varty Manouelian. Ms Deviatkina-Loh was a teaching fellow at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

Ms Deviatkina-Loh was supported by the Tait Memorial Trust - The Thornton Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, Woolf Mernick, and Margot MacGibbon during her studies in London. She is supported by the Ian Potter Cultural Trust Fund, Friends of Strings Award, Greenschlpoon, and the Edna and Yu Shan Han Foundation for her current studies at UCLA.

Ms Deviatkina-Loh released her debut album in 2019 under SHEVA Contemporary. It includes works by Édith de Chizy, David Paterson, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Peter Sculthorpe, Rodion Shchedrin, and Eugène Ysaÿe.

INTRODUCTION

John Cage composed the *Freeman Etudes* at the behest of modern violinist Paul Zukofsky. A collection of thirty-two etudes, this dense opus eventually found itself with a new protagonist, Irvine Arditti. The situation of the *Freeman Etudes* is rather unfortunate. Despite the affiliation of illustrious champions of modern music (violinists Arditti and Zukofsky, and the arts Patron Betty Freeman), it has remained neglected by most violinists. It is rarely programmed in modern music concerts; scholarly treatises concerning this piece are scarce.

The essentially unknown work begs for a reputation, one that would give violinists of the twenty-first century an understanding of the exceptional intricacy in its compositional methodology. Cage perplexes with his use of chance procedures and comprehensive manipulation of violin techniques and timbres. To comprehend the rationale behind such oversight, an understanding of its components is required. The deductions gathered from this investigation can then be applied to the *Freeman Etudes*. The discourse considered will comprise concert reviews, newspaper articles, published biographies, and published treatises from reputable journals. Interviews with Cage himself as well as his contemporaries will also be investigated.

Further investigation into the *Etudes'* genesis suggests that Cage's novel use of Aleatoricism became an obstacle to their performance. This hypothesis, however, cannot entirely answer for the composition's long-standing neglect. Only comparative studies can successfully disclose the gravity of these perceived shortfalls. Hence, by juxtaposing *Freeman Etudes* alongside its more prominent contemporaries, the question of why its correlative works are more accessible by audiences and performers will be answered. The selected candidates of this comparative evaluation are: Cage's *Etudes Australes*, *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard (Piano)*, *Cheap Imitation for Violin Solo*, and *Chorals for Violin Solo*, Salvatore Sciarrino's *Sei Capricci*, Luciano Berio's *Sequenza VIII*, György Kurtág's *Signs, Games, and Messages*, and George Rochberg's *Caprice Variations for Unaccompanied Violin*.

Arnold Schoenberg's hegemonic position in the world of twentieth-century music belies the humble origins of his *Violin Concerto*. It was nearly abandoned before entering the canon. Its vertiginous upswing in performance popularity is a source of inspiration for the not dissimilar position of Cage's *Freeman Etudes*. This examination aims to bring more awareness of this collection to current and future violinists.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PARTICIPANTS

BETTY FREEMAN

Betty Freeman (1921-2009) was an American photographer and philanthropist, whose magnanimity resulted in over 400 grants and commissions. She supported innumerable notable composers, ensembles, and organisations; including John Cage, Philip Glass, John Adams, Luciano Berio, Oliver Knussen, Pierre Boulez, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Herman). She also supported the arts by making her home a music salon. Freeman, in a partnership with Alan Rich (LA Weekly's music critic), opened her home monthly for modern composers to perform their works in what is dubbed as "The Music Room". Termed as "Musicales", this series of soirees ran for ten years from 1981 to 1991.

PAUL ZUKOFSKY

American violinist Paul Zukofsky (1943-2017) was both a performer and an advocate for modern music who held teaching and conducting positions at prominent institutions. In addition, he was also Artistic Director of the Museum of Modern Art (New York) Summergarden concert series and the Arnold Schoenberg Institute at the University of Southern California. Zukofsky's desire to absorb as much repertoire as possible saw him concentrating on a diverse range of repertoire, from La Monte Young to Babbitt, Varèse to Cage. Zukofsky's artistic rigour and intellect made him infamous (Kostelanetz, *Innovative* 108), and it saw him developing a reputation for tackling serious compositions on short notice. Zukofsky incessantly challenged himself, seemingly undaunted by even the thorniest musical puzzles.

Zukofsky protests that education is partially at fault for such intolerance for new music, accusing large music institutions of an anachronistic mannered education. In an interview with James Reel, Zukofsky laments the state of music education, ". . . at the standard music schools they're still teaching the same literature that they've done since I escaped from Juilliard 40 years ago". His pessimistic outlook towards this matter might be why he was at work on a book that

brings focus to violinistic techniques and repertory of the modern era (Kostelanetz, *Innovative* 118). Regrettably, Zukofsky never completed his anthology. He passed away in 2017 from non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

JOHN CAGE

Son of a self-proclaimed inventor and engineering consultant, and a pianist, John Milton Cage Jr. (1912-1992) spent the majority of his younger years in Eagle Rock, northern Los Angeles with the intent on becoming a minister. However, after an extended stay in Europe, he came back to Los Angeles in 1931, having found his proclivity — music (Hines 79-80). In 1934, he started taking composition lessons from Arnold Schoenberg. Cage and Schoenberg would part ways two years afterwards; harmony was paramount in Schoenberg's compositional organisation, while Cage is convinced that the finest form of structure is “. . . in terms of divisions of time; that kind of structure is open both to noise and to silence . . .” (Cage qtd. in McLellan, “John Cage The Art of Noise”).

After leaving Schoenberg, Cage spent time around the West Coast of the United States as an educator, predominantly programs involving dance. This was also the period where Cage became preoccupied with percussion instruments and rhythm — elements that would ultimately reverberate throughout his entire compositional career (Latartara 100).

Cage moved to New York during the spring of 1942. New York would see Cage providing the musical world with innovative concepts and sonic experimentations through personal discoveries. Cage's quest into Oriental philosophical studies transformed his mannerisms in composition — catechising what ego and self-expression mean for a composer. Cage's concepts all seem to violate the traditional edifices of classical music. His innovations in music were also embodied in his other disciplines (painting and writing). Cage's musical and non-musical undertakings found him being recognised not only as a composer but also as an ascendant artistic voice.

Cage's audacious actions would not have happened without the teachings of Arnold Schoenberg, Henry Cowell, D.T. Suzuki, and David Thoreau, to name a few. The legacy of Cage's teachings and abstractions can be seen in artists such as Yoko Ono, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low, and George Brecht.

Cage passed away on 12th August 1992 from a stroke, just within a month of his 80th birthday.

FREEMAN ETUDES

In 1975 violinist Paul Zukofsky asked John Cage to write a work for him that was comparable to his *Etudes Australes for Piano*; Cage complied with the understanding that Zukofsky would assist him with his violinistic enquiries (Cage, "Liner notes"). With the assurance of Zukofsky's technical expertise behind him, Cage began work on the *Etudes* in 1977.

There are varying anecdotes attached to why *Freeman Etudes* was composed. Some sources claim they were commissioned by the late arts patron Betty Freeman, and some sources claim he wrote it as a gift for her, thanking her for her unwavering support throughout his career¹. Freeman herself attested that "The Etudes were just a gift, but I gave him an annual grant from 1964 until his death to do with as he wished" (qtd. in Isenberg). Her annual grant indeed allowed Cage to do what he wished; he bestowed upon modern violinists one of the most fiendishly difficult collections of pieces for solo violin.

The *Freeman Etudes* is an opus comprising thirty-two short etudes for solo violin, equally spread over four books, each consisting of eight etudes. Cage completed the first seventeen etudes by 1980, and was in the midst of composing the eighteenth etude when he unhesitatingly settled to ". . . cease work on the etudes . . . [because] the density of notes [were] so absurdly great that [he] felt that with this particular etude he had crossed the line — this was music that really was impossible" (Pritchett, "Completion" 264). Ironically, the credo of making them "intentionally as difficult as I can make them" (qtd. in Haskins, *John Cage* 111) that Cage

¹ Cage met arts patron Betty Freeman sometime during the 1960s, evident in his letter to Walter Hinrichsen (Cage, *Selected Letters* 276). Since then, Freeman "gave him a substantial grant every year from 1965 to when he died" (Miguel).

adhered to regarding the *Etudes*' writing was the one that eventually propelled him into a near decade long hiatus.

Irvine Arditti, another notable figure of modern music, was the impetus behind Cage resuming work on the *Etudes*. In 1988, upon hearing Arditti perform the first sixteen etudes, Cage was inspired to finish the opus. Arditti's impressively virtuosic performance brought questions of time and tempo to the fore, significantly altering the course the *Etudes* would take.

































































In Book 1 & 2 of *Freeman Etudes*, Cage instructed the violinist to play "as short a time-length as his virtuosity permits" (1); Arditti realised it by playing it as fast as possible. His live rendition of it instantaneously invalidated Zukofsky's sentiment that they were 'unplayable' — Zukofsky's claim facilitated Cage's long hiatus in composing this work (Pritchett, "Freeman Etudes"). Seeing his *Etudes* performed live also highlighted the complexity of the notation and its subsequent detriment to the performer. Realising that a perfect performance of these *Etudes* was near impossible, Cage allowed violinists a compromise. He suggests in the composition notes: ". . . a violinist, omitting what he must, should play as many ictuses as possible . . ." (*Freeman Etudes: XVII - XXXII* 33).

Zukofsky helped lay the foundations of Cage's opus, by demonstrating the very limits of what is possible on the violin. Cage then proceeded by assembling every possibility, plausible and not, to produce a conglomerate of options in notation and articulation. Cage conceived these possibilities via chance procedures: star maps determined the rhythms and pitches while the *I Ching* (Fig. 1) determined the articulations of every note (Pritchett, "Freeman Etudes").

Zukofsky's and Cage's relationship had a surprising consequence. Zukofsky felt that "While every event was in and of itself completely playable, a quick succession of events was something else again, and in many instances was quite *unplayable* due to the constraints of time" (qtd. in Pritchett, "Freeman Etudes"). Zukofsky's sentiment would prompt him to disengage from the project. Cage had difficulty altering anything he already produced, to which Zukofsky recalls, "John was extremely reluctant to change anything, and I kept insisting that certain things were impossible as they stood" (227).

An Index of The Hexagrams

The page references pertain to Book I, where each hexagram is first treated. (For an explanation of this and other sequences, see H. Wilhelm, *Change*, pp. 89-91.)

1  1. <i>Ch'ien</i> 3	17  57. <i>Sun</i> 220	33  18. <i>Ku</i> 75	49  51. <i>Chên</i> 197
2  44. <i>Kou</i> 170	18  30. <i>Li</i> 118	34  55. <i>Fêng</i> 213	50  35. <i>Chin</i> 136
3  13. <i>T'ung Jen</i> 56	19  58. <i>Tui</i> 223	35  56. <i>Lü</i> 216	51  3. <i>Chun</i> 16
4  10. <i>Lü</i> 44	20  50. <i>Ting</i> 193	36  17. <i>Sui</i> 71	52  46. <i>Shêng</i> 178
5  9. <i>Hsiao Ch'u</i> 40	21  49. <i>Ko</i> 189	37  32. <i>Hêng</i> 126	53  62. <i>Hsiao Kuo</i> 239
6  14. <i>Ta Yu</i> 59	22  28. <i>Ta Kuo</i> 111	38  31. <i>Hsien</i> 122	54  45. <i>Ts'ui</i> 174
7  43. <i>Kuai</i> 166	23  12. <i>P'i</i> 52	39  47. <i>K'un</i> 181	55  29. <i>K'an</i> 114
8  33. <i>Tun</i> 129	24  42. <i>I</i> 162	40  48. <i>Ching</i> 185	56  39. <i>Chien</i> 151
9  25. <i>Wu Wang</i> 100	25  41. <i>Sun</i> 158	41  63. <i>Chi Chi</i> 244	57  40. <i>Hsieh</i> 154
10  61. <i>Chung Fu</i> 235	26  11. <i>T'ai</i> 48	42  64. <i>Wei Chi</i> 248	58  24. <i>Fu</i> 97
11  26. <i>Ta Ch'u</i> 103	27  59. <i>Huan</i> 227	43  20. <i>Kuan</i> 82	59  7. <i>Shih</i> 31
12  34. <i>Ta Chuang</i> 133	28  22. <i>Pi</i> 90	44  27. <i>I</i> 107	60  15. <i>Ch'ien</i> 63
13  6. <i>Sung</i> 28	29  54. <i>Kuei Mei</i> 208	45  19. <i>Lin</i> 78	61  16. <i>Yü</i> 67
14  57. <i>Chia Jen</i> 143	30  53. <i>Chien</i> 204	46  4. <i>Méng</i> 20	62  8. <i>Pi</i> 35
15  38. <i>K'uei</i> 147	31  21. <i>Shih Ho</i> 86	47  36. <i>Ming I</i> 139	63  23. <i>Po</i> 93
16  5. <i>Hsü</i> 24	32  60. <i>Chieh</i> 231	48  52. <i>Kên</i> 200	64  2. <i>K'un</i> 10

730

731

Fig. 1 I Ching: Index of Hexagrams. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*. (Wilhelm and Baynes 730-731)

They only reconciled after Zukofsky compared his issue with one of Merce Cunningham's. He explained to Cage how ". . . Merce in many instances derived results that were physically impossible . . . chance had given [them] some results that were physically impossible — therefore, [they] too had to compromise" (227). Zukofsky also reminded Cage that for a violinist, nothing was conclusive: ". . . the fingerings and bowings that one uses throughout one's life evolve constantly as the mind and body change" (228), and hence, it will be tricky if every decision becomes final. By allowing Cage to recall the compromises he made for Cunningham, in addition to Zukofsky's violinistic advice, they reached a compromise. If it is

“absolutely necessary” (228), a violinist can change certain particulars when needed. However, the reconciliation did not last long.

Their tenuous working relationship faltered for the final time in 1980 during Cage's draft of the eighteenth etude. The eighteenth etude had reached a pinnacle of density and difficulty. Zukofsky saw a live rendition as unattainable, a prediction he made based on his study of the first eight etudes: "Some of the Etudes are so complex that we may have to synthesise them, but the challenge of playing them live may be too great" (qtd. in Cage, "Liner notes"). As an alternative, he proposed the less strenuous option of recording them to Cage. Unfortunately, Cage was disinclined to the proposal. Clinging to his belief that nothing is impossible, and undoubtedly, his “legendary” (Grubbs 10) aversion to recordings², Cage and Zukofsky reached no settlement and Cage ultimately stopped working on the *Etudes*.

Irvine Arditti performed them to greater claim in 1988, which inadvertently inspired Cage to revise his approach and return to work on *Freeman Etudes*. Upon returning to his composition, Cage realised there was another debacle he had to overcome; deciphering the elaborate chance procedures he employed – and developed – to compose the *Etudes*. This hurdle was primarily overcome by James Pritchett. Pritchett met Cage in 1984 while working on his doctoral dissertation in musicology which concentrated on Cage's chance operations in the 1950s (Pritchett, "Freeman Etudes"). In 1989, Cage contacted Pritchett for assistance. Pritchett was presented with manuscripts of the remaining *Etudes* by Cage, and within a few weeks, a report was successfully compiled. In 1990, Cage completed the collection.

As of today, there have been six artists who have recorded the *Freeman Etudes* commercially, Paul Zukofsky (*Etudes 1-VIII* with CP² Recordings, 1983), Janos Negysey (Newport Classic, 1995), Irvine Arditti (Mode, Books 1&2 [1993], Books 3&4 [1994]), Marco Fusi (Stradivarius, Books 1&2 [2010], Books 3&4 [2012]), Stefano Scodanibbio (WERGO, *Etudes I - V*, 2009), and Meiko Kanno (Orpheus Institute, *Etudes VI & IX*, 2009).

² In an interview with Kostelanetz, Cage lightly alluded to his disinclination towards recordings: “I’ve always been . . . in favour of live music” (“Conversation” 224). He later explicitly expounded upon that sentiment in an interview with Vincent Katz: “I don’t like records” (206). It has to be noted that Cage only remonstrated against recordings when they were used as performance replicators; otherwise, he was in favour of it being used as a component for artistic expression (Tone 12-14).

ALEATORICISM

Aleatoricism in music describes music that incorporates ambiguity in either the compositional process and or performance practice. It umbrellas its subsets, chance, indeterminacy or open form, and graphic notation. Chance and indeterminacy are often wielded interchangeably, thus causing confusion as to which term signifies which compositional process. Cage made a clear distinction between chance and indeterminacy, coining the former as an “operation” (*Silence* 36) and the latter as a performance choice (Pritchett, *Music* 108). Chance has the composer using external sources to determine notation, articulation, and or performance practice concerns (performances remain unchangeable). In contrast, the unpredictability of indeterminacy lies in the performance; performers are given an array of performance options to choose from.

Stylistically, Aleatoricism is “. . . a negation of *all* organisations because it accepts no definiteness” (Ranković 201). While it seemingly defies all the customs traditional Western musical art had championed for eras (form, harmony, and notation), Aleatoric writing, more specifically indeterminacy can be arguably traced back to the classical era (Cowell 138). Alternatively, there is a claim in the *Indiana Theory Review* that indeterminacy has been a phenomenon in musical art since the existence of music (Tucker 3).

A common misconception of Aleatoric writing (more chance than indeterminacy), is the belief that it requires no training or talent whatsoever. As Stephanie Ross explains in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, a preconception of Aleatoricism is that “. . . A child . . . [or] Anyone could do that” (21). Similar arguments are launched at other modern movements in the arts. Some question the composers' agency as an artist in writing a work that is not predetermined. By ‘deferring’ decision making to an extraneous agency or performer(s), many question whether artistry is involved. The composer was not ‘fully’ responsible for the creativity.

The vernacular of this genre means that nothing is foreseeable, hence the element of surprise is absolute. While composers like Pierre Boulez laud surprise, calling it “the most outstanding quality” (“Alea” 45) of a composer, many audiences shirk from surprises.

Harmonically, there are no traditional relationships, and sometimes, timbrally (like in the case of Cage's *Freeman Etudes*) it is also individualised. The lack of perceivable homogeneity of any sort can be rather challenging to comprehend.

There are also issues of communication between performer and audience pertaining to Aleatoric writing. Cage claimed that with chance operations, he has the "pleasure of discovering it along with the audience" (Taruskin 276). Yet, as Taruskin reminds readers, performers are in the unfortunate situation where they cannot "share the pleasure" (276). All professional performers have the duty to deliver the piece with full commitment, and that means justifiable preparation. The act of preparation is in itself, the antithesis to chance. There is planning, and there is no room for haphazardness. Even with an indeterminate work, a performer still has to construct a plan to successfully deliver a satisfactory performance. As a result, a dilemma occurs. One has to convey spontaneity to an audience under the conditions of absolute control and preparation.

CAGE'S ALEATORICISM

Aleatoricism has been an essential ingredient in the majority of Cage's oeuvre. There is a claim that his ancestors' transient lifestyle (the Cages have been through Colorado, Utah, Virginia, Tennessee, and Iowa) ". . . predicted and perhaps even influenced the aleatory character of Cage's work" (Hines 74). Hines' posit is somewhat improbable as it scantily bears relevance to Cage's own life, and subsequently, his compositional career.

A more indisputable certainty is the influence Henry Cowell had on Cage in regards to his exploration of Aleatoricism. In his book *Silence*, Cage himself has acknowledged how pivotal Cowell was in bringing Aleatoric writing to the twentieth century (71). Yet, Cage is sometimes remembered as the architect of Aleatoricism (Charles Ives being another important predecessor), because like his endeavour with many of his other ideologies, he focused considerable time and energy on the systematisation of a single concept: ". . . he built overarching theories and pre-compositional systems by carrying the aesthetic implications of

novel ideas to logical, yet often radical conclusions" (Miller 51). Cage's tenacious undertaking of Aleatoricism re-revolutionised its concept.

Cage's devotion to Aleatoricism is also a by-product of his studies of Oriental philosophy. He was burdened with matters such as his sexuality (Larson 109) and frequent misinterpretations of his music (Cummings), and needing mental peace, Cage found solace in Oriental studies. These studies question the significance of self. Ultimately, Oriental studies functioned as therapy as well as interest.

Oriental studies assisted Cage in his artistic communication with the greater audience and his communication with himself regarding identity (Cummings). It also rekindled Cage's fondness for composing (Cage, *Selected Letters* 442). Oriental studies, especially Zen Buddhism, helped Cage consolidate his mind and self. Zen Buddhism, as explained by D.T. Suzuki, embraces the idea that the ego is an obstacle to enlightenment (Larson 171-173). This philosophy also encourages the concept of accepting everything with equanimity (Larson 202).

For Cage, Zen Buddhism led him to accept the lack of control he has over his identity and his music. As a result, Cage adopted indeterminacy and later Aleatoricism into his compositional methods. Aleatoricism was Cage's method in absolving choice and any imposition. In Aleatoricism, Cage saw a practice that allowed him to sever his inner sentiments from his music. Cage's Aleatoric undertakings upon review, also heavily intertwined with his egalitarian view of what constitutes music, evident in employment of noise and silence as music, and his interdisciplinary compositions.

“In the end, Cage's use of chance or randomness was the least important aspect of his work; his conception of art as a human activity and his opening up of the external universe as a subject matter for an art that had [elsewhere] become almost entirely interiorised will stand as his major contributions.”

— Eric Salzman³

³ Salzman quoted in Richard Kostelanetz's "Not Wanting to Say Anything about John Cage (1912-92)" (174)

CHAPTER TWO: INVESTIGATING THE *FREEMAN ETUDES*

INCENTIVE BEHIND THE COMPOSITION

Despite its namesake, Cage did not intend for the *Freeman Etudes* to be treated in the traditional sense of pedagogical studies. He purposed them as a collection of miniatures with a societal agenda, and he wanted to prove that nothing was unattainable:

. . . these are intentionally as difficult as I can make them, because I think that we're now surrounded by very serious problems in the society, and that we tend to think that the situation is hopeless and that it's just impossible to do something that will make everything turn out properly. (laughs) So I think that this music, which is almost impossible, gives an instance of the practicality of the impossible. (Cage qtd. in Moore)

These pieces were composed during a period when America was recovering from involvement in the Vietnam War, the consequences of the Watergate Scandal, hostilities in the Middle East, and other conflicts due to the Cold War. Despite his non-political inclination albeit his self-proclaimed anarchist stance⁴, there were never overt proclamations that he was unaffected by the surrounding political happenings. During this period of governmental and societal tumultuousness, Cage found solace in his writing, and he used this set of compositions as proof that optimism is still in existence no matter the surrounding bleakness.

UNRAVELLING THE TITLE

In a thorough discussion about the definition of 'etude', the term 'caprice' should also be included since they seem to be interchangeable for many composers. Moreover, both can be admitted into a public performance. A simple perusal of major violin etudes and caprices displays just how interchangeable these terms are. To understand why these terms are used with such ambivalence, their official definitions should be examined further.

⁴ In *A Year from Monday*, Cage states: "I'm an anarchist" (53). He reiterates this in his book *Anarchy*.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Music, an 'etude' is a "Study composition intended as a basis for the improvement of the performer's technique". Similarly, both Grove Music (now a division of Oxford Music) and Naxos also define it as a study yet with further explanation. Naxos delineates that ". . . later composers elevated the *étude* into a significant piece of music, as opposed to a mere vehicle for exercise" and Grove Music explicates that "The term . . . was also used as a title by some 20th-century composers, usually to indicate a piece exploring a specific aspect of the composer's craft". The synonymous definition amongst all three sources is that the etude is a study. The additional information Grove and Naxos provided insinuates that 'etude' later adopted a more creative role in artistic expression and musical substance.

Such creativity, therefore, brings the meaning of 'etude' closer to 'caprice'. The word 'caprice' in the Oxford Dictionary of English defines it as "a sudden change of mood or behaviour". Moreover, it further elaborates that 'caprice' is a derivative of the Italian word *capriccio* which means "a lively piece of music, typically one that is short and free in form" or "art representing a fantasy or a mixture of real and imaginary features". When examining the Oxford Dictionary of Music, 'capriccio' adopts a similar meaning: "according to the fancy (caprice) of the performer, hence a composition that has unexpected and original effects". More so, this dictionary also offers the historical definition: "In early 18th century sometimes used for *cadenza*".

It is clear that over time, etudes have evolved from technical exercises into works of art in their own right. Thus, it explains why composers interchangeably used 'caprice' and 'etude' as if they were analogous. Cage's choice of the historically ambiguous genre 'etude' presents lingering questions of interpretation. He never explicitly pigeonholed the *Etudes* as exercises to flaunt one's technique. Acknowledging both the title in its fullest potential and the absence of any violinistic pedagogical notes from Cage, the *Etudes* in this opus resonate more to a fancy than an exercise.

SCORE ANALYSIS

Conceptualising *Freeman Etudes*

The enquiry is how Cage used the principles of Aleatoricism to accentuate *Freeman Etudes*' societal rhetoric. The explanation can be traced back to Cage's motivating purpose in composing. As Joseph McLellan elaborated in *The Washington Post*, Cage's compositions were all borne from his innate desire to ask questions ("Appreciation"). In the case of *Freeman Etudes*, many queries were proposed. Chance procedures guided Cage in assembling an opus of near impossibilities and thorny difficulties, to create the perfect metaphor for a chaotic society. He supposed that if near-impossible music could be made possible, then a society that seems irremediable could be still saved. The Aleatoric foundation of the collection provokes listeners to question what music is. Simultaneously, it begs performers to reassess their understanding of violin performance practice and its limits.

The kaleidoscope of timbres and soundscapes Cage demanded from the violinist not only showcased the violin's capabilities, but it also is a metaphor for all the chaos and phenomena in life. Anne Midgette of *The Washington Post* calls the *Freeman Etudes* "... an endurance test: [it is] a good hour and a half [of] isolated sound events, with seesawing dynamic changes, squeaks and bops and thick bow-strokes and whiskery harmonics succeeding each other until they merge into a continuum that wraps up different moments into a kind of sameness, like snowflakes, or waves breaking again and again on the shore". All the *Etudes* are paced differently, and as expected, the complexity in each one varies. If this is interpreted as an allegory of the current socio-economic atmosphere, then every *Etude* is a snapshot of a significant event or movement. The differentiated pacing is divulging to audiences that every one of these happenings is unique in character and cadence. Cage's complexity in this composition, seen in the rapid and voluminous manoeuvres, further emphasise the overwhelming societal problems.

While Cage only expressed himself politically in his art during the latter part of his life, political issues were always imbued in his composing. Even as early as 1927, before his career in

music, Cage was cognisant of socio-economic issues, as evident in his speech *Other People Think*⁵. Recognising the significant impact political matters had on Cage prior to his artistic career, hints to performers and listeners alike that the political message *Freeman Etudes* is imparting is immensely crucial.

His composition notes explain how violinists should overcome complexities: “Instead of finding a push button solution of this problem, a violinist, omitting what he must, should play as many ictuses as possible in the time-length which he has established . . .” (Cage, *Freeman Etudes: XVII - XXXII* 33). This minuscule relenting of freedom for the violinist to ensure a win in this endurance test can be paraphrased in society as allowing breaks and shortcuts to maintain survival.

Cage uses aleatory to imbue *Freeman Etudes* with the atmosphere of an uncontrolled environment. The method ensured that Cage be abdicated from any managerial role in the composition. It embodied the idea that societal matters cannot be managed at a personal level. Cage believed that “. . . chance [is] a representation of the way nature organises things” (Larry Stein qtd. in Shulgold). If chance is how nature organises things, and if *Freeman Etudes* was a representation of the surrounding political atmosphere, then perhaps the most organic and veracious manner in determining every particular of the *Etudes* is via chance.

In consideration of these beliefs, the ‘atypical’ aggregates and soundscapes that were assembled by chance should be instead espoused rather than dismissed. Cage saw all sounds on the same wavelength (Henahan). Metaphorically, this is interpreted in humankind as an acceptance of all the ugliness and privations of society in equilibrium with all the beauty and virtues. The question Cage is asking us is, to accept the unorthodox makeup of these sounds and noises, and accept them all as music.

The noises Cage asks audiences to accept as music also includes silence. Silence, as Cage discovered in Harvard University, is non-existence (Cage, *Silence* 8). However, all the subtleties 'silence' proffers is only audible if one quietens and listens, a principle Cage had been proposing

⁵ The speech discusses the tenuous relationship between the United States and Latin America, and the many jingoistic issues that heated during the height of the Banana wars.

since his adolescence⁶. In the case of *Freeman Etudes*, the sporadic silences that occur throughout the opus encapsulate societal harmony and serenity. Musically, it begs both listener and performer to further investigate the intricacies that might have been missed from all the rambunctiousness of the chaos created by the galactic notation. Metaphorically, Cage is perhaps asking people to take a temporary pause and to assimilate the minutiae of everyday life.

Due to the inherently arbitrary nature of the compositional method, in addition to Cage's desire for them to be as difficult as possible, *Freeman Etudes* exude a chaotic ambiance. Cage lived “. . . by a Zen existentialist code: “Want nothing and accept everything” (Perlmutter). When translating this artistic ideal of eschewing choice and ego from the *Freeman Etudes*, Cage intends for an acceptance of all sonic elements that occur in the opus. For Cage the notion that one must accept all sounds that one experiences, including noise and silence, is an allegory to one's relationship to surrounding society, which includes a tacit acceptance of negative as well as positive events. Building upon this same analogy, the act of Cage asking the performer to successfully render his complex score is to shed light upon the abstraction that all sorts of calamities, in spite of their perceivable dilemmas, can be overcome.

The essence of *Freeman Etudes* is not only how it is mostly derived from chance; it also encompasses compositional complexity. The inextricable writing of Cage's in *Freeman Etudes* is a product of his desire for near impossibility on the violin, yet, it also requires performers to question and acknowledge the role of this level of complexity. Aleatoricism is merely a device for Cage's concern to create a metaphor for the hardships one encounters in the real world. Complexity is the product, yet it also is the main impetus behind the near impossibility of the *Freeman Etudes*. Cage's rendering such complexity⁷ in the *Etudes* was his way of personifying society.

⁶ Cage's has been espousing his tenet of listening since *Other People Think*: “. . . we should be hushed and silent, and we should have the opportunity to learn that other people think” (12)

⁷ New Complexity was “. . . a reaction against . . . new simplicity . . . [and] also a rejection of an integral serialist approach that seeks to control every musical domain” (Duncan 141). While *Freeman Etudes* is not of the New Complexity sort, its intricacies corresponds with many elements of New Complexity.

Notation in *Freeman Etudes*

As outlined by Pritchett in *Perspectives of New Music*, each *Etude* was to cover two pages with twelve staves of 9.6 inches in length each, and the range of notes the *Etudes* can manipulate on the violin is 4 1/2 octaves. After those parameters were set in place, Cage would begin establishing the notation of each *Etude*. Using star maps (the same star maps he utilised in the conception of the *Freeman Etudes*' piano counterpart *Etudes Australes*), Cage used a tracing paper with twelve rectangles on it (each rectangle reflected one staff of an *Etude*) and overlaid it over the star map (265-266).

The star maps that Cage used had six colours. With these, there were possible combinations in “. . . singly or in pairs, or all three . . .” (Cage qtd. in Kostelanetz, *Conversing* 97). Cage used coins and yarrow sticks to consult the *I Ching* (98). Both yarrow sticks and coins have designated numerical value⁸ giving him an answer that would match one of the hexagrams in the index — see Fig. 1 to view the list of possible hexagrams. The numerical values Cage was presented with (after his coin or yarrow sticks tosses) would determine the amount of “. . . notes in a given section of the piece, the number of star colors to trace in that section, and the density of stars in that part of the sky covered by the particular star map used” (Pritchett, “Freeman”). Cage would repeat this process until all twelve rectangles (staves) were drawn up. These tracings were then translated onto a ten-staved music sheet; the vertical placements governed the pitch, and the horizontal placements on the tracings were the indicator for timing. The *I Ching* was used again to determine many subsequent facets of the piece: the articulation, the groupings, and the exact octave of every note. Every detail of this piece was either determined by a star map or chance via the *I Ching* (Pritchett, “Completion” 266-268). Although similar to its piano counterpart, the *Freeman Etudes* were assembled with “even more control” (Pritchett, *Music* 98) than *Etudes Australes*.

⁸ For more details on their operations, refer to the “appendix” section in Wilhelm’s and Bayne’s *I Ching or Book of Changes* (721-724).

The *Freeman Etudes* are widely regarded as dauntingly complex because he uses every possible extended technique and articulation for solo violin. In addition, he inundates the score with an abundant amount of instructions (See Fig. 2).

Tones to be played *legato*, sometimes simulated, are connected with a beam. Below the staff are two lines, the lower giving the “measure”, a constant length of time, the upper the appearance in space-time of the ictuses. A violinist should establish a time-length for the measure and then maintain that tempo from system to system and from etude to etude. It should be short rather than long, as short a time-length as his virtuosity permits (circa three seconds). In Etudes XVII and XVIII, particularly, more ictuses appear than can be performed. Instead of finding a push button solution of this problem, a violinist, omitting what he must, should play as many ictuses as possible in the time-length which he has established, minimizing as much as possible the number of gaps in the continuity which results. Tones are conventionally pitched or indeterminately microtonally sharp (♯ , ♯̣ , ♯̤) or flat (♭ , ♭̣ , ♭̤). They are sometimes slightly inflected (⤴ , ⤵ , ⤶ , ⤷ , ⤸ , ⤹ , ⤺ , ⤻ , ⤼ , ⤽ , ⤾ , ⤿ , ⤿̣ , ⤿̤). The stringing may be changed, but only if after due consideration on the part of a particular violinist it proves absolutely necessary. R means *ricochet*, the number accompanying it giving the number of sounds so produced. Four kinds of *martellato* are used ♣ , ♣̣ , ♣̤ , ♣̥ (beginning in space, ending on the string; starting on the string, ending in space; beginning and ending in space, hammering the string between; beginning and ending on the string).

I am grateful to Paul Zukofsky for his patient answering of my many questions; without this I would not have been able to write these pieces.

– J.C.

Fig. 2 John Cage’s composer notes; *Freeman Etudes* (Books 3 & 4 33)

For pitch, each semitone is microtonally split in half. For every pitch accidental (sharp ♯, natural ♮, and flat ♭), there are two extra subsets — an arrow that points up and an arrow that points down. Each indicates a microtone/half-semitone up or down as per the arrow. Instead of twelve notes in a regular octave, there are twenty-four different notes. Furthermore, the notes at times are indicated with idiomatic squiggles. They provide the pitch direction, while the bullet at either end or both ends indicates the stopping points (See Table 1 on Pg. 21).

Cage has instructed performers that the *Etudes* are not to be played with *vibrato* unless indicated. Certain notes in the score should be denoted with the abbreviation ‘vib.’. Every note

has been designated with at least a dynamic. Sometimes, there will be a supplemental indication of growth or decline via hairpins.

Concerning the right hand, every note is provided with at least one bow articulation. In some cases, there is a request for pizzes (*pizzicato*) instead. Within the realm of *pizzicato*, Cage offers violinists a palette of *pizzicato* options: damp, nail, regular, snap, and muting other strings. For bow placement, Cage gives the performer three options, ST (*sul tasto*), SP (*sul pont*), or just regular placement. Regarding bow strokes, there are two manners, CL (*col legno*), or traditional.

Finally, the range of bow articulations Cage bestows upon the performer is wide. There are five different types of bow attacks, R (*ricochet*), 'beating', normal, *spiccato* and *martellato*. Within *martellato*, Cage delegates four kinds of strikes. The direction of the arrow and where the blackest part of the arrow is dictates where the bow should begin (in the air or on the string). If the attack or pivotal point is at the beginning or end, the bow begins and ends on the string. He also strictly specifies the number of times the bow has to bounce while executing *ricochet*; this is indicated by the specific number next to the 'R'.








While many of Cage's individual events (denoted as 'ictuses' in the preface by Cage) are possible and even idiomatic, what makes the music difficult to render is the speed at which he moves from one event to the next. Even the composer himself admits that it is not possible. The complexity mostly lies in rendering an incessant onslaught of dense information in a very short amount of time. These episodes do not occur sporadically; they occur ceaselessly. Rarely does the performer come by a moment of repose. In short, the velocity of information conveyed is perhaps the most significant factor.

In lieu of bar lines or rhythm, Cage drew two lines under every system. The bottom line indicates the consistent bar and the top line indicates where every note should be placed in relation to the bars. Adopting the concept of graphic notation, these placements could be approximated since Cage never explicitly notated any rhythms. However, in conversation with Kostelanetz, Cage specifically said how precise graphic notation should be, ". . . nothing could be

more strict than graphic notation, since you could take a ruler . . . and find out exactly what was to be played” (37).

Taking Cage’s perspective of graphic notation into consideration, violinists should avoid approximating the time placement of every note in *Freeman Etudes*. Embracing the mindset of using a ruler to determine where everything should be, the diminuendo and crescendo symbols should be interpreted with as much precision as their fellow notations and articulations. Assuming such precise and literal thinking ensures the timbral versatility Cage implicitly desires in his writing. In the composer’s notes Cage penned for *Freeman Etudes*, he asks performers to maintain consistency between each ‘measure’ with a note of “circa three seconds” in parentheses. While he leaves the choice of tempo up to the performer, meaning that the three-second rule can be rejected for a slower choice, if any violinist is familiar with Cage, the three-second rule is more obligatory than implied. For one, Cage heavily relies on time for fundamental musical structure (Pritchett, “Silence” 168). Secondly, a predominant portion of Cage’s compositions’ “. . . larger rhythmical forms have been based on one or another set division of absolute time, such as a unit of sixty seconds” (Cowell 133). After all, three is a divisor of sixty.

While both statements did not specifically indicate three seconds, Zukofsky informs readers (and performers) that three-seconds per measure is obligatory: “Each segment was eventually assigned a nominal value of three seconds — therefore, each line equaled twenty-one seconds” (225). Considering that Zukofsky was the originally intended violinist for the *Freeman Etudes*, his words hold value. As per calculations, every *Etude* is two hundred and fifty-two seconds (four minutes and twelve seconds) long. The entire collection which contains thirty-two etudes equals a length of two hours, fourteen minutes, and twenty-four seconds.

SYMBOL	MEANING
BOW PLACEMENT	
ST	<i>sul tasto</i> – play on fingerboard
SP	<i>sul pont</i> – play on bridge
BOW STROKE	
CL	<i>col legno</i> – play on the stuck of a bow
R	<i>ricochet</i> – throw bow on string for bounce
beating	throw bow on string; more forceful than <i>ricochet</i> and no bounce required after
	<i>martellato</i> with bow beginning in air and finishing on string; no lift afterward
	<i>martellato</i> with bow beginning and finishing in air, while marking the string in between
	<i>martellato</i> with bow beginning on string and finishing in air; lift afterward is compulsory
	<i>martellato</i> with bow beginning and finishing on string; pressure is slightly alleviated in between
PITCH	
	Start below indicated pitch, then slide towards and land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, then slide down in pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, then slide up in pitch










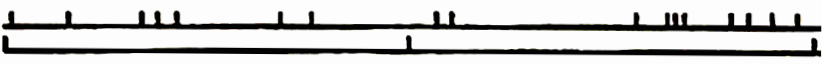
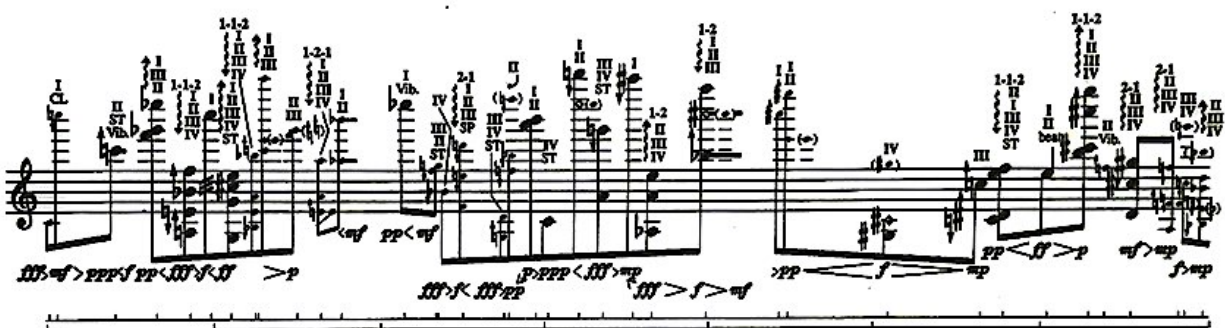
	Start above indicated pitch, then slide towards and land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, quickly slide down to below designated pitch, before sliding up and away from designated pitch
	Start above indicated pitch, slide down to below designated pitch, before quickly sliding up to land on designated pitch
	Start below indicated pitch, slide up to above designated pitch, before quickly sliding down to land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, quickly slide up to above designated pitch, before sliding down and away from designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, slide up before sliding back down to land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, slide down before sliding back up to land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, slide up before sliding below the designated pitch, then back up to land on designated pitch
	Start on indicated pitch, slide down before sliding up above the designated pitch, then back down to land on designated pitch
NOTATION TIMING	
	
<p>The bottom line indicates the 'measure'; space between every outdent is evenly distributed in length on the score.</p> <p>Outdents on the top line indicate where every note is situated in accordance to the 'measure'. A measuring device should be used to inform the performer to the precise temporal position of each note.</p>	

Table 1 Detailing the symbols Cage used in *Freeman Etudes*

CHAPTER THREE: CONCERNS PERTAINING TO LISTENERS AND PERFORMERS

WHERE IS THE DIRECTION?

One significant disparity between Aleatoricism and traditional writing, or most compositional methods is the lack of perceivable direction in its writing. As Judith Becker observed in *The Musical Quarterly*, “Music which ‘doesn’t go anywhere’ is rarely valued by Classical concert audiences in the West” (347). Cage’s *Freeman Etudes* is precisely the kind of ‘music’ Becker is describing. It is Aleatorically written, and upon first glance, it looks and sounds like musical turmoil (Ex. 1).



Ex. 1 Line 3, Page 2 of “Etude XXXI” (Cage, *Freeman Etudes XVII - XXXII : Books 3 & 4* 63)

Similarly, the general audience can become disinterested in *Freeman Etudes* because of the lack of syntax. As Kostelanetz remarked, “Mainstream music is more accessible . . . [because] its texture is filled with ‘melodies’ [and] because such works generally embody the classical form of introduction, exposition, development, recapitulation, climax and conclusion” (*Innovative* 210). The two facets Kostelanetz highlighted which attract audiences — melody and aesthetic narrative — are two facets *Freeman Etudes* do not have.

The compositional manner of the *Etudes* results in a lack of melody. Due to Cage’s Aleatoric writing in which he attempts to relinquish himself, the *Etudes* become an “arrangement of sounds” (Kostelanetz, *Innovative* 210). There is no concrete storyline, nor is there an overt emotive dimension to it. The *Etudes* are the antithesis to accessible mainstream music. The non-mainstream nature of it fashions it to “produce no pleasurable expectations or

restful closures” (Smith and Witt 170), resulting in many listeners struggling to find a tangible connection with it. Furthermore, the lack of detectable imagery also leads to listeners and performers straining to comprehend the questions Cage is posing.

The lack of conceivable direction engenders numerous unfavourable deliberations. One consensus among mainstream audiences is that due to its perceived purposelessness, it is not music. To reiterate, “. . . without easy mimetic participation there is for some music lovers less motivation to listen and . . . less of a basis for conceptualising the music beyond superficially categorising it as *music I don't care for*” (Cox 33). This opinion seems only elementary because it is apparent that this sort of listener did not input audible effort before delivering their judgement.

Some listeners cannot connote ‘random noise’ as music; they “. . . decid[e] not to call these various sound concatenations ‘music’ . . . [because] they lack the kind of overall coherence, development, closure, and elaboration characteristic of works of music or they lack the element of human intention-the compositional hand-that distinguishes art from nature or from the purely fortuitous” (Herwitz 786). If there is no soliloquy, it is all noise. Cage even said himself that these *Etudes* share similarities with *4'33*” in that their “. . . sounds are free of [his] intentions” (qtd. in Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* 231). Cage just equated *Freeman Etudes* to his silent piece, a composition that half a century later is still under intense discussion concerning its validity in the realm of musical art.

The defence for Cage’s ‘random noise’ is to reconsider them as a synthesis of musical episodes. Cage’s one-time mentor, Henry Cowell, said Cage “. . . conceives each musical ‘event’ to be an entity in itself that does not require completion, he simply places them one after another and sees them as being related through their co-existence in space . . . therefore, [Cage’s compositions] might well be likened to a shower of meteors of sound” (Cowell 133). Understanding Cowell’s elucidation, *Freeman Etudes* is to be envisaged as a collection of soundscapes that infiltrate our ears in colourful bursts and sparks.

Freeman Etudes can also be appreciated if an understanding of the concept is embraced; however, the chaotic sounds of the violin can be alienating for those unfamiliar with Cage's work and philosophy. A long term Cage listener who surveyed these *Etudes* positively said they sounded like “. . . disconnected pitches, plotting extreme intervals in extreme registers, with an ever-shifting kaleidoscope of attacks and tonal effects, outline a jagged, disjunct, drastically unfamiliar kind of melody . . . each etude is a chain of sounds with no recognizable logic, pattern, or continuity” (Lange). Many listeners will grasp onto the fact that it sounds like noisy chaos, and forget about Cage's intent of this opus. It can easily be considered as noisy unintelligible gibberish. The more detrimental fact is that *Freeman Etudes*, and additionally, Cage's Aleatoric music, are surmised by even critics; they “. . . assume that the compositions are formless and without distinguishing characteristics since they believe them to be, in effect, barely more than random noise” (Pritchett, *Music 2*).

The irony is that Cage does have intent behind every composition. The fact that he propounds enquiries in every piece means there is an intent. Cage once said to Burt Folkart from the *LA Times*, “In my works that employ chance I have an awareness of the whole piece, the various things that might happen”, establishing the fact that he indeed is composing with an objective. Despite his career-long objective to abdicate personality and disown all sorts of styles, there is still intent behind his compositions. Without intent, Cage would not have asked performers to defeat the near-impossible complexities. Without intent, there would not have been a socio-political agenda in the construct of *Freeman Etudes*.

There are issues with writing music that is more philosophical than an artistic stimulant. As Joseph McLellan elaborates, “Cage's music is often more enjoyable to think about than to hear . . .” (“John Cage The Art of Noise”). Reich further explicates that “The processes he used were compositional ones that could not be heard when the piece was performed” (qtd. in Bernard 107). In regards to *Freeman Etudes*, this means Cage's politicised message (or his message of nothing is insurmountable) is beguiling as an abstraction, yet that appeal does not translate verbatim to the audience (sometimes performers too). Moreover, the effort is made

more difficult for people approaching the *Etudes* since the inherent message of the collection might become lost between performer and listener.

Alternatively, Cage's Aleatoric compositions ". . . are not concerned with anything even remotely musical. These are 'conceptual' works . . . [where the] importance lies in [Cage] having originated these ideas, but the results are not music and are not to be evaluated as music" (Pritchett, *Music* 2). Heeding to this perspective, the *Freeman Etudes* should thus be approached as a philosophical concept. The violinist is merely the messenger who is giving a voice which is embodied in the form of the score. Any protests against the collection's perceived non-musical elements can be nullified as it was not originally intended as a musical composition.

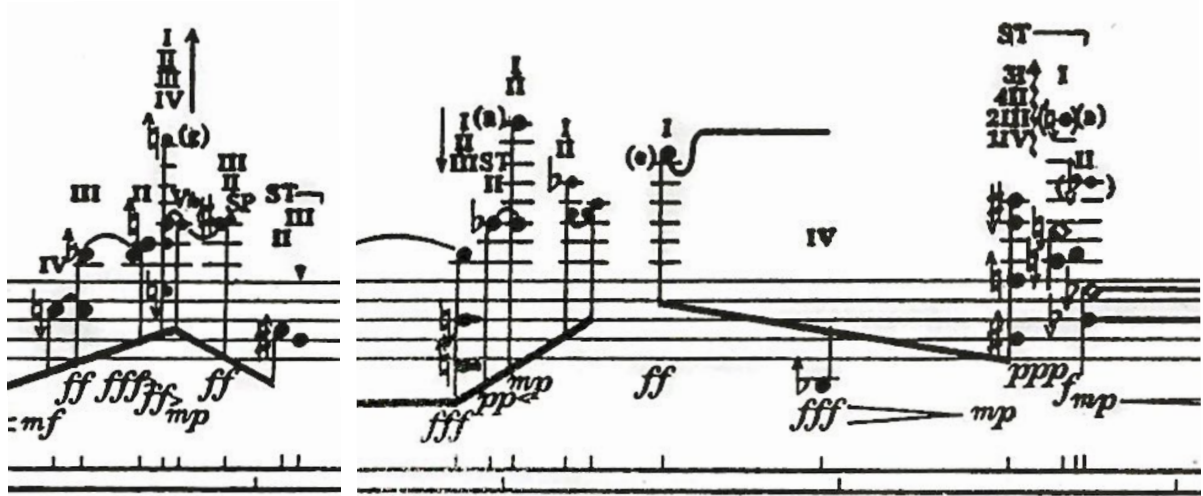
COMPLEXITY IN *FREEMAN ETUDES*

The syntax of the *Freeman Etudes* is quite complex, challenging the traditional capabilities of violin performance, and does so by demanding severe physical prowess and stamina, super-human mental tenacity, while, at the end of the day, failing to engage or gratify audiences. In these *Etudes*' case, the complexity is evident in the barrage of information Cage mandates for every note, every system, and every *Etude*. Every single note has a different nuance; all are prescribed with a dynamic, timbre, register, string, and attack (Ex. 2 & 3). This bombardment of information, both sensory and tactile, can overwhelm a performer. The subsequent choices they make constantly affect the performance's outcome and also, the psyche of the performer themselves.

The seemingly intimidating wealth of instructions on the score can inundate the performer to the brink where they are only capable of focusing on the notation and nothing else. This notational rigour, unfortunately, can lead to the performer ". . . follow[ing instructions] without involving too much of the musician's creativity" (Orning 310). In other words, the performer can easily fall into the role of a golem⁹ performing musical acts. While superficially,

⁹ Cage uses this colourful term in the liner notes of Zukofsky's recording *Violin Music*.

this attitude will seem exemplary due to Cage's advocacy for personality eschewal, it actually counteracts Cage's socio-political intent for the work. It also opposes Cage's life-long tenet of asking questions in his music.



Ex. 2 'Measure' 2, Line 3, Page 1 of "Etude I" (Cage, *Freeman Etudes I - XVI : Books 1 & 2*)

Ex. 3 'Measure' 4-6, Line 3, Page 1 of "Etude I" (Cage, *Freeman Etudes I - XVI : Books 1 & 2*)

To appropriately answer the questions that *Freeman Etudes* engenders, the performer has to become an entity beyond a musical golem. With the abundance of intricacies seen in the *Etudes*, competent violin skills will not be enough to attain eloquence. Only a performer of highest calibre will be capable of delivering a successful rendition. With less concentration on the mundane technical problems of the piece, the performer will be able to realise Cage's underlying socio-political dimension of the *Etudes*.

A common misinterpretation that arises when tackling compositions of this level of notational complexity is that "... complex writing is intended only for the eye, for the analysers and musicologists rather than for musicians" (Orning 304). There is no denying that complex scores have an unmitigated effect on the eyes. The initial reaction is vital, and in most cases, when seeing complexity, performers will likely feel anxious or hostile, and rush to judgement that the piece is more theoretical than musical, and not worth the trouble..

Freeman Etudes, unfortunately, suffer the same fate as New Complexity repertoire due to its appearance on paper. There is however soundness for this shunning. Before 'Book 1' and

'Book 3' of the *Etudes*, Cage supplies a short preface, detailing for the performer all the aspects of the *Etudes*, including all the meanings behind the different signs and symbols, and there are many. This (dense) anecdote hardly mitigates the formidable impression that the score makes upon first glance. The melodic lines that most violinists are accustomed to are missing. Instead, we are left with Cage's writing at its most intricate and arduous. There are no key or time signatures. Time and rhythm are instead indicated by the lines below the staff. These lines are extra information, information that could have been translated into the staff via bar lines and rhythms. The particulars listed above may have a cumulative effect of overwhelming the violinist, especially during a live performance.

ELASTICITY FOR ARTISTS THROUGH ALEATORICISM

A year before his death, Cage said of his compositions, "I am not aware of any of the details. Those things happen in a way that makes me a tourist — someone who sees everything for the first time — in my own composition" (Folkart). This proves that notwithstanding what turmoil or wretchedness the performer is undertaking while performing the *Freeman Etudes*, listeners can enjoy the unsystematic surprises that they are infected with, which is good.

A matter that might frustrate the violinist when faced with the *Freeman Etudes* is its Aleatoric writing. Despite the pedantic notation and stipulations, there are still some plastic elements, like the timing and placement of every sound in the piece. Violinists are given "much greater latitude" (Buettner 150), and it suggests that the *Etudes* will be "virtually new with each performance" (Buettner 150). Also, even this meagre flexibility means every violinist will realise the work differently, bringing to audiences and Cage a variety of renderings of the *Freeman Etudes*. Cage will enjoy being a tourist to every concert, which will also satiate his hunger for newness since he despised repeating himself. Many violinists might be turned off by these sentiments. Also, violinists innately want to "preserve [an] integrity of individual expression" (Hoogerwerf 239) which equates to control, which is the opposite of the Aleatoricism of the *Freeman Etudes*. Aleatoric music is a ". . . purposeful denial of all elements

of controlled self-expression[,] . . . free of personality and individual taste . . .” (Hoogerwerf 239). Cage is composing in the Aleatoric manner because he wanted to “. . . depersonalise the process of compositions . . . [which is not] any sort of denial, but rather an affirmation of existing sounds, free from restricting associations” (Hoogerwerf 239). Performers who abide by the *Etudes*' Aleatoric properties might feel that they are giving up control, and for so many, giving up their emotional investment. The gruelling hours can seem futile for performers because no ideal result can be reached.

THE INTEGRATION OF PERCUSSION AND VIOLIN

To successfully comprehend the polarising timbres of *Freeman Etudes*, performers have to review Cage's oeuvre in its entirety. “. . . Cage loved noise. . . . He made his name as a composer for percussion, manufacturing instruments from brake drums, hubcaps, spring coils, and other cast-off car parts. At the same time, he was bewitched by soft sounds, rustlings on the border between noise and silence” (A. Ross 398). Knowing Cage's fondness for sounds of all qualities and sorts, when examining all of the articulations in *Freeman Etudes*, one should regard them as a guide. Every articulation, dynamic, or other instruction should be understood literally. Cage was not a composer who intended one sort of timbre. He welcomed variety, and he strived to notate his fondness for sonic abundance.

Cage's percussive elements are a proclivity that was fostered by his percussion teachings and collaborations with dancers (Revill 54-55). The experimental component in his percussive inclinations was also nurtured by Cowell, who imparted to Cage its importance through his teachings and own experimentations (Miller 82-83). Thus, despite *Freeman Etudes* being explicitly written for violin with all the notations and articulations dictated via chance procedures, one cannot ignore the smatterings of percussive peculiarities in the collection.

The extended techniques that can emulate percussive sounds were chosen by Cage. As well as desiring the collection to be as difficult as possible, Cage also wanted (intentionally or otherwise) percussive characteristics to be incorporated in the *Freeman Etudes*. Although this

ensures that the product will be quite fascinating, it can also be an ordeal for the performer. Simply put, for the *Freeman Etudes*, a violinist will need to think quite differently to realise the work. The altering of timbre necessitates the performer to alter their mindset and approach to their instrument.

FREEMAN ETUDES AND THE ERA OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Lastly, the inescapable issue regarding *Freeman Etudes*' lack of popularity is perhaps in its exposure — or lack thereof. As mentioned above, this collection of miniatures is scarcely known amongst mainstream audiences. Music, in general, relies on performances, recordings, and broadcasting to gain acclaim. Before the introduction of recordings, the only avenue to promote works was in concerts. Now, performers and composers have an array of platforms, online streaming like Spotify and Apple Music, recordings, online social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, and live venues.

However, the ease in accessing these platforms also means ease in neglecting them. The advantage of premiering works in live concerts is the listeners' role as a member of an obligatory audience, regardless of their feelings about the music being presented. With multimedia, one can skip, or ignore music they do not enjoy. With a collection like *Freeman Etudes*, factoring hits, profit, streaming statistics, and the fact that it is an acquired taste, even for new music connoisseurs, provides a less ideal outlook.

A simple perusal will reveal the lack of support Cage's music has from major recording labels. Cage's music is also rather rarely performed in live concerts. As Taruskin observes, "The *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* claims flatly that Cage 'has had a greater impact on world music than any other American composer of the twentieth century.' Yet as one looks around at today's music world, it is hard to find evidence of that" (277). Rob Haskins expands further on the relationship between Cage and the recording industry: "For the most part, the major labels have long ceased any commitment to Cage's work . . . and some of the most significant releases . . . appear on small labels with precious little budget for advertising or

distribution” (“Recorded Sound” 400). His struggle with major labels reflects his demand, or lack of demand, but more importantly, his attachment to a small label means the circulation of his music is not as ubiquitous as Beethoven's *9th Symphony*. Consequently, Cage's music (apart from *4'33"*) is less publicised, and it can lead to what Taruskin earlier observed, a lack of it in performing venues.

However, since Cage's death, technology has made exponential advancements. The current milieu is dominated by technology. Recording equipment is very accessible. The ease in self-producing a well-made recording successfully is quite attainable. More so, this can be all achieved from home, and it can be easily uploaded onto the internet. The convenience in recording and promotion has developed rapidly in the past few decades. People now listen to music on YouTube or Spotify, and if CDs and vinyls are bought or used, it primarily fulfils one's need to hark back to the past.

Thus, despite the scantness of Cage's music in recordings and over the Internet, the ease in disseminating music (streaming and file sharing) is the reason pieces like *Freeman Etudes* can also proliferate. People with abstruse taste may now obtain music that correlates with their taste. Before the advancement of sound technology, abstruse music was a rarity in live concerts; audiences who sought distinctive music of that sort had to cope with the inconvenience. *Freeman Etudes* can now easily travel to anyone, especially in recent times, where online sharing has taken a precedent.

The sound recording has also provided listeners with an unbiased view of the performer(s). With the lack of visuals, it forces audiences to rely only on their hearing for the music they are listening to. For the *Freeman Etudes*, it works both for it and against it. The advantage of not seeing a performance in a composition like the *Freeman Etudes* is that listeners are barred from seeing the performer's considerable effort. Thus, their verdict of the collection is entirely reliant upon what they hear.

In contrast, there is new-found interest in YouTube music recordings that visually stream the score. There are also benefits in having a performer embellish a work visually. An

article in *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* defends the value for visuals in performances: “. . . the visual component of the live music performance contributes significantly to the appreciation of music performance” (Platz and Kopiez 71). Assuming the violinist will capitalise on the visual elements of the performance, the complexity of the *Freeman Etudes* can perhaps become an asset for the work. By underscoring the intricacies, the arduousness then metamorphosises from pure struggle to artistic extravaganza.

Perhaps another issue of performing live during the current era is the challenge of capturing the modern listener's attention. If one can access music easily, one can also forget the music easily. The “recording allows the listener to be as distracted [and] as not-present . . .” (Grubbs xix), hence resulting in the recording becoming “. . . background music, where repeated plays counteract or nullify the kind of attention that an audience focuses on a performance that will be heard only once” (Grubbs 74). Henceforth, if a listener is used to having an unfocused manner when listening to music, that attitude might follow them even when they become an attentive audience. In the case of *Freeman Etudes*, does it mean the violinist has to overstate gestures sonically (which might be dissonant with Cage's intentions) and overtly gesticulate to keep their audiences attentively attuned?

A final consideration when discussing *Freeman Etudes* and sound technology is the matter concerning mainstream listeners. Schoenberg argues in his book *Theory of Harmony* that listeners have a polarising need in music: “. . . the demand for repetition of pleasant stimuli, and the opposing desire for variety, for change . . .” (48). An article in *Plos One*, “Instrumentational Complexity of Music Genres and Why Simplicity Sells” uses Schoenberg's argument by pointing to an example that most of society can relate to, pop music.

Leaning more towards the notion that simplicity is more profitable than progressive artistry, the publication compares the sales numbers between Justin Timberlake's and Daft Punk's 2013 albums. While both albums are popular, Timberlake's album is inevitably more in demand. Though Daft Punk's album is arguably more intricate and won the 2013 Grammy 'Album of the Year', and received critical acclaim for revitalising pop music (Percino et al. 2), it

did not become the most profitable album of 2013. Timberlake's album prevailed. The contrast between them: Timberlake's producer took into account the demographics and tastes of the targeted audience; there were simply fewer complications (Percino et al. 2).

Furthermore, Percino, Klimek, and Thurner explain the seemingly paradoxical actions of style and popularity: "As a style increases its numbers of albums . . . its variety also increases. At the same time the style's uniformity becomes smaller . . . Album sales numbers of a style, however, typically increase with *decreasing* complexity" (Percino et al. 13). In other words, when a particular style proliferates in approval, it also evolves in artistic intricacies. Sales increase when simplicity overrides complexity. Another way to interpret this is that once anything attains vogue status, it also diminishes in quality. *Freeman Etudes* is founded upon complexities. Rendering it, in terms of marketability, it is the antithesis of what is necessary to allure listeners.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARING *FREEMAN ETUDES* WITH ITS CONTEMPORARIES

To better understand the strengths and deficiencies that the *Freeman Etudes* possesses, it may be conducive to compare it with a few prominent contemporaries.

JOHN CAGE: ETUDES AUSTRALES

18
IX



The image shows a musical score for 'Etude IX' by John Cage. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble and bass staff, and the second system also has a treble and bass staff. The notation is complex, featuring many notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also some unusual symbols and markings, such as a star-like symbol and a 'b' with a dot, which are characteristic of Cage's aleatoric notation. The score is labeled '18 IX' at the top left.

Ex. 4 Line 1, Page 1 of "Etude IX" (Cage, *Etudes Australes: Books 1 & 2* 18)

The closest musical work to the *Freeman Etudes* is its sister *Etudes Australes*. Most components are identical other than the instrumentation (Ex. 4). Both are conceived Aleatorically. Cage used star maps and the *I Ching* to determine the notation and articulation for both. Both comprise four books of eight etudes each and both have socio-political inclinations.

Coincidentally, the difference in instrumentation is the primary advantage *Etude Australes* has over the *Freeman Etudes*. Cage had a penchant for rhythm, percussion, and the piano. It shall not be forgotten that ". . . Cage was first a pianist . . . and to the extent that any individual instrument can be at the root of his compositional imagination, it is the piano" (Kostelanetz, *Innovative* 44). Taking this matter into consideration, it is justifiable to state that Cage's composition mannerisms are inherently more pianistic.

Arguably, it can be contended that due to the Aleatoric nature of these compositions, Cage had no sway in how pianistic or not these collections became. However, this defence is easily quashed — there should be a reminder that before Cage imposed the star maps and the *I Ching* unto his manifold of articulations and notational options, Cage had authority over the type of notation and articulation being used. Because he was a pianist first, Cage will be preferentially pianistic in his organisation, subconsciously or not.

A perusal of the score in addition to a thorough listen to multiple recordings authenticate the previous claim. Much of the struggle in performing the *Freeman Etudes* is spawned from the rapidity of register and attack changes. There are quite a few moments when the leaps and quick shifts are awkward; either due to the extremely high notes on the G-String or because the succession of aggregates are severely swift, accomplishing them at the correct velocity is near impossible. Conjuring the fantasy of performing the same complex notations on the piano is like a respite into a daydream. Gone are the tricky jumps, or worse, the impossible finds due to arbitrary intervals or registers. *Freeman Etudes* precipitate much frustration, mainly over the inability to find the correct pitch. Violinists are literally required to find notes in high registers or positions out of nowhere.

Secondly, the soundscape of *Freeman Etudes* is predominately a concoction of sonic moments. Nothing is related to anything, and even though it is a de-personalised artwork, every note has a separate narrative to tell. Due to every note being a one-man island, it also sounds like relentless jabs of colours, occasionally interrupted by an undulated sound — *vibrato* indication — or moments of continuous sound — notation connection indication. Relentless jabbing can also be translated into relentless hits, which is a replica of percussive instruments, namely piano and percussion. The ease, which can be audibly and perhaps visually detected by audiences, might promote a more positive reception towards the piano etudes.

JOHN CAGE: SIX MELODIES FOR VIOLIN AND KEYBOARD (PIANO)

One of Cage's more vogueish violin works is *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard (Piano)*. Written in 1950, it was conceived during a time of mental turmoil for Cage. He was gradually reconciling with his homosexuality and found a remedy in Zen Buddhism (Ratcliff). Structurally, this set of pieces follows his *String Quartet in Four Parts* which he composed in 1935. He even calls it a "postscript" to the quartet in a letter to Pierre Boulez (Freudenheim). Both are uniform in the atmosphere; aloof and apathetic. Furthermore, *Six Melodies* "recycles fragments from the *String Quartet*" (Haskins, "Works for Violin 4" 85). The impersonality in *Six Melodies* is engendered by Cage's request for the violinist to perform with minimum bow pressure and no vibrato. In both pieces, both exploit the same compositional techniques in sound and rhythm. A certain amount of sonorities are set in place first: singles tones, intervals, and aggregates. These sonorities, called gamuts (Fig. 3), are then clustered in particular manners to create distinctive abstracts. Also, in both compositions, the temporal structure for each piece and phrase is identical; 3 1/2, 3 1/2, 4, 4, 3, 4 (Freudenheim).

THESE MELODIES ARE WRITTEN IN THE
RHYTHMIC STRUCTURE: 3 1/2, 3 1/2, 4, 4, 3, 4
(WHEN THE TEMPO IS 92 (rubato 76-108)).
THE VIOLIN STRINGS TO BE PLAYED ARE
ALL INDICATED:



PLAY THE VIOLIN WITHOUT VIBRATO AND WITH
MINIMUM WEIGHT ON THE BOW.

THE PEDALS OF THE PIANO ARE INDICATED:

PEDAL = _____
UNA CORDA = - - - - -

ACCIDENTALS APPLY ONLY TO THOSE NOTES THEY
DIRECTLY PRECEDE.

Fig. 3 John Cage's composer notes in *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard (Piano)*

Despite a stark contrast in the appearance of the score, there is homogeneity between *Freeman Etudes* and *Six Melodies*; they are both scant in expressive markings — undoubtedly a commodity of Cage’s philosophy of ridding personality from his composing, and both intend for the performer and listener to subject themselves to all the surrounding sounds and noises. Both pieces are comprised of atypical melodic lines — or in the *Etudes*’ case, no melody at all — and both pieces are given a set of rigid modules in an otherwise free environment: *Freeman Etudes* with its articulations and ictuses, and *Six Melodies* with its specified choices of string for every note.

However, because Cage intended the *Etudes* to be as difficult as possible, and the *Melodies* as sparse as possible, the divergence of density also caused a discrepancy in the gradation of technical difficulties in the two works. The *Etudes* are noticeably harder; the cause mainly lies in the rapidity of notes and the boundless range in articulation and registers, while the *Melodies* are only based around 20 notes. The disparity in technical difficulty is evident. Thus, the *Melodies* are consequently more accessible to performers.

In addition, the *Melodies* are composed with a more melodious prose than the *Etudes*. As discussed earlier, a large number of people crave their music easygoing and pleasant to the ear, and between the two sets, *Six Melodies* is undeniably more pleasant, largely due to its subtle and intricate timbre. *Freeman Etudes* is also intricate, yet the simple fact that it comprises considerable leaps and attacks of an often harsher nature — the combination of *sul pont* and *fortissimo*, and stratospherically high double stops — can be irritating to some and possibly deter them. Even Irvine Arditti, who pioneered the latter half of the *Freeman Etudes* jokingly admitted that “. . . it is an endurance test. I always tell promoters they should lock the concert hall doors!” (Hewett). This nonchalant comment by the violinist who inspired Cage to complete the set is very revealing.

Between *Freeman Etudes* and *Six Melodies*, the primary argument for the case of *Six Melodies* lies in its accessibility. As with *Freeman Etudes* and *Etudes Australes*, it seems as though *Six Melodies* are much easier to comprehend for both performers and listeners.

However, the listeners' judgement of a composition often is a result of the performer's reaction to the composition. As Zukofsky explains, "You can't convince an audience unless you the performer are convinced and convincing" (qtd. in Reel).

JOHN CAGE: CHEAP IMITATION FOR VIOLIN SOLO

In the midst of writing *Freeman Etudes*, Cage also wrote three other works for violin: *Cheap Imitation*, *Choral*, and *Eight Whiskus*. To be more accurate, all three were based on another piece of his, for another instrument or voice. By briefly exploring some of these 'transcriptions' he made for violin, perhaps a better comprehension of Cage's violin writing emerges.

Cheap Imitation was originally written for solo piano in 1969. In 1977, in collaboration with Zukofsky, Cage arranged his original *Cheap Imitation* for solo violin. Cage based the entire work on Erik Satie's *Socrate* (Nicholls 89). As described by William Brooks, "The rhythm, phrasing, and structure of the source were preserved; Cage even modified his method slightly so that exact repetitions of phrases in the original would be preserved" (132). The *I Ching* was used to ask questions pertaining to notation (Fig. 4). In the violin transcription, the bowings in the 3rd movement were also determined by the *I Ching* (Cage, "Liner notes").

The following information regarding the compositional means of *Cheap Imitation* appeared with the version for piano solo.

The *I Ching* (64 related to 7, to 12, etc.) was used to answer the following questions for each phrase (with respect to the melodic line and sometimes the line of accompaniment) of Erik Satie's *Socrate*:

- 1. Which of the seven "white note" modes is to be used?**
- 2. Beginning on which of the twelve chromatic notes?**

Then, in I (for each note excepting repeated notes):

- 3. Which note of given transposition is to be used?**

In II and III original interval relations were kept for one-half measure, sometimes (opening measures and subsequent appearances) for one measure.

Fig. 4 John Cage's composer notes in *Cheap Imitation for Violin Solo* (2)

A constant among *Freeman Etudes* and *Cheap Imitation* is the specification of the string to be used for specified notes. In *Freeman Etudes*, nearly every note is noted with a specific string. In *Cheap Imitation*, though not as specific as *Freeman Etudes*, there are moments when specific strings are designated (Ex. 5). Retrospectively, it resonates more with *Six Melodies* — (compare Ex. 5 & Ex. 6).

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff contains a sequence of notes with string designations III, IV, III, II, I, III, IV, III, II, III, IV, III. The bottom staff continues the sequence with string designations III, II, III, II, III, IV, IV, III, IV, III, III, II, I. Dynamics markings include *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. A dashed line underlines the first two staves.

Ex. 5 Line 4-5, Page 7 of *Cheap Imitation for Violin Solo*

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff features chordal structures with string designations A, D, B, A, D, B, A, D, B, A, D, B. The bottom staff shows the corresponding bass line. A dashed line underlines the bottom staff.

Ex. 6 Line 4, Page 2 of *Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard*

Interestingly, *Cheap Imitation*, a piece originally for piano, is many instances more friendly for a violinist than *Freeman Etudes*. The method of using *Socrate* as the source has engendered relatively traditional notation (Ex. 7). Cage articulated phrasing for the composition (the dotted slurs), giving it a sense of direction. Instead of being confronted with a collage of arbitrary sounds, *Cheap Imitation* offers the performer and listener phrases with melodic contour. However, the perceived simplicity in the score is a mere illusion. Cage explains in the preface of the score that the tuning is Pythagorean. Following that statement, he clarifies in detail where each note should be situated (in cents) with fractional explanations — Fig. 5.

I

JOHN CAGE
(EDITED BY PAUL ZUKOFSKY)

Ex. 7 Line 1-2, Page 4 of *Cheap Imitation* for Violin Solo

Such detail and specification in pitch organisation are comparable to the detail and specification *Freeman Etudes* demands from violinists in articulation and left-hand placement. As with to *Freeman Etudes*, where Cage asks violinists to “omit” (*Freeman Etudes: XVII - XXXII* 33) anything that might hinder the performance, Cage also relieves the violinist from the anxiety of tuning all the pitches to a precise frequency by notifying violinists: “Rather than making this difference of 24 cents precise, the violinist should sometimes increase it, even to 40 cents, in order to distinguish tones from another” (*Cheap Imitation* 3). By interpreting *Cheap Imitation*’s Pythagorean pitches more as guidance than a requirement, a successful

comprehension of it is more feasible than the *Freeman Etudes* which allows (tolerates) optional omissions.

The intonation is Pythagorean following the definition of this system by Hermann Helmholtz (On the Sensations of Tone, p. 312):

tuning proceeded by ascending Fifths, thus –

C G D A E B F# C# G# D# A# E# B#.

Now if we tune two Fifths upwards and an Octave downwards, we make a step having the ratio $\frac{3}{2} \times \frac{3}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{9}{8}$, which is a major Second. This gives for the pitch of every second tone in the last list –

C D E F# G# A# B#
 1 $\frac{9}{8}$ $(\frac{9}{8})^2$ $(\frac{9}{8})^3$ $(\frac{9}{8})^4$ $(\frac{9}{8})^5$ $(\frac{9}{8})^6$.

Now if we proceed downwards by Fifths from C we obtain the series –

C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb Cb Fb Bbb Ebb Abb Dbb.

If we descend two Fifths and rise an Octave, we may obtain the tones –

C Bb Ab Gb Fb Ebb Dbb
 1 $\frac{9}{8}$ $(\frac{9}{8})^2$ $(\frac{9}{8})^3$ $(\frac{9}{8})^4$ $(\frac{9}{8})^5$ $(\frac{9}{8})^6$

Now the interval $(\frac{9}{8})^6 = \frac{262144}{531441} = \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{524288}{531441}$
 or, approximately $(\frac{9}{8})^6 = \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{7}{4}$
 $(\frac{9}{8})^6 = 2 \times \frac{7}{4}$.

Hence the tone B# is higher than the Octave of C by the small interval $\frac{7}{4}$ (=24 cents), and the tone Dbb is lower than the Octave below C by the same interval. If we ascend by perfect Fifths from C to A#, we shall find the same constant difference between

C G D A E B F# C#
 Dbb Abb Ebb Bbb Fb Cb Gb Db
 G# D# A# E# B# F# C# G# A#
 Ab Eb Bb F C G D A B.

The tones in the upper line are all higher than those in the lower by the small interval $\frac{7}{4}$ (=24 cents).

Fig. 5 John Cage's composer notes in *Cheap Imitation for Violin Solo* (3)

From a listener's point of view, many particulars are not audible: the complexity of attaining *Cheap Imitation's* Pythagorean tuning or the many obstacles violinists face in *Freeman Etudes*. Obviously, without prior knowledge, the socio-political agenda of *Freeman Etudes* is imperceptible for unprepared listeners. An audience will hear *Cheap Imitation* as a

piece with a simple line, albeit with a non-conventional harmonic structure. Contrastingly, *Freeman Etudes* will portray a nebula of distinctive sonic gestures, all with different timbres. Visually, due to the nature of the score, *Freeman Etudes* will require more showmanship.

Consequently, if *Cheap Imitation* is to be performed by more amateur violinists, it would perhaps be heard as a more perfunctory composition. In addition, the required smoothness in bow control might not be fulfilled, which will cause discontinuity in the composition's lyricism. In a live performance, a violinist who mismanages the simplicity of *Cheap Imitation* could appear uninspired. And as mentioned earlier, the labour of a violinist trying to realise *Freeman Etudes* will be tangible. Hence, under the manipulations of more amateur violinists, both *Freeman Etudes* and *Cheap Imitation* similarly present tangible challenges.

JOHN CAGE: CHORALS FOR VIOLIN SOLO

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Ex. 8 "Solo for Voice 85" (Cage, *Song Books: Volume II* 289)

Chorals for violin solo is based on *Solo for Voice 85* (Ex. 8) from his *Song Books*. The primary tenet of *Song Books* is “connect[ing] Satie with Thoreau” (Cage, *Song Books* 1). Some songs are relevant to this subject matter, and some are not. In the particular case of *Solo for Voice 85*, it is relevant.

Chorals was conceived after Zukofsky encouraged Cage to produce “. . . continuous music of disparate elements, single tones, unisons, and beatings” (Cage, “Liner notes”). Synchronous to *Freeman Etudes*’ compositional procedures, Cage involved a staff (etched onto transparent paper) and the *I Ching* in determining all the notation and articulation of the work (Cage, “Liner notes”). Similar to *Cheap Imitations*, Cage conveys his fondness for Satie by using Satie’s *Douze Chorales* as a foundational constituent in his notational process. Like *Cheap Imitation*, it was also a prerequisite to *Freeman Etudes* in his quest for solo violin writing (Haskins, *The Complete John Cage Edition*).

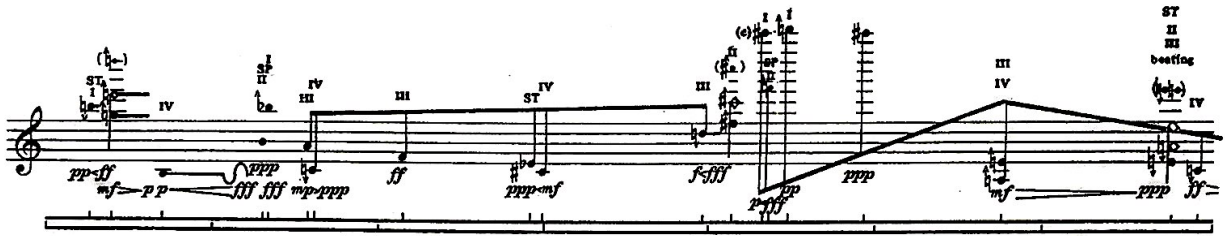
Chorals immediately correspond to *Freeman Etudes* in its structure: although not as large as the *Etudes*, it is a set of nine miniatures. Cage’s attention to detail that is evident in *Freeman Etudes* is also rendered here: every note has a designated string. *Chorals* is also similar to *Freeman Etudes* in its precise control of pitch. Once again, Cage notates microtonal inflections with great care and precision,

Unlike *Freeman Etudes*, the placement of every note in *Chorals* is not as precise. *Freeman Etudes* implemented lines (nearly like graphic notation) to detail where every note was meant to sound within the preferable three-second bar. *Chorals* only differentiates phrases with commas, and the placement of the notes are not indicated.

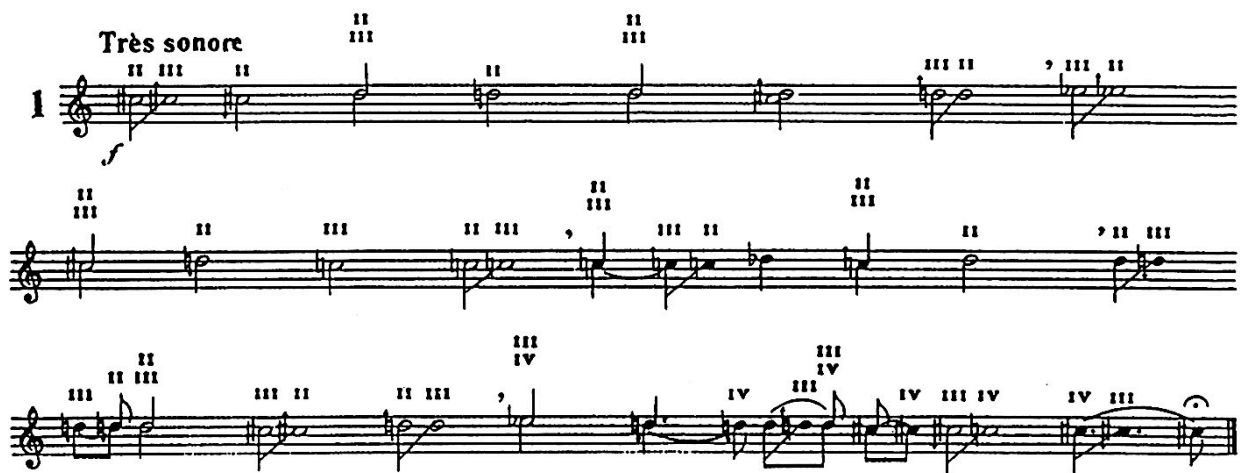
The content of the composition is also quite dissimilar. Where *Freeman Etudes* is more like a palette of sonic gestures, *Chorals* instead exudes an air of sonic phrases. Perhaps this is because it was originally a vocal composition. Notating traditional time values in addition to the exclusion of bar lines implies to performers the need for sustainability.

This sustaining element of the composition is also what sonically distinguishes *Chorals* from *Freeman Etudes*. The route *Freeman Etudes* took veers towards the whimsical.

Sometimes, there are also semblances of flying due to the wispy gestures Cage imposes in *Freeman Etudes*. This is because *Freeman Etudes* is notated without stems. Stems are used in any chord larger than a dyad, or when lines are drawn between notes to indicate sustained pitches (Ex. 9). In *Chorals*, Cage uses conventional time values. Furthermore, *Chorals*' use of mainly sustained notes generates a more grounded impression – Ex. 10.



Ex. 9 Line 2, Page 1 of "Etude I" (Cage, *Freeman Etudes I - XVI : Books 1 & 2*)



Ex. 10 *Chorales I* (Cage, *Chorales for Violin Solo 1*)

Despite their differing notation, both *Freeman Etudes* and *Chorals* are comparable in concept and content. *Chorals* infuses the concept of connecting a French avant-gardist composer and an American anarchist philosopher, therefore homogenising itself with the thesis of *Freeman Etudes*. In addition, *Chorals* also demands a substantial amount of exertion from the performer. Though seemingly short, to undertake sizeable phrases that require sustain from the bow hand in addition to necessitating the left hand to stretch for difficult unisons, is rather exacting on the violinist.

The investigation into the various violin compositions Cage wrote concurrently with *Freeman Etudes* shows versatility in his violin composition approaches. While there is no denying that chance procedures sometimes inadvertently yield pleasing harmonies, Cage managed to explore all dimensions of the violin, realising a panoply of sonic effects and techniques. Due to Cage's desire to use chance to determine every element of his writing, often the bowings and or string used is unorthodox. As a result, a consistent feature in Cage's compositions is his somewhat awkward writing. Furthermore, for all of Cage's compositional dogma, which espouses purposelessness and the removal of self, his enthusiasm in posing questions in his compositions imbues even the thorniest of his pieces with an almost endearing quality. It is as if he really does not wish for his work to be taken too seriously, or even seriously at all. In this he shares much with his hero Satie.

SALVATORE SCIARRINO: SEI CAPRICCI

In 1976, A year before the *Freeman Etudes* were conceived, Salvatore Sciarrino composed a set of solo violin caprices for Salvatore Accardo called *Sei Capricci*. The similarities between the two collections lie in their intentions; both composers wrote their collections for specific violinists. Otherwise, the *Etudes* and the *Caprices* diverge in abstraction and soundscape.

N.3

Ex. 11 Line 1-2, Page 1 of “Caprice No. 3” (Sciarrino, *Sei Capricci* 6)

Both works reach a fiendish level of difficulty. As we've seen, Cage has the performer jumping all around the instrument like an acrobat creating a somewhat kaleidoscopic effect. Sciarrino composed the majority of his set in harmonics to express the whimsical and spectral gamut of the violin (Ex. 11). Both works require the performer to possess formidable facility in order to realise all their technical complexities and artistic intricacies successfully.

Upon further examination, Sciarrino's *Sei Capricci* is more akin to Cage's *Six Melodies*, when considering their simple and quaint soundscapes. Both are soft in ambiance; Sciarrino took the route of fabricating zephyr-like vistas and evocative colours, while Cage took to constructing a meditative garden. Moreover, these two collections both require the violinist to use minimal bow pressure and no vibrato. The expressivity in these works is not the result of personalised vibrato or taste; rather, it is evoked by both the composers' ability in utilising the multifaceted elements of the violin. Also, similar to *Six Melodies*, *Sei Capricci* has elements derived from another work of his: *Sonatina for Violin and Piano (1975)*.

Lastly, *Sei Capricci* and *Six Melodies* have a commonality in being perhaps more accessible than *Freeman Etudes*. Despite the difficulties related to mastering the *Caprices* with its reliance upon the always tricky to play harmonics, Sciarrino manages to convey images of scenic soundscapes, provoking a much more tranquil sentiment. Also, it allows for a more comprehensible picture to be communicated to the audience due to its picturesqueness. Paul Griffiths, in his book *Modern Music and After*, details the entirety of Sciarrino's compositional style as tangible and acoustical based rather than theoretical: the acoustical facet is his “. . . savour [for] marginal sonorities: breathy sounds and multiphonics on woodwinds, harmonics, and all kinds of rustlings from string instruments, microtonal waverings, the vast possibilities of a hushed vocalism” (295), and the tangibility of his writing is substantiated in his concept, where “Sound for him is a living substance . . . tremulous as if with its own vital signs. At the same time, it bears the traces of human corporeality” (295). Sciarrino asserted that humanity in his writing through acoustical means; “Bodily rhythms of walking, pulse, and respiration are

often audible; the tremulousness may also suggest the scratching of a pen on paper, as if the music partly conveyed the sound of its being composed” (295).

In *Sei Capricci*, Sciarrino dispatches these intricate and life-emulating or lifelike mannerisms like breathing through his use of harmonics, *ponticello*, *niente*, *tremolo*, and *jeté*. The more jarring moments such as his critter like sounds are created by having the violinist interject with *pizzicatos*, *battutos*, *tremolos*, rapid brushing of the bow between fingerboard and bridge, and violently fast glissandos between a wide interval. The prismatic soundscape Sciarrino provides for listeners and violinists coincidentally bridges the gap between Cage’s *Freeman Etudes* and *Six Melodies*. *Sei Capricci* has an affinity with *Six Melodies* in its wispy, sometimes breathy concepts, yet it also has a kinship to *Freeman Etudes* in its usage of extended techniques.

More than the use of extended techniques, Sciarrino’s writing is similar to Cage’s writing in the *Etudes* in that he explores both the caustic and tender acoustic of the violin. Sciarrino’s malevolent outbursts, like scuttling insects during nightfall, broach the fringes of *Freeman Etudes’* erratically yet intricately arranged noises due to its complex soundscape. Beyond its impressionistic panoramic effects, Sciarrino delves into the more uncouth dimensions of the violin, mainly via the different bow strokes and loud dynamics. The barbarity used in *Sei Capricci* is channelled predominately through the right hand. In *Freeman Etudes*, Cage’s dip into barbarism is conducted via both the right hand extended techniques and the unsystematic leaping that the left hand has to undertake. The Aleatoric method Cage utilised for constructing the *Etudes* ensures steps and leaps between notes of all sorts, and of all velocities.

The compositional method — Cage’s Aleatoricism compared to Sciarrino’s more formulaic writing — of both opuses is perhaps the crucial factor behind their polarising difficulty. In *Sei Capricci’s* case, once the performer becomes more acquainted with the intricacies of playing harmonics, there is a routine that can be adopted. Sciarrino’s writing has a direction that can be followed, even if it is mostly based upon imagery, and thus, the performer is able to create a fathomable personalised map. In contrast, *Freeman Etudes* scarcely allows a

performer to orient themselves in a ‘typical’ coherent abstraction, or find a formulaic method in which to settle. Consequently, if a performer is grappling with navigation in a piece, listeners will also struggle accordingly.

LUCIANO BERIO: SEQUENZA VIII

The same year Sciarrino composed his *Sei Capricci*, Luciano Berio composed *Sequenza VIII* for solo violin. Vastly different from his Italian contemporary, Berio’s *Sequenza VIII* is essentially a massive solo violin piece that is structured upon two notes — A and B. As Berio himself explains, the “. . . two notes . . . which, as in a chaconne, form the compass in the quite varied path of the piece” (Montague 137). By building upon this specific foundation, *Sequenza VIII*, in turn, is associated with Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Chaconne* from his *Partita No. 2 BWV 1004*, a “surely deliberate one, for Berio has cited the Chaconne as an influence on the *Sequenza*” (Montague 148). This connection corresponds with Sciarrino’s *Sei Capricci* since that collection is a homage to another prominent solo violin composition: Paganini’s *24 Caprices*. However, aside from the ancestral association and being both of Italian descent, *Sequenza VIII* shares more similarities with *Freeman Etudes* despite initial impressions of being dissimilar.

Sequenza VIII begins on a single note, and for most of the first page, like a siren, the violinist relentlessly plays long and loud (marked *fff*) drone-like crotchets that teeter around the substructural notes, A and B (Ex. 12).

luciano berio

♩ = 54
Sempre senza o poco vibrato, molto intenso e alla corda
fff

Ex. 12 Line 1-2, Page 1 of Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza VIII* (1)

Eugene Montague in “The Compass of Communications in *Sequenza VIII* for Violin” homogenised this composition to Umberto Eco’s novel *Foucault’s Pendulum*, describing the drones as “. . . a restless oscillation around a pair of pitches . . . communicat[ing] simultaneously a sense of urgency and a strange immobility . . . becom[ing] an inescapable focus for the listener” (137). Montague further elaborates by comparing the inescapable relentless oscillating notes to Eco’s quote “oscillate for eternity” in *Foucault’s Pendulum* (137), cementing his credo that *Sequenza VIII* transcends its literal meaning, and is an allegory for of civilisation.

Hinging on Montague’s postulation that *Sequenza VIII* is a near mirror of Eco’s *Foucault’s Pendulum* in style and connotation, this outlook insists that Berio organised this work not with violin technicalities or aesthetic imagery as the premise, but with a conceptual analogy that went beyond rhetoric. By underscoring the drones, more specifically the A-B relationship to a level of obsessiveness in the score, Berio not only conveyed a neurotic sentiment, but he also entranced listeners into a hypnotic illusion.

As detailed earlier, Cage rarely allowed mental or physical reprieve in the *Freeman Etudes*. Berio takes a similar route in mentally and physically exerting the performer to its limit. Firstly, the relentless oscillation with the “A and B” figure at a mostly overtly loud dynamic can strain the performer at a physical level. Beyond the repetitive figure, Berio’s expansion of the simple two-note theme involves innumerable awkward whirlwind-like passages, which inevitably causes strain on the left hand. The tension is only exacerbated by the nature of the work in that Berio does not allow the violinist any respite to recharge physically and mentally.

Despite *Sequenza VIII*’s obsessive and thundering nature, Berio imbued the work with a sense of direction. There is a theme, variations, a climax, and it ends traditionally in that the theme returns but at a much softer timbre. For listeners, it has shape, and the overwhelmingness of the simple ostinato creates order. The foundation is elementary. Listeners can easily grasp the context. In contrast, the events or gestures of Cage in *Freeman Etudes* sound random and disconnected, ensuring that many listeners may have difficulties in connecting to the work or finding in it any meaning.

GYÖRGY KURTÁG: SIGNS, GAMES, AND MESSAGES

György Kurtág's *Signs, Games, and Messages*, composed between 1961 and 2004 shares at least one sentiment in common with *Freeman Etudes* in that they both favour an atypical syntax — Kurtág's penchant for fragments and Cage's penchant for deliberate aimlessness. Marison Hestholm in his essay “Transformations of Appearance: Suddenness and the Modernist Fragment”, discusses fragmentary writing and Kurtág's pursuit of it, states that “. . . they are created as open and ambiguous fractions rather than closed and defined units. Works by . . . György Kurtág present this type of fragment — without any identifiable home surrounding or original context, they are ‘fragments of nothing’ and appear homeless” (163). Hestholm further explores the responsibility a composer has over the fragments, “the composer's creative task is to endow the fragment with a marked potential — to make it point beyond itself in its state of incompleteness” (163). Kurtág's venture into simple yet dense writing stems from a period of “. . . crisis that made it impossible for [him] to compose . . .” (Kurtág qtd. in Varga 6) in 1956. Seeking help, he turned to Hungarian psychologist Marianne Stein, who forced him to “. . . accept [himself] for what [he was]” (Kurtág qtd. in Varga 6) and got him to “. . . recognize that [he] had become disillusioned with [his] own self [and] [his] own character” (Kurtág qtd. in Varga 6). Stein's guidance saw Kurtág's mental health improving and it was reflected in his music: he began to foster ideas from the most basic musical concepts.

Signs, Games, and Messages, a collection of 16 aphorisms ranging from under a minute to the longest which is around 5 minutes, is an epitome of Kurtág's style. He manages to embody material as dense as a Proust novel within a few utterances. The extremely sparse writing ensures that only the essential is voiced; no redundancy occurs, and both performer and listener never experience the sour taste of overstaying.

Perhaps the advantage *Signs, Games, and Messages* has over *Freeman Etudes* is in length and character. While Kurtág arranged the pieces in fragments, there are still elements of direction throughout the miniatures. For example, “Hommage à John Cage — Faltering Words”, as the title mentions, is Kurtág's salutation to John Cage. Only six lines long (Ex. 13), the layout

is designed in accordance to its phrasing as indicated by line breaks, the dotted slurs over and below the notation, and the hats over and below the bar lines. More so, Kurtág indicates where the cesuras are with commas, and very long rests with the pause sign. In spite of being an unconventional patchwork of snippets, Kurtág's homage to John Cage has more normality than Cage's *Freeman Etudes* because his far more modest expressions are more akin to poetry than narrative, making it easier for listeners to comprehend.

Molto moderato [$\text{♩} = 132-126$]

p, poco dolce

pp *più pp, dolce* *p, come prima*

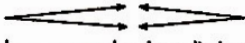

sub. in tempo

meno p, poco a poco dim. e calando

1987. IV.
rev.: 1991. VIII. 6.

Ex. 13 "Hommage à John Cage — Faltering Words" from György Kurtág's *Signs, Games, and Messages* (12)

Jelmagyarázat / Zeichenerklärung / The Signs Used

1. A „relatív”, nem hagyományos notáció hangértékei / Tonwerte in der „relativen” nicht-traditionellen Notation / Sound values in “relative”, non-traditional notation:
 - rövid / kurz / short
 - hosszú / lang / long
 - ⊙ nagyon hosszú / sehr lang / very long
 2. Időtartamot módosító jelek (hangok vagy szünetek felett) / Zeichen für die Veränderung der Zeitdauer (über den Noten oder Pausen) / Signs affecting duration (over notes or rests):
 - ⌒ rövidítés / gekürzt / shortened
 - ⌒ hosszabb nyújtás / stark verlängert / longer or even long prolongation
 - ⊙ nagyon hosszú nyújtás / sehr stark verlängert / very long prolongation
- NB. Ezek a jelek a hagyományosan lejegyzett ritmusértékekkel is előfordulhatnak, illetve önmagukban is állhatnak, szünetjelként / Diese Zeichen können auch bei der traditionellen Notation vorkommen, bzw. können als unabhängige Pausezeichen gelten / These signs can also be used in combination with traditional notation, or may serve as rest-signs by themselves:
- ⌒ rövid szünet / kurze Pause / short rest
 - ⌒ hosszabb szünet / längere Pause / long rest
 - ⊙ nagyon hosszú szünet / sehr lange Pause / very long rest
3.  crescendo – diminuendo kis, agogikus tempó-módosítással (a nyíl irányában gyorsul – lassul) / crescendo bzw. diminuendo mit kleine agogische Tempoänderung (Beschleunigung bzw. Verlangsamung in der Richtung des Pfeiles) / crescendo and diminuendo with slight agogical tempo-modification (moving ahead or holding back in the direction indicated by the arrow)
 4. A hosszú ívek frazeálási jelek, nem vonást jelölnek! / Die lange Bogen sind nur Frasierungszeichen, keine Bogenstriche! / Long slurs mean phrasing, not bowing!
 5. A frazeálási egységek vége / Ende der Frasierungseinheiten / Ends of phrasing units:
 - ⌒ cezúra / Zäsur / caesura sign
 - ⌒ a legrövidebb, előke hosszúságú cezúra / die kürzeste Zäsur, von Wert eines Vorschlags / the shortest caesura, the length of an appoggiatura
 -  motívumokat illetve frázisokat elválasztó ütemvonalat jelöl / bezeichnet einen Taktstrich, der Motiven oder Phrasen trennt / marks the bar lines, which form a boundary between motifs or phrases
 6. - egyszerű tenuto / einfaches tenuto / simple tenuto
 > marcato
 ^ marcatisimo

NB. > és ^ = mindig tenuto – kivéve, ha staccato-ponttal együtt szerepel (≧ vagy Δ). Ha a marcato-tenuto különösen fontos, külön jelölji: ≧ vagy Δ. / > und ^ = immer tenuto, falls ohne Staccato-punkt (≧ oder Δ). Wenn das marcato-tenuto äusserst wichtig ist, wird es mit ≧ oder Δ gekennzeichnet. / > and ^ = always tenuto if not combined with a staccato-point (≧ or Δ). If the marcato-tenuto is very important, it is sometimes notated ≧ or Δ.


 A karikával ellátott kottafejek az üveghangok hangzó magasságát jelölik. / Der kleine Kreis über den Notenkopf heisst, dass die Flageoletnote klingt, wie notiert. / A small circle above the note means that the note indicates the sounding pitch of the harmonics.

Fig. 6 Glossary of Signs for Signs, Games, and Messages (Kurtág 29)

In contrast to the rigidity of *Freeman Etudes*, Kurtág's use of commas and fermatas allow more fluidity in timing — glossary detailed in Fig. 6. For example, in *Faltering Words*, the first line includes three commas and a fermata. Kurtág in the glossary, simply defines short, long, or very long fermati as a guide for timing. The three commas in *Faltering Words*, which indicate caesura (pause or break to indicate phrase changing) is to be interpreted a variety of ways, according to the performer's decision. A break for a phrase change has no set time limit. Alternatively seen as a breath, the appropriate duration for breath is subjective to every performer and occasion. The fermata, which Kurtág denoted as "long rest" is placed at the end of the line. Logically, it is an indicator for the performer to take a longer than usual breather before the next musical sentence; thus, a fermata should be interpreted as a full stop or a semicolon.

The pliable nature of these signs, all to be realised subjectively, in turn, fosters a more personal climate for the piece. These delicate nuances, albeit subtle, can transform the meaning of a work. Moreover, the personalisation that Kurtág allows the violinist to undertake with his signs can cultivate a connection between listener and performer. Audiences thus feel more invited to be a share in the experience with the performer, rather than witness it, as may be the case with the Cage.

Everything is seemingly more cohesive; there are no sudden surprises in timbre or dynamics and textures are homogenous throughout. The other compositions in the opus take a similar direction in that they develop one idea. Kurtág's idea of cohesion is comparatively more traditional than that of Cage's. Cage's *Freeman Etudes* depends more on arbitrariness derived from Aleatoricism and the complexity of violin technicality. *Freeman Etudes* for listeners can initially seem more enigmatic, and when the cause for this is due to randomness and complex techniques, it can repel more than attract.

Secondly, though Cage's intricate use of violin extended techniques generates a genuinely kaleidoscopic effect, his reliance upon a random succession of events guarantees spontaneity and disorganisation. As Rochberg explains, "... the doctrine of 'chance' music is ... incapable of entering into the subjective human world" (*The Aesthetics of Survival* 4). Thus

Cage's gestures, vibrant though can be, can easily descend into unintelligible chaos.. Kurtág's set of miniatures is not less complex or colourful than Cage's. The idiosyncratic vignettes are full of subtle nuances. All the elements from timbre to techniques are systematic, creating more consistency and harmony.

GEORGE ROCHBERG: CAPRICE VARIATIONS FOR UNACCOMPANIED VIOLIN

Another collection of compositions that is inspired by Paganini is George Rochberg's 1970 work *Caprice Variations for Unaccompanied Violin*. Dedicated to Daniel Kobialka¹⁰, Rochberg was inspired to compose a collection based on Paganini's *24th Caprice for Solo Violin* after hearing parts of Johannes Brahms' *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* at his daughter's dance recital (Rochberg, *Five Lines* 26). While similar to Sciarrino in that Paganini was mainly behind his musical incentive, he differs in ideology. Paganini's entire set of *Caprices* was the catalyst in the inception of Sciarrino's *Sei Capricci*, as evident in the extended techniques used in the *Caprices*. For Rochberg, only the *24th Caprice* and more specifically, the abstraction of varying it (Brahms' *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* was the impetus) is what galvanised his expedition in composing the *Caprice Variations*. Also similar to Kurtág's *Signs, Games, and Messages* is Rochberg's homage to numerous composers — Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, Schubert, Stravinsky, and Webern.

When comparing the *Caprice Variations* and *Freeman Etudes*, similar matters like coherence dominate the causes behind such distinction in acceptability. As Rochberg himself observed earlier, Aleatoric music struggles to connect with the general public because it lacks an emotional component. Thus, following his viewpoint, it can be contended that *Freeman Etudes* suffers for its objective concept — without a subjective component, the audience cannot identify with it. Whereas, Rochberg's compositional mannerisms which are “gestural . . . and . . . emotional” (qtd. in Dixon xxvii), signifies that *Caprice Variations* can connect with an audience on an intimate level.

¹⁰ Dan Kobialka “planted the idea of . . . writing for solo violin” (Rochberg, *Five Lines* 25)

Yet, Rochberg's argument is flawed. He generalises Aleatoric music and accuses it of not connecting with an audience because its compositional methods are not emotive. The argument is somewhat conservative; he only recognises the traditional manner of composing as personal. *Freeman Etudes* argues otherwise. While Cage did not personally influence any notational and or articulative decisions, and while his belief is to eschew the self, one of his intentions was to address a socio-political dimension.

Both collections are idiomatic. Rochberg based his *Caprice Variations* on Paganini, a composer renowned for his formidable technical prowess. Cage wanted to make *Freeman Etudes* as difficult as possible. Despite their polarising principles and compositional mannerisms, both sets are inadvertently displaying the violinist's artistic and technical skills; albeit, Rochberg in a buoyant manner and Cage in a more austere manner.

FREEMAN ETUDES THROUGH THE LENS OF SCHOENBERG'S VIOLIN CONCERTO, OP. 36

The preceding comparisons between *Freeman Etudes* and its contemporaries have taken a more despondent tone. To adopt a more optimistic perspective, the route of Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* should be investigated. Similar to his student's *Freeman Etudes*, Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* was criticised for its unorthodox compositional mannerisms, mainly for its violinistic obstacles. Thus, by understanding the trajectory Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* took, Cage's *Freeman Etudes* could take an alternate evaluation.

When Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* was first written in 1936, he had intended Jascha Heifetz to premier the work; unfortunately, Heifetz deemed it too difficult. The concerto never saw a live audience till 1940, when Louis Krasner performed it with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Leopold Stokowski. Cage's *Freeman Etudes* went through a similar route: Cage composed it for Zukofsky, but ultimately, the performer never realised the entire collection. Zukofsky did record *Book I*, but it was Arditti who eventually performed and recorded the entire opus.

According to Maiko Kawabata in her article for the *Journal of Musicological Research*, she believes that Heifetz's rejection of Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* was not only due to its technical obstacles but his "use of dissonance" (35). She reminds readers that Heifetz was a man who ". . . thrived on raising the level of technique in concertos of the time . . . Difficulty made sense to Heifetz, was even appealing to him . . ." (38-39). Thus, Heifetz rejecting Schoenberg's concerto was not merely because there were some unorthodox left-hand technicalities.

Kawabata concludes that Schoenberg's unconventional style and employment of the violin (the soloist is not in its traditional heroic role) in his concerto was the fundamental obstacle for Heifetz. The concerto was a ". . . jarring of modernist difficulty against romantic virtuosity [that] upended traditional conceptions of violin virtuosity . . . and the violin's role as a solo instrument in the concerto genre in particular . . ." (49). To briefly explain, Schoenberg harmonically structured the work in an unconventional manner, and his employment of the solo violinist was distinctive; the soloist's role was not that of a protagonist, and thus, it possibly questioned the intrinsic role of the soloist. Schoenberg had "upset the traditional tutti-solo balance" (Kawabata 39) by denying the soloist the standard romantic criterion of the valorous individual contending with the group (tutti). For Heifetz, who was a romantic virtuoso, it seemed as though he could not inherently reconcile with Schoenberg's otherwise impersonal take on the soloist nor his atonalism. Hence, these observations suggest the democratisation of the solo and tutti roles did not enthrall Heifetz.

Freeman Etudes went through a similar hurdle with Zukofsky. It was never rejected by Zukofsky for its harmonic (or lack of) structure, but for its technical demands. Zukofsky's issue was less about his role as a violinist and more about the impossibilities in the notation. Both Cage and Schoenberg were passively castigated by their dedicatees for their unorthodox manipulations of violinistic procedures. Unfortunately, both works unintentionally acquired a stigma that has since compounded.

Heifetz denoting the piece as "unplayable" has had an unfortunate effect on the concerto's reputation. Despite numerous players refuting the claim by giving successful

performances and or recordings of it, the stigma of being unplayable has stuck. Music journalists were penning “exaggerated and sensationalised” (Kawabata 41) stories in the media, further vilifying the concerto due to its abstractness; this concerto became infamous, acquiring a near pariah-like status. Furthermore, this unmerited stigma consequently engendered a case of incessant “. . . resistance by soloists, conductors, and orchestras . . .” (Kawabata 49).

The difference between *Freeman Etudes* and Schoenberg’s *Violin Concerto* is that Cage himself was the one that aggrandised the work’s impossibilities; not music critics. There has been scarce refutation of that claim, possibly due to a couple of reasons. One, the initial violinist involved in this project — Paul Zukofsky — ultimately withdrew himself from the project. Two, only a handful of violinists have toiled with this collection. Cage’s own words regarding the collection were prophetic, there is still a sense of fear blanketing many violinists, preventing them from undertaking the piece. Similar to Schoenberg’s *Violin Concerto*, the unplayable reputation has assumed an almost mythical status, prompting many to lose sight of the actual work. And similar to Schoenberg’s *Violin Concerto*, with its (perhaps) daunting atonality, the *Freeman Etudes*’ Aleatoric notation mannerisms have also turned many away.

Conductor Leopold Stokowski, pushed back against the general attitude of the time, admonishing the audiences to “give it a fair chance” (qtd. in Kawabata 37). American violinist Sol Babitz asked violinists to “think outside the box” (qtd. in Kawabata 43) in regards to technique — venture outside the traditional habits and formulate new concepts in accordance of the work. American violinist Hilary Hahn, who recorded the concerto with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2008, in the foreword of the CD’s liner notes, said: “I had to train my hands to adopt positions completely new to me . . . push[ing] my technique and interpretive concepts to a different level” (qtd. in Kawabata 48). Both violinists encouraged the concept of embarking on new avenues. What seems to be such a hardship for many musicians, the idea of venturing outside the traditional conventions, which also translates to venturing outside one’s comfort zone, Hahn’s and Babitz’s announcements, made without much fuss underlines the simplicity of this idea.

Hahn's and Babitz's declarations also take on a self-educative route. Their posits simultaneously discussed the acceptance of new ideas, yet it also discussed their endeavours in education. By teaching themselves new habits, they attained a new skill, thus, making a new accomplishment. In relation to the *Freeman Etudes*, one then has to ponder if the obstacle in preventing them from successfully realising the collection is simply the absence of accomplishing new technical habits. The concept of adopting novel practices was successful for Schoenberg *Violin Concerto* (consider the case of Hahn); thus, would not such a simple concept be applicable for *Freeman Etudes*?

Furthermore, if one was to consider the motivation behind Stokowski's harangue, the plea for listeners to venture outside their standardised traditions and embrace new sounds, and apply it to *Freeman Etudes*, the simple task is to not only embrace its eccentricity, it is also asking listeners to relinquish their fears of new and weird noises. Prevailing one's fears is a common trait of Hahn's, Stokowski's, and Babitz's proclamations, over whose shared message is that the primary obstacle in 'impossible' works is fear.

Walter B. Bailey commented in *The Journal of Musicology* that past composers who were lobbied as "futurists" (307) such as Wagner, Strauss, and Wolf, "were now finding acceptance" (307). He then stated that the same was applied to Debussy and Scriabin. In the case of Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, the public hostility has indeed lessened — the increasingly more frequent public performances and recordings would indeed appear to support the acceptance of a work hitherto deemed unapproachable.. Hence, observing the upward trajectory of Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, a piece that was deemed unplayable by one of the most celebrated and esteemed violinists of the century, perhaps *Freeman Etudes* will also travel on a similar journey, albeit more gradual.

CHAPTER FIVE: *FREEMAN ETUDES* AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Based upon what has been presented thus far, the outlook for the *Freeman Etudes* must seem, at least superficially, bleak. However, the case for these *Etudes* is still very viable. Instead of inveighing against the score, perhaps the responsibility in fostering an optimistic scenario for *Freeman Etudes* falls to the performer. Unlike the score, the violinist is malleable, and thus, can ultimately reorient themselves with different approaches and reconcile many of the matters upon which were opined.

THE VIOLINIST INTERPRETING THE ABSTRACT IN *FREEMAN ETUDES*

One of the issues violinists face in *Freeman Etudes* is its non-violinistic writing. Many of the leaps and chords Cage requests from the violinist are quite unorthodox. Yet, upon examination from another perspective we could take a different position. The violin has been associated with the Devil and death throughout time (Riggs 3-5). Thus, taking that into account, all the atypical leaps and chords can be then understood as the diabolical component of the violin. Moreover, the plethora of extended techniques that Cage uses in the score are common for the violin — *sul pont*, *sul tasto*, *col lego*, *ricochet*, *martellato*, and glissandos. By merely focusing on how all the intricacies can be associated with the wicked side of the violin, notions of *Freeman Etudes* being non-violin friendly can be bypassed. More so, expressing the nefariousness of the violin also aligns with Cage's desire in making *Freeman Etudes* as difficult as possible.

The habitual desire when confronting a difficult passage is to prepare it until it can be effortlessly performed in a live concert. In fact, if the performer is successful in masking its difficulties they will have failed to exemplify a key tenet in Cage's ambition for these pieces. Instead, performers should relinquish their innate desire to hide the struggles innate to any performance of these pieces, but on the contrary, embrace and share them. Through

exemplifying all the complexities in *Freeman Etudes*, the performer is adhering to Cage's goal in the composition — the portrayal that nothing is insurmountable.

However, no matter how many suggestions are proposed in reevaluating *Freeman Etudes'* complexities, it cannot be achieved if the violinist has not discovered methods in tackling the technical obstacles. The complications that arise due to Cage's method (or non-method to be precise) in determining notation or articulation is that many of the chords are uncustomary — exemplified in Ex. 14. Thus, like adopting a novel violin methodology, performers have to entertain new ways in organising finger and hand positions. Perhaps Cage intended performers to treat these convoluted gestures like puzzles that are meant to be deciphered with creative and unorthodox thinking and undertakings. One can speculate that perhaps Cage envisaged all this because it was another route in allegorising a society overcoming their seemingly hopeless milieu.



Ex. 14 'Measure' 5-6, Line 2, Page 1 of "Etude XVII" of *Freeman Etudes* (Cage, *Books 3 & 4* 64)

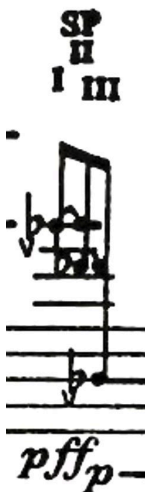
The concept of adopting novel practices and tackling new challenges can be daunting. As David Leech-Wilkinson explicates, many artistic radicals in musical art have been castigated for their innovations, by either critics or potential employers. Perhaps there is an underlying fear that upon the endorsement of novelty, tradition might be forgotten. And, in a composition like *Freeman Etudes*, there is an overt rejection of tradition; the work requires performers to espouse new strategies in music interpretation and perception. However, the acquirement of new concepts also inadvertently encourages performers to transform their view on other compositions.

As a result, *Freeman Etudes*' atypical use of extended techniques inadvertently obliges performers to thoroughly examine the sonic capabilities of the violin. Alternatively, performers can realise the 'etude' side of *Freeman Etudes*. Homologous to Niccolò Paganini's *24 Caprices for Solo Violin* or Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst's *6 Études à Plusieurs Parties*, in that these *Etudes* and or *Caprices* adopt the role of both study and recital fancy, *Freeman Etudes* can be comprehended as both an eccentric fancy and a study of modern extended techniques.

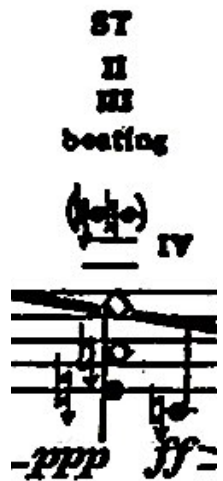
One example is the practise of transitioning to *sul pont* and into a new dynamic in one bow; simultaneously, a single note becomes a dyad (Ex. 15). As detailed above, the G^{3/4} ♭ at *piano* builds itself into a dyad at *fortissimo*, by adding the D ♭. Concurrently, the bow placement also transitions from normal to the bridge (*SP = sul pont*). Cage also notated a slur, indicating this has to be done in one bow. More so, the close proximity of these two notes signifies the speed this has to happen at – rapid.

Cage also asks the performer to find different answers in realising harmonics. Seen in Ex. 16, the E artificial harmonic is to be beaten by the bow at *pianississimo* while placed on the fingerboard (*ST = sul tasto*). As most violinists know, there are many occasions where harmonics only work at specific point on the string. In other cases, harmonics only work at specific dynamic ranges. Hence, the violinist thus has to find the exact spot on the fingerboard that would allow the harmonic to both ring at a very soft dynamic and to avoid an abrasive

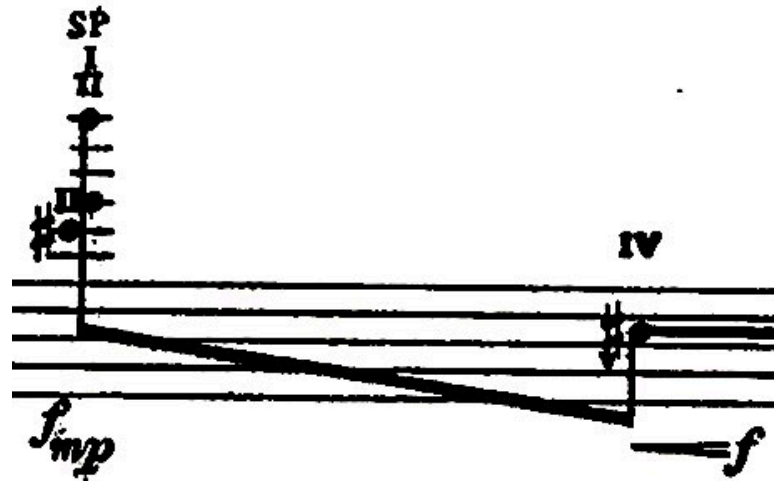
timbre. In most cases, it also requires the finger placement to be exceptionally exact. Typically when harmonics are played in the normal manner, with a medium or loud dynamic, left-hand finger placement is more genial. However, in this specific case, due to the bow placement and particular dynamic, everything has to be exact. Knowing how quick these gestures are happening in succession, it is considerably difficult, if possible.



Ex. 15 'Measure' 3, Line 3, Page 1 of "Etude I" of *Freeman Etudes* (Cage, *Books 1 & 2*)



Ex. 16 'Measure' 7, Line 2, Page 1 of "Etude I" of *Freeman Etudes* (Cage, *Books 1 & 2*)



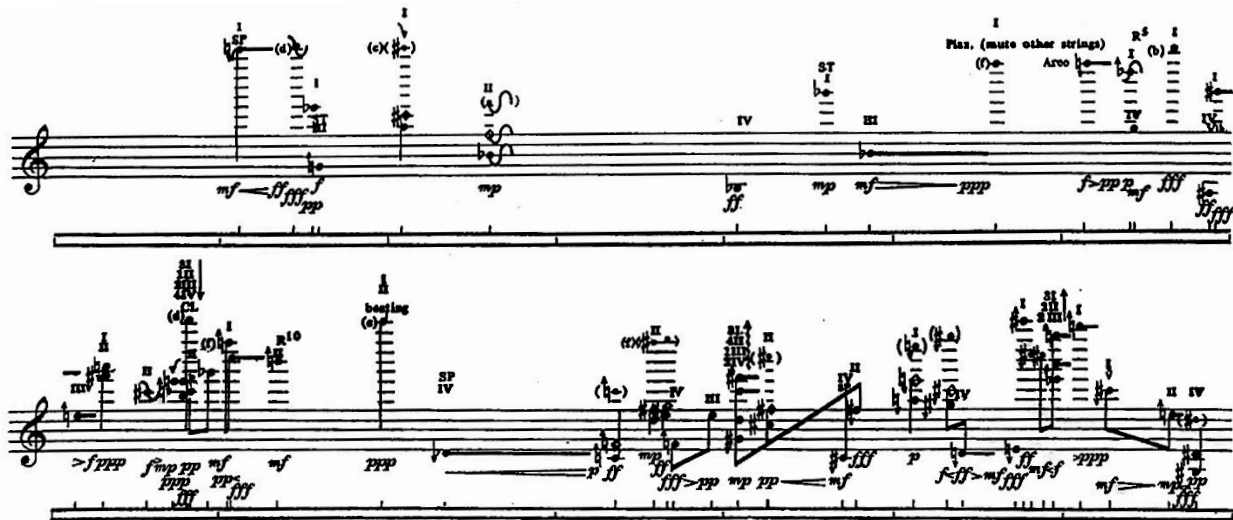
Ex. 17 'Measure' 5-6, Line 4, Page 1 of "Etude I" of *Freeman Etudes* (Cage, *Books 1 & 2*)

In Ex. 17, the C¹/₄ # on the fourth string occurs right after a higher seventh dyad (E and D) that happens on the first and second strings. One of the hurdles in this two-note gesture is finding the C¹/₄ # without any sonic guidance. The fact that it is stemmed prevents violinists from subtly (normally from slapping the fingerboard loudly with their left hand to find pitch) locating its finger placement. That it is to be played on the fourth string also heightens the difficulty. Moreover, it is also a microtone. Thus, all these contingencies have made executing the C¹/₄ # successfully quite tricky.

The examples discussed above are just a few out of one *Etude*. *Freeman Etudes* comprises thirty-two etudes, which means there will be plenty of intricate gestures that can only benefit a performer's artistic arsenal, broadening their violinistic aptitude. These skills can be

then applied to other modern and more traditional compositions. Moreover, because performers had to reorient their artistic concepts and performance practice after studying an opus like *Freeman Etudes*, the versatility and insight gained from that experience can only enhance their artistic intellect.

It was discussed earlier that ‘etude’ may include fantastical characteristics. Therefore, while using the Cage’s meticulous instructions as a guide, the violinist can approach these miniatures with pliability. Performers can use the top line below the staff as a gestural guide: the more clustered the ictuses are, the more rapid that bundle of notes has to be executed. With a more liberal approach to the score’s spatiality, a performer can interpret the spaces as long or short pauses, and note clusters as a frenzy (or whatever seems appropriate).



Ex. 18 Line 5-6, Page 1 of “Etude I” of *Freeman Etudes* (Cage, Books 1 & 2 2)

Consider Ex. 18 as an example. In an absolute realisation, there is to be a silence that lasts just over three seconds. Depending on the exact millimetre measurements, the first note of the first line will fall right before the first half second. Within a second, the second note and the two-note gesture will happen in quick succession. The two-note gesture sits halfway through the ‘bar’, meaning either the third or fourth note will be at the 1.5-second mark. However, if this first segment is to be realised without meticulous measuring, a performer can perhaps interpret the

first empty bar as a pause. Hence, the gap between the beginning of the second 'bar' and the first note can be perceived as an elongated comma.

Due to the second note being at the cusp end of a *cresc.* from the first note, the length of the first note is entirely accordant to the bow speed and *cresc.* More so, the space between the second and third note is customised to whether the performer perceives the direction of the gesture either landing on the second or third note. If the performer believes the first two notes are one gesture, then the first bow can end with a whipped flourish. There will then be time taken heading into the third note, to prepare for the *pianissimo* and to realise the two-note (third and fourth note) gesture as another mini *cresc* and perhaps interpret the fourth note (*forte*) as a vicious bite. If the performer deems the first three notes as a gesture, then it will end like a draw of breath. Because each space is lessening, the eventual fourth note becomes almost like an unintended crash, as if the *piano* beforehand made the situation precarious.

The second line in Ex. 18 contains clusters of intricate chords which if performed strictly in time, requires much effort. Treating it like a fantasy, allows performers to take time to achieve all those chords successfully and with the appropriate sound. Take the second last measure for example; eight notes occur (including two artificial harmonics and a three-note chord). Each second progressively contains more notes; simultaneously, the notes become harder to realise. A performer might spotlight the elongated $D\frac{1}{4}$ \natural both to emphasise the *decresc*, but also to exploit on the extra time in preparation for the following two notes.

Also, in the final two notes of the measure, there is a *cresc* from *mezzo forte* to *forte*. This spot is also another opportunity where a gesture can be executed with more time, both to emphasise the *cresc* and to grant time for the three-note chord. Similar to the earlier suggestion (where the violinist can adopt a different role), contemplating the *Freeman Etudes* as thirty-two miniature fantasies can alleviate the apprehension (instigated from realising the composition's complexities), yet more so, it allows the performer to underline the peculiar gestures this opus has.

THE ASSISTANCE OF PROGRAMME NOTES AND PRE-CONCERT LECTURES

Previously, the discussion focused on the consequential role performers have in connecting a composition to audiences. Another important element that can sever the disconnect between a composition and an audience is programme notes and or pre-concert lectures. Both of them discuss the provenance of a composition and or provide anecdotes to humanise the music.

A brief annotation of Cage's compositional philosophy can guide listeners. Understanding his desire for sound and noise equality, which also ties in with his passion for percussive instruments (including piano), the sounds he administers in *Freeman Etudes* — which are somewhat percussive in nature — can thus be understood as something idiosyncratic to Cage. Similar to how the *I Ching* has become a part of Cage's compositional tools, percussive sounds are a part of Cage's artistic language.

Also, if programme notes also impressed upon audiences the philosophies Cage obtained from Oriental studies — the elimination of self and the espousal of acceptance, which alternatively, is implicitly advising audiences to listen to *Freeman Etudes* without any preconceived expectations and accept any noises that might occur, a better understanding of the opus might happen. With an explanation of Cage's compositional premise, audiences have a better chance of accepting the percussive and aesthetically chaotic elements of *Freeman Etudes*.

As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, much of *Freeman Etudes'* purpose is lost because its concept is more noetic than aesthetically artistic. Thus, providing to audiences the narrative of this opus allows them the opportunity to apprehend it with an alternate disposition. *Freeman Etudes'* programme notes thus operate as both educator and brain stimulator. It forces audiences to reevaluate society; performers are also impelled to reassess their role as reporters. Cage had opined that music is teamwork, and that its role is to change people's cerebral thinking and spirit (qtd. in Richards 45). Thus, in regards to *Freeman Etudes*, realising it to its fullest potential in addition to Cage's socio-political intent can be accomplished by asking performers

and audiences to intimately connect with the music, through subtle manipulations of programme notes.

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY RENDITION OF *FREEMAN ETUDES*

Another method in interacting with audiences in a composition like *Freeman Etudes* is through the use of interdisciplinary arts. Returning to the notion that a performer, or a performer with the assistance of programme notes, can manipulate their performance practise to deliver a socio-political message, performers can also propose scenarios where they exploit other mediums to magnify their artistic gestures and philosophical messages.

Earlier, we explored the artistic gestures and how embellishing them physically or musically would help accentuate *Freeman Etudes*' fundamental message. Thus, using other media will only further accentuate the opus' message. One of the most blatant and tangible methods in amplifying a message is to incorporate theatre. While there are many options in theatrical art, possibilities that are soundless are incorporating dancers and mime artists with *Freeman Etudes*.

Movement means that any artistic gesture, artistic locution, and artistic message can be conveyed tangibly. Performers can instead temper their own movements; they can instead focus entirely on the notation and relegate the physical role to the performing artists. The advantage of dancers and mime artists is that whatever message they attempt to convey, it will be customarily more perspicuous than that of a musician. With choreography to match the music, body movements and simulations are more overt in demonstrating the sonic gestures. If the performer is to decide on a more flexible rendering of the collection (by really focusing on the fanciful aspect of an *Etude*), dancers and mime artists can thoroughly express the improvisational aspect.

The tangible expression and messages dancers and mime artists can execute also benefit *Freeman Etudes* in the matter of relaying Cage's inherent socio-political message to an audience. It was mulled on earlier that either a violinist's embellished body language or a crafty

programme note can comprehensively articulate Cage's fundamental message in the opus. However, especially for the performer who is relying on their motions for communication, is that there is a risk of miscommunication between performer and audience. Thus, a collaboration between the musical artist, and dancers or mime artists have a better chance at conveying Cage's message. Both mime artists and dancers can assemble themselves into a makeshift society; they can also enact scenarios where a society overcomes sentiments of despair.

Apart from the tangibility in expression from dancers and mime artists, involving these sort of performing artists also strengthens the subject matter when performers want to involve audiences in the *Freeman Etudes* experience. Similar to interactive theatre which engages audiences in their productions, the performers can integrate or weave through an audience, enabling an audience to feel as if they were physically participating in the performance (maybe even feel like they were performers themselves). Their undertaking in penetrating the invisible barrier between the performer(s) and listeners allows the audience to undergo a somewhat 3D experience, due to the significantly close proximity between audience and performer(s). Thus, the act of integrating dancers and or mime artists into the audience results in an original portrayal of *Freeman Etudes* that illustrates the struggles and achievements of society. It also supports Cage's idea that music is a team effort.

Furthermore, these integrating measures the performers took also blurs the roles of performer and audience. The subtle upheaval of the performer's role also obscures the invisible barricade between stage and audience seating. Hence, the performance platform essentially encompasses everyone in the concert venue, which alternatively means audiences also adopt the performer's role. Ultimately, the violinist is also in a better position to instigate a more personal response from the audience.

The intimacy of integrating performing artists and audiences also leaves a stronger impression upon both performers and audiences, whether subliminally or consciously. The bonus of performing artists like dancers and mime artists is costumes, masks, and makeup are a part of their performance practice. An outfit and a mask can tell a tale in itself; colours, patterns,

and materials signify different backgrounds, metaphors and much more. Makeup can amplify expression on a face. Makeup can also transform a face into another entity. The visual aspect of costuming and cosmetics is another storyteller in itself. As a result, it adds an extra dimension to their communication in performance.

While it might be an unorthodox idea in executing *Freeman Etudes*, it should be emphasised that Cage himself ventured into interdisciplinary art. He also artistically collaborated with his partner Merce Cunningham (dancer) frequently, often composing for the artists in his dance company. Thus, the idea of combining all these art forms might be acceptable for Cage.

Cage's interest in non-musical art also begs the question of whether he would approve the notion to include a painter and or a sculptor on stage while *Freeman Etudes* are being performed. These artists might compose in response to what they hear, and like an audience, they are reacting in real time to what is happening live in concert. Whether or not they foreknowledge of what is behind Cage's work does not matter, since the creation of their art is based upon the sounds they hear.

The advancement of technology saw the development of virtual art and light art. Amalgamating *Freeman Etudes* with those mediums can potentially give prominence to different facets of this piece. One of the simplest forms of lighting a performer can undertake is by having the stage in darkness and utilising only a stand light for navigation and score reading. If the performer uses a tablet like an iPad, they can also rely on the light emitted from the screen. Thus, the lack of lighting leaves listeners more focused on the sonic aesthetics of the composition and perhaps, even the extraneous noises of the concert hall.

Lighting options are also typically determined by what a venue can provide. Other more accessible options with lighting are changing the colour of the stage light. Performers for *Freeman Etudes* can then determine what colour is appropriate. More lighting expertise would allow for a variety of patterns or affects to be manipulated during a performance. To reflect Cage's premise in *Freeman Etudes*, performers can ask for lights to move around widely,

mirroring the raucous society. Warm hues can be subsequently manipulated to illustrate hope, while bright neon lights can reflect the more vibrant element of society. Alternatively, if a performer wanted to adhere to a Cagean manner in creativity, they could determine lightning decisions via chance operations. Alternatively, if the performer is intrepid enough, with the coordination of the lighting team, the lighting decisions could be determined by the audience members.

These ideas can also be used to mirror a more fanciful interpretation of *Freeman Etudes*. The extended techniques can correspond with specific light effects; pitch bends can be expressed as a light bend, or microtones can adopt a darker hue to depict their atypical nature. A shock of light can be exploited during silences, or sudden dynamic moments to reflect sonic shocks. The propositions detailed above are merely a few ideas out of many. Using light art in *Freeman Etudes* can guide listeners in understanding the sonic concepts and gestures Cage, and subsequently, the performer is attempting to convey.

The other media device that can be integrated with *Freeman Etudes* is video. With video, possible minimalist options such as screening colour panels or colour effects can be effective. Considering the case of *Freeman Etudes*, where the abstraction of the composition is more philosophical than sonically aesthetic, clips of society's triumphs or catastrophes may be creatively utilised.

There is a possible drawback in including societal content though. By externalising Cage's message behind the composition, audiences might be deprived of coming to their own conclusions regarding the sonic gestures in the composition. The visuals might take away some of the mystery that shrouds *Freeman Etudes*.

One wonders if Cage would appreciate the synthesis of multimedia and *Freeman Etudes*. Cage had a complicated relationship with sound technology. He had a disinclination for recordings, yet he was quick to adopt its technology into his compositions (evident in *Fontana Mix* and *Williams Mix*). It is a viable possibility that Cage would embrace the idea of merging multimedia into his musical art compositions.

Cage's interdisciplinary tendencies are evident in his lectures, where he would give a talk and be simultaneously accompanied by Tudor on piano (Cage, *Silence* 260). Understanding this element of his career gives credence to the idea of coalescing oratory and or percussion with *Freeman Etudes*. There should be caution when integrating speech or percussion into the collection because there is a danger of overwhelming the piece and relegating it to a more submissive role.

There is the option of juxtaposing speech between the *Etudes* as if creating a dialogue between text and music. The attraction to this approach is that a programmatic presentation can help audiences comprehend the meaning of *Freeman Etudes*. Another option with speech is to have sounds or words happening over the *Etudes*; preferably not during the silence (silences should remain silent to emphasise its stillness). That option then allows scenes where drones are hummed under frantic violin playing, and fastidious speaking over the long drone-like moments in *Freeman Etudes*. Alternatively, the speech patterns can mirror the sonic gestures in the collection: accelerated speaking during the more intricate moments in the *Etudes*, and elongated words or sounds happening at the same pace as the drones in the *Etudes*.

The argument over what Cage would think about the different integrations is redundant because he was not enthusiastic about telling other people what they should do. He explicitly stated in *A Year from Monday* that he “find[s] this an unattractive way of getting things done” (ix). Perhaps Cage's opinion does not matter; he was ultimately against imposing his convictions upon others.

NAVIGATING THE ONLINE PLATFORM

At its most fundamental, a recording can be uploaded on audio streaming websites and or applications or video-sharing platforms (as sound-only videos). More advanced presentations would see it embodied in a multimedia product. Either the performer can stream their performance live online (through Facebook, Instagram, Twitch, or similar websites), or pre-record it then upload it (platforms include YouTube, DailyMotion, Vimeo, and more). The

online platform is one method in connecting with the younger generation. For *Freeman Etudes*, it is also a means in reaching mainstream audiences.

Given the ease of use and ready accessibility of video and sound technology anyone can create reasonably high quality video. Such ready convenience in creating visual content means that performers now have the ability to control the multimedia component of their performance. It economises on personnel; it gives more control to performers in a live concert, and for a virtual performance or video, performers can manage all elements from their residence.

The discussion up to now has focused upon pre-planned videography for any multimedia performances. The technology of today has advanced to a point where creating videos that can co-exist with a live performance is practical. With the use of a software application (phone or computer), digital visuals art can be appropriately matched to musical sounds. As early as the 1990s, computer programs like Cthugha would visually interpret sounds that were input through its software. Later music player applications like Winamp and iTunes (now known as Music) included music visuals in their software, where graphics would appear with whatever song it was playing. Currently, downloadable software like Adobe After Effects, Project M, and Synesthesia, or online websites like RenderForest and Videobolt will graphically design the sounds it hears. For performers, this means every performance can be accompanied by different graphics, which coincidentally parallels Cage's employment of *I Ching* and indeterminacy, in that the artist will always experience something unexpected during a performance.

Perhaps nothing is as overt in showing everyone how recordings have become the new performer as the repercussions of Covid-19. Most performance venues have ceased operations, leaving artists to transform their personal social media accounts into virtual concert halls. Uploaded pre-recorded performances are now becoming the standard in the time of a pandemic.

PROGRAMMING *FREEMAN ETUDES* IN CONCERT

Previous discussions have been centred around the recontextualising of *Freeman Etudes*. However, concert programming is also pivotal in allowing a composition to reach its

fullest potential. A well thought out assemblage of compositions with a balanced level of parallelism and variation can boost a composition's brilliance. Zukofsky when discussing his programming as director of the MoMA Summergarden concert series said that an effective way to "run a concert series at a museum . . . is [to] run it the way you would run any other exhibition . . . You pick a topic that you believe in and that you want to convey to the public and you concentrate on that topic" (qtd. in Swed). While Zukofsky's statement addresses programming in museums, the sine qua non is the passion from the performer (who sometimes is also the concert programmer) and how essential it is to have a nexus between every composition in the programme.

Freeman Etudes can connect to any number of other compositions both classical and modern. Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* is one such match. Similarly, Eugène Ysaÿe's *6 Sonatas for Solo Violin* make a particularly good companion, not only because the work is for solo violin but due to its particularly virtuosic nature. Other suitable pieces are the etudes and or caprices by Paganini, Henryk Wieniawski, and Pietro Locatelli. And of course there are modern works for unaccompanied violin such as those by John Corigliano and Rochberg (discussed in Chapter Four). This set being a collection also finds correspondence with other solo violin collections, such as Kurtág's and Sciarrino's.

The importance of linking *Freeman Etudes* with traditional repertoire is to remind audiences that despite Cage's departure from conventional classical music traditions, there is still a tangible connection between the two different worlds. Moreover, when connecting the opus with other concert etudes and or caprices, they help unveil the otherwise camouflaged violinistic qualities of *Freeman Etudes*. When deciding what specific *Etude* to use in a programme, themes like key signatures, extended techniques, and concepts sometimes become the underlying link. Because all the miniatures in *Freeman Etudes* were composed Aleatorically, a method of choosing which *Etudes* to program (when the entire collection is not to be performed) could be by chance.

When the *Etudes* are programmed not as an entire collection, but as separate *Etudes*, they act more like miniature fantasies. They can then operate as a bridge to other compositions in the concert. Or, they can be whimsical afterthoughts that are prologues or epilogues to the other compositions. Because these *Etudes* are now highlighted as singular *Etudes*, the spotlight on them is more acute, yet their short length does not become too invasive for the listeners. Their role as quirky interjections also act as a moderator for the other compositions.

Alternatively, creative programming can also link compositions like Béla Bartók's *Sonata for Solo Violin* with *Freeman Etudes*. Bartók's solo sonata has connections with Bach's solo violin sonatas, which in turn, connects it with Ysaÿe's solo sonatas. Ysaÿe's solo sonatas are revered violin repertoire, on the same platform as Paganini's *24 Caprices*. Paganini's *24th Caprice* was the inspiration behind Rochberg's *Caprice Variations*, and Sciarrino's *Sei Capricci* in turn upon Paganini's entire set of *Caprices*. Rochberg's and Sciarrino's collections all connect to *Freeman Etudes* in their shared manipulations of extended techniques. More so, in Rochberg's collection, there are miniatures with specific honourees that connect (indirectly) to Cage — either because Cage had a fondness for them (Webern for example) or a particular aversion to them (like Beethoven). This type of connection also links *Freeman Etudes* and Kurtág's *Signs, Games, and Messages* (detailed earlier in Chapter Four).

Thus far, the discussion has been regarding limited possible programmatic pairings to solo violin repertoire. In fact, we need not. With other instruments, *Freeman Etudes* hence tells a slightly different story to the audience. For example, if *Freeman Etudes* were to be programmed with Cage's *Etudes Australes* and *Etudes Boreales*, a listener would be exposed to Cage's three different but related perspectives. They will thus hear three different sorts of artistic struggles, which allegorically signify three different sorts of societies and their struggles. If *Freeman Etudes* is to partner with percussive instruments in a recital, the percussive repertoire will bring attention to all the percussive elements in *Freeman Etudes*. Pairing *Freeman Etudes* with different instruments will highlight the various aspects of the opus, potentially allowing listeners to assimilate more facets of this collection.

Furthermore, a performance is enhanced with the appropriate venue. If the recital merges multimedia elements with *Freeman Etudes*, then the performers have to choose a platform that can accommodate the multimedia components. Many a time an atypical venue can also highlight or augment the unusual or significant aspects of a particular work. For example, an art gallery with the appropriate exhibition (and if possible, an unorthodox room structure) can help emphasise *Freeman Etude's* abstract qualities; an industrial styled warehouse meanwhile can perhaps draw attention to Cage's societal message. If a stage is at the same level as the audience's seating, the performer can more easily engage with the audience. The other advantage to these types of venues is their ability to enable the creative positioning of the performers. For example, one can envision programming all the *Etudes* of Cage (violin, cello, and piano) where the audience is seated in the centre of the performance space, and the violinist, cellist, and pianist are positioned in separate corners of the venue.

The options in programming *Freeman Etudes* are vast; the variety of venues, repertoire pairings, and interdisciplinary integrations are limitless. What would John Cage think of it? He was known for not making a show for the audiences, preferring to allow only the music to speak (Fetterman 194). However, he also advocated for "do[ing] whatever we want, even nothing, as long as we do it with discipline" (Sumner et al. 14). He disapproved of imposing his own will on others. One take away from this is that a violinist who ventures the *Freeman Etudes* should inform any creative performance practice decision they make, even anomalous ones, with commitment and discipline.

AFTERWORD

Despite its relative obscurity, the *Freeman Etudes* is a significant composition for violinists. It is a laudable example of Cage's later compositional methodology: it also encapsulates the sonic aesthetic developments modern composers had established in the twentieth century. As illuminated in the investigation above, it encourages creative cognition and can ameliorate one's technical facilities, making it also relevant for violinists who are concentrating on traditional musical art.

The technical complexities itself are pedagogical, as it necessitates violinists to formulate strategies in navigating the composition successfully. The nature of these miniatures demands that violinists think creatively about programming this composition and what repertoire might be paired with it no matter how seemingly faint the connection is. Cage's unorthodox style begs for violinists to think of interdisciplinary undertakings in order to better market this music to mainstream audiences. The composition repays more in-depth study as it nurtures the violinist to scale an abundance of complexity, furthering their propensity for all modern music.

Taking into account the political message Cage was attempting to impart, *Freeman Etudes* perhaps carry even more relevance than during the time it was written. It mirrors the societal sentiment of today when considering the present political climate, and it acutely expresses the emotional impact that is currently felt across the globe. The hopelessness Cage observed when he composed *Freeman Etudes* resonates in everyone as Covid-19 remains rampant and mysterious. Uncertainty has pervaded many people's thoughts, as their livelihood remains in abeyance. The sonic and conceptual battles Cage applied in the composition is personified in the current fight society is having against racial injustice. For an esoteric composition, its concept is ironically pertinent to everyone; mainstream audiences included. In Cage's opinion, if one can overcome the obstacles of the *Freeman Etudes*, there is a chance to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to a better world.

Thus, *Freeman Etudes* play a significant role in a violinist's development. The unorthodox notation, due to Cage's imposed complex and aleatoric compositional mannerisms, demands violinists to reformulate their physical and mental approach to the instrument. Its unique and enigmatic qualities allow for interesting pairings with other compositions. Its individuality also allows for interdisciplinary performances, providing both audiences and performers with a fresh perspective on the violin and musical art. *Freeman Etudes* is a composition with an undeniable pedagogical dimension, humbling performers of all pedigrees into aspiring pupils. The invaluable enlightenment it provides for performers and audiences alike is truly significant, bringing us closer to the mystifying world of John Cage.

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