

# **lecture on infinity**

**michael winter (2005)**

If Cage were here...

Would he go to sleep?

And is sleeping not just one of the endless number of states that affect how one listens, performs.

or even composes?

It should not be surprising that a new art has evolved that truly explores a never-ending abyss of possibilities. It was only a matter of time before someone did for art what Heisenberg did for physics.

Cage.

And now,

James Tenney, Larry Polansky, Michael Pisaro, Nick Didkovsky, Doug Barrett, James Orsher, Harris Wulfson, Raven Chacon, Thadeus Frazier-Reed, Eric KM Clark, Mark So, Joe Kudirka, Madison Brookshire, and countless others

all of whom very seriously and deeply deal with

both nothing and everything. Though one could argue that they are the same.

and both one and infinity. And yet again, one could argue that they are the same.

To me, indeterminate does not necessarily mean exposed without determination, or without limitation for that matter.

When a violinist attempts to play one continuous, unchanging tone, it becomes clear that despite stringent limitations a plethora of events occur.

Subtle variations in bow pressure and friction, finger movement, and morning breakfast all affect the outcome.

This, too, is indeterminacy.

And it exists in all art.

What does not exist in all art, however, is the embracement of these never ending number of possibilities. In essence, an open mind. In fact, so many artists suppress these possibilities and account for them by posting blame on those involved in the expository process.

Bad performers, bad listeners, but for some reason...

never bad composers.

I suppose that I will be a happy man when my music becomes "indestructible" as Mark So says.

I suppose that I will be a happy man when I stop putting my name on my work.

For some of the most beautiful things that I have experienced in music, including my own, no one person could account for at all.

I am skeptical of the word create;  
of the word compose.

I prefer expose.

And I like to expose because that is how I enjoy spending my time.

By myself.

Thinking...

of ways that I can expose an art with a clear structure and form elucidated by random processes that will always surprise me.

It is an exposure of something that exists without me and is never predictable.

What is the point of art if one believes they know exactly what the outcome will be?

In keeping with this.

I will soon recite a statement and repeat it \_\_\_\_ times based on the length of this particular performance. Only the first iteration will be read rubato in a normal speaking voice. For all successive iterations, the individual characters of the text including spaces have been algorithmically placed on the page by a computer program. All letters have been converted to lowercase. To ensure a left to right flow on the page, all letters are spaced at least .125 inches from the very beginning of the proceeding character. Any increase in the amount of spacing is based on random values that are generated from the absolute value of a Gaussian distribution with a mean of zero and a standard deviation that goes from 0 inches to 10 inches by the end of the text. Since the speaker determines the number of repetitions (no less than 5) based upon the duration of the performance, the standard deviation at any particular point is calculated as follows:

First, a number between 0 and 1 is calculated by dividing the index of the current character in the whole lecture by the number of characters in the entire lecture, which is the number of characters in the repeated text (including spaces and punctuation, which, in English, is 792) times the number of iterations. This is then raised to the power of 15 so that the change in the standard deviation is an exponential curve. Finally, this number is multiplied by 10 to scale the change in the standard deviation so that the destination of 10 inches for the standard deviation is achieved.

After the letters are placed on the pages, one random page is chosen. And on that page, one character is randomly chosen and is marked by a rectangle that encompasses the character.

Throughout the reading, the letters will become more and more spaced out on the page. When reading, a correlation of space on the page to time will be made. Any successive string of letters with the minimum spacing of .125 inches, as mentioned above, will be read as a conglomerate sound, like a word might be read. However, as the characters start to spread across the page, I, the reader, may interpret the spacing in any number of ways. The predominate way will be silence, but any letter that implies a single phoneme either than a plosive may be held for any duration equal to or less than the space on the page suggests. A glottal stop is not necessary between the interpretations of each character except when there is a punctuation mark, which can be interpreted as any duration of silence.

There may be an instrumental accompaniment to the lecture. The instrumentalists may play one tone during the lecture at a soft level. The start point of the tone should be played when the character marked by a rectangle surrounding it, which was chosen randomly as stated earlier, is

read. For non-sustaining tone instruments, the decay time of that particular tone will determine the duration. For sustaining tone instruments, the duration should be equal to a long bow-stroke for strings or a long breath for any wind instruments. Several instruments may be used to produce a more complex tone as long as they start at the same time and play the same pitch class.

In keeping with this.

If Cage were here?

Would he go to sleep?

And at what point do these words lose all meaning?

Till all that you hear is successive sound events that imply nothing.

All arranged by a method that can expose an infinite number of paths towards the deconstruction of these words that have meanings adopted by many as conventional wisdom.

One could conclude that anything, when taken apart to some of its smallest components, is nothing short of awe inspiring.

For one can lose sight of the greater picture and enjoy simple beauty without function.

Thus all that is left to ponder is the method, the idea, the cogitation,

the number of ways that this lecture could be rendered,

the number of ways one could read this lecture,

the number of ways that one could perceive a performance of this lecture.

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