

(RE-)DEFINING THE POETIC TEXT SCORE

Craig Pedersen

Edith Cowan University
c.pedersen@ecu.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Text scores emerged within post-1960s Experimental music as the musical score's definition expanded beyond the representation of foreseeable or reproducible musical outcomes. Using language in place of other notations, text scores employed indeterminacy and openness to establish an acceptable range of possible realisations. While instructional text scores—those that relatively clearly indicate musical action—have been widely discussed, their more ambiguous, non-instructional counterparts have received comparatively little attention. This paper addresses this gap by proposing a redefinition of such works as *poetic text scores*, framing them not by the absence of instruction but through their ambiguity and poetic function.

Drawing on examples from Fluxus-associated artists, Pauline Oliveros, the Wandelweiser collective, and contemporary experimental practice, the paper surveys a range of poetic text scores, categorising them according to word use, spatial layout, and thematic qualities. Building on post-Saussurean structuralist semiotics, the paper advances a model of the score as an object signifying acts in time, with the act of interpretation arising to answer the questions “which acts, and when?” This framework is applied first to instructional text scores, before turning to Roman Jakobson's theory of the poetic function to clarify and account for the poetic text score's identity as score.

1. KEY QUALITIES OF POETIC TEXT SCORES

Within music, a text score can be defined as a score using the written word to convey compositional ideas in place of other forms of notation [1]. They have been described as a place where language can subtly and effectively be applied to sound [2], using qualities of both language and music to artistic ends [3]. Although the oral or written transmission of musical ideas is present within many genres, such as rock, jazz, or folk musics, this paper focuses on scores written in alignment to the

Experimental¹ music movement borne out of Western classical music. Further, while the use of text in-score as rehearsal or performance markers is not new, we see the medium of text-as-score emerging from the 1960s onwards, largely post-John Cage, with Fluxus-associated artists such as George Brecht and Yoko Ono, composers Pauline Oliveros and Karlheinz Stockhausen, later from composers associated with the Wandelweiser collective such as Antoine Beuger, Stefan Thut, and Manfred Werder, and continued contemporaneously by composers such as Lo Wie, Ryoko Akama, Sarah Hughes, Sage J Harlow and Elizabeth Millar.

Although a variety of terminology and descriptors have been suggested (Table 1), broadly speaking text scores fall into two categories [4], [5], [6], [7]: instructional scores which focus on the use of text to (relatively) clearly communicate a range of actionable musical ideas, and non-instructional scores which are definitively ambiguous in the ways they point to actionable sounding interpretation, the latter of which is of most interest to this paper. Additionally, some scores combine qualities of both instructional and non-instructional scores to form a composite [3], [4], while others use text in addition to other forms of notation.

While to date historical background and defining features of Experimental music and open works have been covered in detail [8], [9], [10] and groundwork has been set in understanding varying forms of notation [7], [11], [12], including a comprehensive study of the specific ways many, primarily instructional, text scores use language to achieve their aesthetic ends [1], missing from the discourse is comprehensive discussion of the nature of non-instructional text scores.

1.1 Terminology

Non-instructional text scores are a form of open work, a term which conventionally describes compositions for which multiple sounding outcomes across different performances is an aesthetic feature, achieved through a variety of compositional techniques. As such, using ambiguous text in place of other notations, non-instructional text scores are likewise ambiguous in the ways they point to actionable sounding interpretation, aestheticising and featuring multiple interpretations and

Copyright: © 2026 Craig Pedersen. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 3.0 Unported](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

¹ Capitalised here and throughout to distinguish between the Experimental movement borne out of Western classical music, and experimental music in general.

sounding difference between performances. Accordingly, they have been described as “suggestive” [6], “mysterious or enigmatic” [5], or “poetic” [6], [7]. Anderson [4] suggests the terms “allusive, (conceptual or ambiguous)” for text scores that do not contain clear instructions referring to action, using as example La Monte Young’s *Piano Piece for David Tudor #3* (1960) [13] reading “Most of them / were very old grasshoppers”. Lely & Saunders [1] discuss grammatically “moodless” scores that place words in such a way that they lack command, statement or question, thus creating a marked lack of clarity, drawing on scores from George Brecht’s landmark work *Water Yam* (1963) [14] collection as example; Montgomery suggests [3] “poetic” and “para-poetic score” to denote those using qualities of both language and music, focusing on the ways in which the text-based works of Michael Pisaro and Manfred Werder may or may not make clear how to be translated into sound.

Instructional:	Non-instructional:	Composite:
Action score	Ambiguous	Hybrid
Event score	Allusive	Composite
Instructional text score	Conceptual	Para-poetic
Prose score	Mysterious	
Prose notation	Non-instructional	
Text-based action score	Poetic	
Text notation	Suggestive	
Verbal notation		
Verbal score		

Table 1: terms used to identify and describe text scores

My preference is for the term *poetic* text scores, as the term positively describes qualities and characteristics of said scores, as opposed to the term non-instructional, which defines them by qualities absent. Discussing the nature of poetry and ambiguity, sociolinguist Roman Jakobson [15] states that “ambiguity is an intrinsic, [...] corollary feature of poetry” (p. 370). As such it has been argued that ambiguity is pragmatic, in that intended meaning left unclear to the reader [16]. Following this logic, although a detailed account of their poetic nature follows, as a baseline we can take as given that what defines poetic text scores is not simply the use of suggestive, mysterious, allusive, or ambiguous language, but that their ambiguity extends to their musical meaning, definition, and interpretability as scores.

2. CATEGORISATION OF POETIC TEXT SCORES

Given the use of ambiguous language as relating to their actionability as scores, poetic text scores are difficult to categorise in the same way as other open scores, unable to be clearly categorised according to their formal structures, application of parameters or additional forms of instruction. Further, given their variety they cannot clearly be categorised by type of language used and there are not readily present examples of scores containing

characteristics of different genres of poetry, such as sonnet, epic, or narrative. In most cases, the closest correlation to poetic genre is that of free verse and concrete poetry, and occasionally haiku, a finding congruent with the understanding that the poetic nature of such text scores depends primarily on the ambiguity of their actionability as pertains to their nature as scores. As such, a simple approach to categorisation is to group them according to their word use and placement²

Single words or ideas	• <i>October 24, 2022</i> (2022) [17] by Craig Pedersen • <i>Hide Piece</i> (1961) [18] and <i>Cut Piece</i> (1964) [19] by Yoko Ono • <i>Suitcase</i> (1963) [20] by George Brecht • <i>wind</i> (2017) [21] and <i>grass</i> (2017) [22] by Lo Wie
Word groupings or lists	• <i>2005¹</i> (2005), <i>2008³</i> (2008), and <i>2012³</i> (2012) [23], [24], [25] by Manfred Werder • <i>for Strings</i> (1969) [26] by Howard Skempton • <i>Three Aqueous Events</i> (1961) [27] by George Brecht
Short statements	• <i>2010¹</i> (2010) [28] by Manfred Werder • <i>Chair Event</i> (1963) [29] by George Brecht • <i>Earth piece</i> (1963) [30] by Yoko Ono • <i>Piano Piece for David Tudor #3</i> (1960) [13] by La Monte Young • <i>April 14, 2022</i> (2022) [31] by the Craig Pedersen • <i>Sifted Ashes of Air</i> (2022) [32] by Sarah Hughes
Longer verses	• <i>The Earthworm Also Sings</i> (1992) [33] by Pauline Oliveros • <i>Envelopes</i> (2020) [34] by Elizabeth Millar • <i>Two Definitions</i> (1963) [35] by George Brecht
Prose	• <i>February 26, 2000</i> (2000) [36] by Amnon Wolman • <i>Sextet: The Tigers Mind</i> (1967) [37] by Cornelius Cardew
Concrete	• <i>A Column of Sound</i> (2025) [38] by Sage Harlow • <i>eine/r 2</i>, (2008) [39] by Stefan Thut • <i>Piano Piano</i> (1988) [40] by Pauline Oliveros • <i>e.a.c.d.</i> (2014) [41] by Ryoko Akama

Table 2: categories of poetic text scores by word use and placement.

2.1 Single words or ideas

Scores utilising only single words, or single ideas, include Yoko Ono’s *Hide Piece* and *Cut Piece*, respectively stating only “hide” and “cut”; George Brecht’s *Suitcase* containing only the title and a bullet point with the word “suitcase”; *wind* and *grass*, by Lo Wie, scores existing only as titles transmitted orally by

² It is necessary to note that it is outside my means to create a comprehensive list of poetic text scores. Scores here have been included to balance historical precedent with select contemporary use.

the composer. My own piece *October 24, 2022* (Fig. 1) containing the words “Autumn” in addition to a duration.

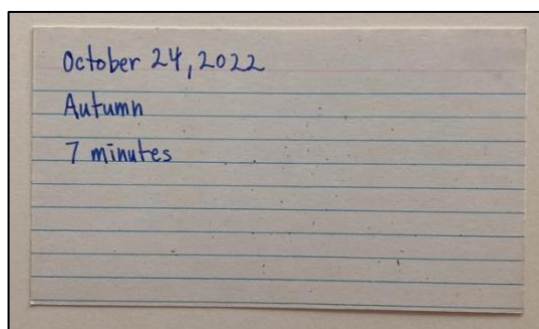


Figure 1: *October 24, 2022* by Craig Pedersen

2.2 Word groupings or lists

Examples of scores composed of groups of words or short lists include George Brecht’s *Three Aqueous Events* containing bullet points listing the three words “ice”, “water”, and “steam”; and Howard Skempton’s *for Strings*, composed of three handwritten words “waves”, “shingle” and “seagulls”. Of note are scores by Manfred Werder, each utilising a different approach to word grouping or lists. Examples include *2005*¹, using three words “place”, “time”, and “(sounds)”; *2008*³ (Fig. 2) a list in both German and English, composed of “eine anhöhe a hill / ein tal a valley / eine bergkette a mountain range / eine tiefebene a lowland / eine hochebene a plateau / ein flussdelta a river delta / ein fjord a fjord; *2012*(4), a list of three words in different languages, “litio” (lithium in Italian, Spanish, and Basque, from the Greek líthos, meaning stone), “φωνή” (the Greek word for voice, sound or noise), and “papier” (French for paper).

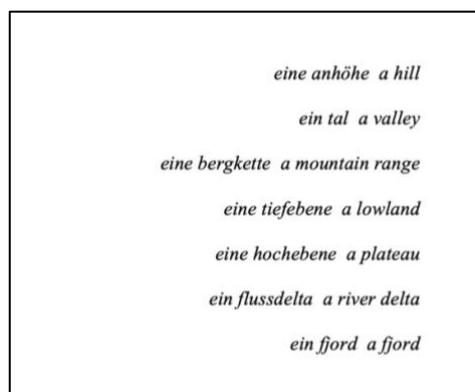


Figure 2: *2008*³ (detail) by Manfred Werder

2.3 Short statements, poetic or otherwise

Examples of pieces utilising short statements include George Brecht’s *Chair Event* composed of the poetic description “on a white chair / a Christmas -tree ball / flag / can opener / black and spectral colors”; La Monte Young’s *Piano Piece for David Tudor #3* reading “most of them / were very old grasshoppers”; Sarah Hughes’ *Sifted ashes of air*, containing a poetically arranged line of text attributed to Edward James, along with the ambiguous statement “For four / Letting most sounds fall

/ With some retained”; a series of scores of found quotes from literature or poetry composed by Manfred Werder; my own score *April 14, 2022* (Fig. 3) stating “asking to be part of the environment dismisses that we already are” in addition to duration, and *22 September 2024* [42] expressing “something will always remain, as a kind of residue, that exceeds analysis”.

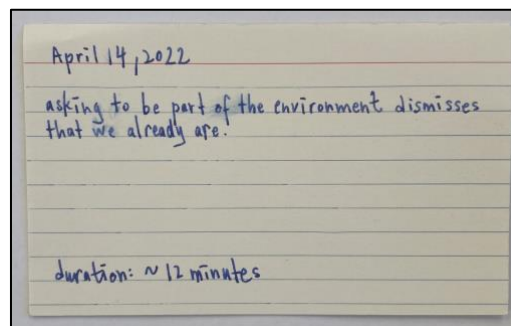


Figure 3: *April 14, 2022* by Craig Pedersen

2.4 Longer poetic verses

Although rarer, some poetic text scores exist as longer poetic verses. Examples include *The Earthworm Also Sings*, by Pauline Oliveros; *Two Definitions* by George Brecht, composed of two bullet points, one with a long ambiguous text, and another stating “(a cup and a saucer)”; *envelopes* (2022) (Fig. 4) by Elizabeth Millar, a long free-verse text describing qualities of sound.

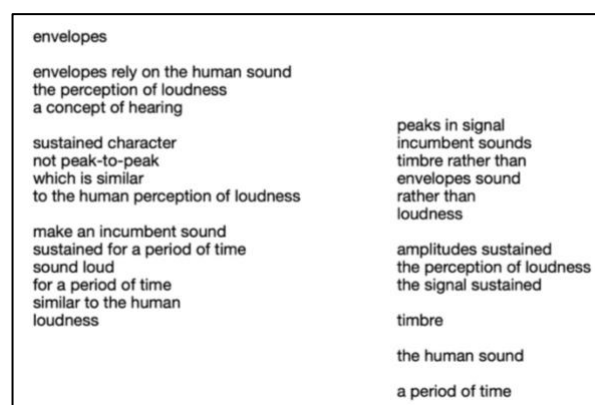


Figure 4: *envelopes* by Elizabeth Millar.

2.5 Long form prose

Rarer yet than scores composed of long-form poetic verses are those made of longer-form prose, such as Amnon Wolman’s *February 26, 2000*, a text describing an imaginary sounding experience:

A new sound, a very nervous, taut and nerve-racking sound. You hear it and almost want to put your finger in your ear to dampen it, but you hold back, reasoning that it will mutate, it will turn into something else, but it doesn’t. It is an annoying piercing shrill, similarly to a difference tone it is seemingly placed inside your ear. It persists and perseveres. It is not quite electronic, or not what we think of when we say an electronic sound [37, p. 419].

Another compelling example is Cornelius Cardew's *Sextet: The Tiger's Mind*. A hybrid instructional-poetic score, the work is separated into two parts. The first section contains two prose verses titled *Daypiece* (Fig. 5) and *Nightpiece*, revolving around six characters: Amy, the tiger, the tree, wind, the circle, and the mind.

Daypiece
The tiger fights the mind that loves the circle that traps the tiger.
The circle is perfect and outside time. The wind blows dust in tigers' eyes. Amy reflects, relaxes with her mind, which puts out buds (emulates the tree). Amy jumps through the circle and comforts the tiger. The tiger sleeps in the tree. High wind. Amy climbs the tree, which groans in the wind and succumbs. The tiger burns.

Figure 5: *Daypiece* (excerpt) from *Sextet: The tiger's mind* by Cornelius Cardew

The second section offers commentary on interpretation, in addition to defining features of each character. Of particular note is the way in which the second section offers no musical guidance. Instead, the commentary on interpretation discusses potential approaches to the work, such as performing *Daypiece* and *Nightpiece* on alternate occasions, memorisation of the text, assigning of roles, and discourse on ways in which the work could evolve. Further, while the descriptions of characters are akin to poetic characterisations, rather than musical motifs, as demonstrated below:

Amy is a person. She worships the tiger. She tags along holding him by the tail. Her mind is occupied with things close by. She comes to no harm in the wind, although it brings her intimations of things far away. However, in high winds she should avoid climbing trees [38, p. 530].

2.6 Concrete Poetry

In addition to the above mentioned word use, many scores use qualities of concrete poetry, where placement or arrangement on the page, in addition to change in typeface is also a poetic factor. Explicitly concrete works include *eine/r*, 2 by Stefan Thut, a score with single instances of the words “sound” and “noise” arranged on the page, and the words “once (again)” centre-justified in a smaller size at the bottom; *Piano Piano* by Pauline Oliveros, a score containing the words “play”, “black”, “white”, “one” and “tone” arranged in different placements, sizes and font-weights; *e.a.c.d.* by Ryoko Akama, composed of a time-line from 0’00” to 20’00” surrounded on the page by a number of words and short phrases, such as “small”, “holes in the eye” and “like a chimney”, including a longer text reading “silent letter is a letter that is not pronounced / yet without it / the word makes no sense”; *A column of sound* (fig. 6) by Sage Harlow, composed of the multiple instances of the phrase “a column of sound” overlaid in different ways on multiple pages.



Figure 6: *A column of sound* (excerpt) by Sage Harlow

It is noteworthy that regardless of category, most of the scores mentioned thus far take care with the spatial placement and visual presentation of words, in addition to material choice. For example, Brecht is known for use of dot points, with scores presented on small white or off-white cards; Werder's unmistakable use of right-justified text in the middle of a page, with lower-case signature and title at the bottom, often typewritten on found paper; the poetic placement of text in Sarah Hughes' *Sifted Ashes of Air*; my own scores, handwritten on a set of found index cards, written with the same pen and ink in a consistent format.

2.7 Categorisation by allusive, ambiguous, conceptual

The challenge of categorising scores by word use and placement lays in the lack of thematic connection between scores. For further thematic connection we turn to Anderson's definition of poetic text scores as allusive, conceptual, or ambiguous [4]. Although the terms are offered without further qualifiers, beyond that such scores consist of text which does not explicitly point to action, nor contain performance instructions, it is worthwhile to consider the viability of the terms as being categorically distinct. In this view, *allusive* scores primarily refer to the presence of an act, or a description of a result, without outright instructing; *ambiguous* scores are primarily ambiguous as pertains to their actionability; and *conceptual* scores primarily realised in the mind [44]. It is important to consider that while many scores fit within multiple categories, I have chosen to categorise according to what appears to be their primary characteristic, recognising this is an interpretive choice. In this light, previously mentioned scores can be categorised as follows in Table 3:

Allusive	• 2005¹ by Manfred Werder • October 24, 2022 by the Craig Pedersen • Chair Event by George Brecht • envelopes by Elizabeth Millar • Suitcase by George Brecht • Three Aqueous Events by George Brecht • wind and grass by Lo Wie
----------	---

Ambiguous	• 2008³, 2009¹, 2012⁴ by Manfred Werder • <i>A Column of Sound</i> by Sage J Harlow • <i>April 14, 2022</i> by Craig Pedersen • <i>for Strings</i> by Howard Skempton • <i>Piano Piece for David Tudor #3</i> by La Monte Young • <i>e.a.c.d.</i> by Ryoko Akama
Conceptual	• <i>Earth Piece</i> by Yoko Ono • <i>February 26, 2000</i> by Amnon Wolman • <i>The Earthworm Also Sings</i> by Pauline Oliveros • <i>Two Definitions</i> by George Brecht

Table 3: Categorisation of scores by allusive, ambiguous, and conceptual

As suggested, an allusive score primarily alludes to the presence of an act, or a description of a result, without outright instructing. In this light a score such as Werder's 2005¹ makes clear the necessary components for its realisation: place and time, with sound (written in parentheses), somehow acting as explanation or afterthought; Brecht's *Chair Event* takes meaning as the description of a potential realisation whereby a Christmas-tree ball, a flag, and a can opener are placed upon a white chair, with black and spectral colours present, while *Three Aqueous Events* describes three events, defined at minimum by the presence of ice, water, and steam, presumably in that sequence; my own score *October 24, 2022* ("Autumn") alludes to a realisation where aspects, qualities, documentation of, or responses to, the idea or archetypes of Autumn are present.

Conversely, ambiguous scores contain heightened degrees of ambiguity as pertains to their potential actionability. For example, Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor #3* ("most of them / were very old grasshoppers") leaves no clear frame of reference for interpretation on the piano; Skempton's *for Strings*, presumably written to be performed on string instruments, leaves interpreters to consider the potential musical meaning of the words "waves", "shingle", and "seagulls"; Harlow's *A Column of Sound* presents an interpreter with the need to interrogate potential meanings of the phrase "a column of sound", in addition to negotiating the elements of concrete poetry discussed above. My own work *April 14, 2022* ("asking to be part of the environment dismisses that we already are") requires poetic unravelling, potentially including personal understanding of the philosophical meaning of the text and how it relates to praxis, to realise.

Drawing on the work of Doyle [43], we can consider conceptual scores as those primarily realised in the mind, whether through the presentation of impossible, impractical, or unthinkable to realise instructions, such as those found in many scores written by George Brecht, Yoko Ono or other Fluxus associated artists; inquiry or internal reflection scores such as many of Pauline Oliveros' sonic mediations; scores explicitly made to be realised in the mind, such as Wolman's *February 26, 2000*, the intended to function as guide to creating an imaginary sounding experience. Of interest is how Wolman's score can be viewed as quite unambiguous, even instructional, in its description of an imagined

music, but that its markedly conceptual nature cannot be overlooked.

In the above examples, qualities and characteristics of poetic text scores have been explored, and it has been demonstrated that they can take many forms. Further, although thematically varied by content, they can be loosely connected by their forms of ambiguities. However, while basic categorisation and simple description of their qualities and ambiguities is necessary to their understanding, I contend that to fully understand the nature of poetic text scores we must broadly consider what musical scores are and investigate the nature of poetic language. Doing so both provides context for understanding how poetic text scores function as scores and sets the foundation for understanding interpretation in relation to broader practice.

3. THE SCORE AS SEMIOTIC MEDIUM

In general, there are two main views of scores, that they are visual representations of music, or set of directions to a performer towards a musical event [44]. The mainstream view of music notation corresponds to the former, that scores and notation represent the way music sounds (or should sound), graphically or symbolically [44], [45], [46], [47], and it is generally accepted that notation serves a variety of purposes: performance and publication, to sketch and remember musical ideas, musical analysis, or to follow along with recordings [48]. Further, it has also been suggested that graphic representations of music, such as staff notation can be considered "descriptive", in that they describe the sound of the work (albeit with certain limitations and functions defined by style and genre), and notation which directs a performer in the method of making sound can be considered "prescriptive" [48]. This paper operates from the view that, at least to a performer, scores can be viewed as directions in that they signify acts in time, doing so not only descriptively or prescriptively, but also poetically. Further, regardless as to being viewed as visual representation of sound or as directions, all scores can be viewed as a system of symbols to be interpreted towards musical performance.

3.1 Overview of semiotics

Within semiotics we also recognise two schools, the "American" and "European", building upon the work of Pierce and Saussure respectively, through which the signs and symbols of music have been considered [49]. This paper draws primarily upon the work of the latter. In *Course in General Linguistics* [50], compiled posthumously in 1913 from lecture notes by his students, Saussure outlines a dyadic approach to understanding to linguistics signs, arguing two main components of any sign, which do not exist independently of one another: the *signifier* as the form or material vehicle of the sign, and the *signified* as concept, idea or meaning of the sign. He argues that language has both individual and social aspects which are inextricably linked, existing both as a product of the past as an established system, and in the present, synchronically. He further asserts that linguistic

signs do not exist independently of their context, which is a complex system, and that within different systems of meaning, signifiers signify differently, carefully noting that neither individuals nor the collective control the meaning of language. Although his work was fundamentally concerned with linguistics, he suggested the possibility to study signs more broadly, coining the term *semiology* (later known as semiotics). Following Saussure's work, theorist Roman Jakobson later pioneered the structuralist movement, broadly applying the linguistic model and insights into the nature of signs to other fields, such as philosophy, literary theory, anthropology and ultimately music.

3.2 Overview of score as semiotic medium

In her essay *Interlude I: Exploring musical integrity and experimentation*, Katherine Coessens [45] succinctly summarises the musical score in the terms of semiotics. Using the language of linguistics, she describes scores as semiotic mediums containing syntax and grammar, signification (representation of meaning) and semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (the way said language is used) in relation to performer practice. As such, she suggests that scores convey signification by way of signs, that scores are contingent upon the systems of notation defined by the rules and conventions of a given musical style, and that scores contain both indeterminate and seemingly fully determined elements, whose relationship to sounding outcome is contingent upon the interpreting musician's practice and their context. She argues (from a canonical Classical perspective) that although the "syntax of music notation is quite clear", having been developed over time by artists and communities through spoken and unspoken consensus, there is no verbatim way to render a score's notation (code or signs) into sound, thus suggesting a complex process of musical literacy, physical learning and translation required to perform a score. As such, she notes that while scores as signs convey meaning from one system to another, from score to sound, the sounding experience of the score is mediated through the body and mind - and thus practice - of the interpreter.

However, while Coessens suggests that musical scores "reduce musical ideas to symbols" whose interpretation are agreed upon, I contend that while this is something scores (and their surrounding context) *can* do, that her suggestion is a more apt description of only particular historical systems of notation. As we have seen, within Experimental music the sounding outcome of a score need not be known in advance, nor reproducible, nor do scores necessarily describe clear process to an interpreter. In this light, I suggest that scores can be read as systems of signs, and the signification of symbols into sounds are contingent upon the systems of notation (or lack thereof) defined by the rules and conventions of a given musical style and context, the sounding experience of which is mediated through the practice of the interpreter.

3.3 The score as object signifying acts in time

However, even this definition of the score presupposes an understanding of a score's fundamental identity, without which the system of signs has no context for an interpreter to understand said signification of symbols. As Pisaro [7] suggests, scores are "to be understood as a set of symbols whose goal³ is to be interpreted, in most cases, as sound (and silence)." In his suggestion that score *is to be understood* as something, Pisaro points to an implied fundamental identity signified by the score, without which the symbols therein lack interpretative significance. In short, musical symbols requiring an interpreter to realise must act as a form of instructions to a performer.

To this end, I propose considering the score as semiological chain, the first part of which establishes a score's fundamental identity: recognising the sign as both signifier and signified, we can broadly view the score as an *object signifying acts in time*. Once a score's identity is established as such, the second part of the semiological chain, understanding the signification of symbols vis-a-vis the act of interpretation, arises as answer to the questions "which acts, and when?"

What is powerful about this definition of the score, is that it holds true not only for different types of musical scores - standard notations, graphic notations, verbal text scores, conceptual text scores, and transcriptions, in addition to non-musical scores such as action scores, event scores, performance scores and dance scores. Further, viewing the definition *object* broadly, we can include aural or audio scores such as found in Gavin Bryars' score *1, 2, 1-2-3-4* [51] as sound object, or spoken scores such as Eliane Radigue's *Occam Ocean* [52] as speech object.

It bears repeating that this identity is not inherent to the identity of the score itself but is dictated by context. While on first observation this might appear to mean, as Anderson [4] suggests "a score (or notation or composition) is a score (or notation or composition) if the culture uses it as a score (or notation or composition)" (p. 136), as Saussure and later structuralists argued: we don't control the signified meaning of language and linguistic signs are ratified by collective understanding and agreement. Further, it is understood that within different systems of meaning, signifiers signify differently, and that context is a complex system. As such, it is a much wider context that comes into play to signify the score's observable definition of an *object signifying acts in time*, not its use. In this way, we can use a shoe as a score, but that doesn't make the shoe a score, it makes the shoe "used as a score".

3.4 Identifying the score

Further, it is necessary to consider another important factor preceding the semiological chain: the recognition of a score's identity. Considering that signs don't exist

³ In his definition of the score, Pisaro notes a "goal" of the symbols. It should be emphasised however, that symbols have no agency, only contextually defined understanding and use, and that said implied ascription of agency falls to the interpreter, in the process of interpretation.

independently of their context [51] and thus context dictates legibility as media [53] within a ‘semiosphere’ of signs [50], we view the aforementioned semiological chain and signification of symbols therein as illegible until we identify the score within a musical context. Therefore, the signs and symbols contained within a musical score, once removed from the purview of Western Classical music appear unintelligible. Given a non-musician will inevitably experience a musical sign differently than a musician [54], the score could easily be misidentified a treasure map or cipher. Said misidentification however would simply be speculative, especially given that the score already has a defined identity in another context. However, said defined identity doesn’t preclude the possibility of a musical score being a treasure map in another context. Hypothetically, within some fantastically arranged series of events a score and its symbols could be understood to be, and used as, a treasure map.⁴

Even within a musical context, some scores are more readily identifiable as scores than others. It will always be easier to recognise a musical score using the syntax of music notation situated well within the limits of tradition, than those who expand, move away from or challenge said limits, due to the familiarity borne from the marriage of historical precedent and education supporting musical literacy. As noted, musical syntax has been developed over time by artists and communities though spoken and unspoken consensus. To this end, we also understand why theories about music (including my own) may lose their authority as we move away from them in time: language and its systems exist both as a product of the past as an established system, and in the present, synchronically, constantly changing, outside of both individual and collective control. In short, scores that move away from the symbolic precedents of the past require a new or modified discourse that accounts for them.

3.5 Other semiological approaches

Accordingly, viewing the music semiotically isn’t novel, having been explored in detail in Nattiez’ [55] *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, and Goodman’s [56] *Languages of Art*, with a clear history found in Tarasti’s [50] *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*. However, Tarasti’s emphasis on historical canonical works, musical meaning of a score’s sounding outcome, or notational relationships is not relevant to my research. Further, given my research deals with scores synchronically, as things already made and presented to an artist for musical or sounding interpretation, it does not deal with composer process. It intentionally eschews notions of hidden composer intention carrying through the score to the interpreter, taking the stance that composer intention is fundamentally unknowable, perhaps even to composers themselves, and is best considered a form of context. Thus, Nattiez’ emphasis on the poetic - the intended meaning or process of creation is also not relevant.

⁴ Cue Dan Brown or Nicolas Cage.

Similarly, Goodman’s theory too rigidly defines the score as a system of symbols containing fixed meanings, discounting Experimental graphic or text scores on the basis of being too non-notational [4], [57]. Further, his theories have been widely criticised within classical canon as insufficiently accounting for the way a score’s use, and thus understanding and relevances of symbols therein, is dependent upon context [57].

Finally, each of the proposed theories above sets out a series of complex systems, none of which are particularly useful to a musical interpreter, nor provides a concise way to view the interpretation of poetic text scores (or any scores for that matter). They mostly operate from the vantage point that the symbols presented in a score are understood to represent the sounding end result of a process, and that the codes of notation (or non-notation) are readily understood. In short, they leave out the essential perspective and process of the interpreter, without which the signs are not actualised. Thus, I return to the simple semiotic model proposed by Saussure of the sign and the signified, the definition of the score as object signifying acts in time, and understanding that the signification of symbols vis-a-vis the act of interpretation arises as answer to the questions “which acts, and when?”

3.5 Instructional text scores

Although instructional text scores are not the primary focus of this paper, the ways in which they descriptively or prescriptively indicate to an interpreter “which acts, and when” demonstrates the ways in which text signifies acts in time, providing context and highlighting the fundamental ambiguities present poetic text scores. The examples here are chosen because they quite elegantly and clearly demonstrate some of the ways scores signify acts in time but are by no means comprehensive to the multitude of possibilities and combinations.

Antoine Beuger’s *one tone. rather short. very quiet.* (1998) [58] (fig. 7) is a beautiful example of a text score describing a sounding result, albeit within certain accepted boundaries of knowability present in open scores.

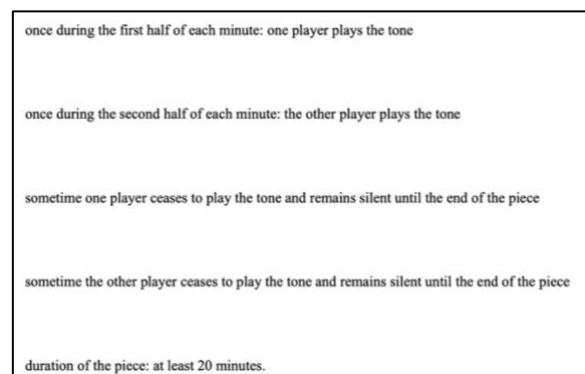


Figure 7: *one tone. rather short. very quiet.* (excerpt) by Antoine Beuger

As Saunders [59] elegantly summarises:

Players each make a sound which is rather short and very quiet. One player makes the sound in the first half of every minute, and the second player makes the sound

in the second half of every minute. After some time, each performer then independently stops making the sound and remains silent until the end of the piece (p. 106).

In this way, the score clearly describes the act of playing one short single tone in the first or second half of every minute, until a performer chooses to stop. Although the score may not describe a specific pitch or tone or its discrete placement in time, it nonetheless indicates moderately clearly what to do and when.

James Tenney's swell pieces (fig. 8), from the composer's series of *Postal pieces* (1971) [60], are another set of text scores clearly describing musical acts. In *Swell Piece: for Alison Knowles* (1968) [61] a group of three or more performers are asked to play long tones, one after another, each tone building from as "softly as possible" to "maximum intensity" before fading into silence, while keeping the pitch and timbre steady. However, the specific temporal placement of each tone within the agreed upon duration of the piece is not described. Instead, placement in time is prescribed through the process of playing each tone sequentially, as dictated by each performer's musical choices, instrument, and capabilities, no doubt in addition to a multitude of other factors. Both *Swell Piece No. 2* (1971) [62] and *Swell Piece No. 3* (1971) [63] follow in a similar fashion; performers are told what to play, swells on A-440 and B3/F#4 respectively, while placement in time is prescribed by a process. In both cases performers play independently of one another, leading generatively to a series of overlapping swells, temporal aspects again dictated by performer's musical choices, instrument, capabilities, and other factors.

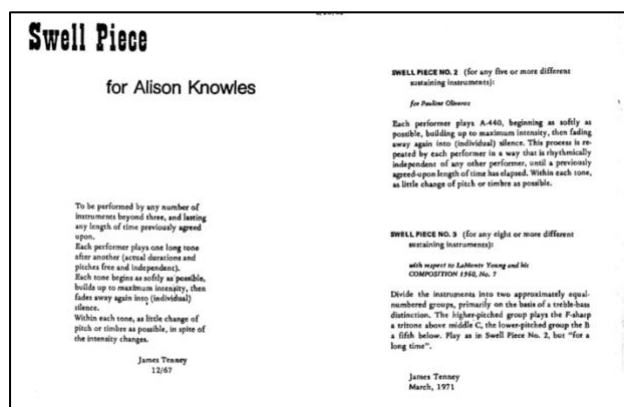


Figure 8: Swell piece: For Alison Knowles, Swell piece no. 2, Swell piece no. 3 by James Tenney

While Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music* (1968) [64] (Fig. 9) is primarily prescriptive, it also contains descriptive elements. The score prescribes the procedure of suspending microphones by their cables such that they can swing in a pendular motion above loudspeakers to create feedback, stating the process by which the microphones are set in motion and ultimately come to rest. While the score describes the sounding result as a "series of feedback pulses...which will either be all in unison or not", such outcome is fundamentally dependent upon the relationship between each microphone-

pendulum and loudspeaker relative to the changes in each pendulum's oscillation period.

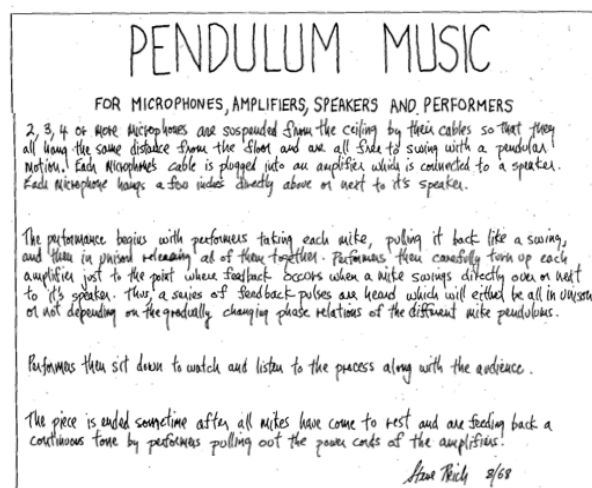


Figure 9: Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music*

The above scores demonstrate ways in which instructional text scores can signify acts in time, both descriptively and prescriptively. However, some instructional scores are more ambiguous, broad, or open-ended in the ways they signify, at times neither describing or prescribing what to do, or when.

Sage J Harlow's *Thirteen pages of improvisation* (2017) [65] (Fig. 10) is primarily prescriptive but contains implied or ambiguous elements. The cover page indicates that it is a piece for one or more improvisors, with open instrumentation, prescribing that interpreters play from the score and not from memory, additionally designating a minimum duration. Each of the subsequent thirteen pages contains only two elements: the word *improvise* slightly above the midline of the page, and the page number in the bottom right corner. Unlike previously discussed scores, the sounding result is in no way described (unless of course you view improvisation as being a specific sound, a notion I would argue against). Instead, the score prescribes that the interpreter *improvise*. Further, while the score tells an interpreter which act to perform - improvisation - it does not designate the instruction's placement in time, other than occurring within the stated minimum duration. Although the use of a single imperative verb is most readily read as a command, implying placement in time as "now" or "within the context of performing this piece", the score's ambiguous nature invites multiple interpretations, without clearly marking their limits. For instance, an interpreter could hypothetically improvise for a period proportional to the space the word occupies on the page. Considering this, we might imagine the interpreter's role not only as the interpretation of prescriptive or descriptive symbols present in the aforementioned second part of the semiotic chain (the set of symbols to be interpreted as sound and silence), but to engage in an act of interpretation beginning with the first step of the chain (the ways in which it signifies acts in time). In the case of *Thirteen pages of improvisation*, as act of interpretation the performer decides upon or takes a position (implicitly or explicitly) regarding the way the score signifies time and

interprets the score accordingly. In this way, lacking prescription or description to guide them, an interpreter engages with the nature of the question “when?”, setting the foundation for which they then realise the symbols as presented. Noteworthy is how despite the ambiguity present in the *Thirteen pages of improvisation*, the score still instructs the performer and is thus categorically an instructional text score.

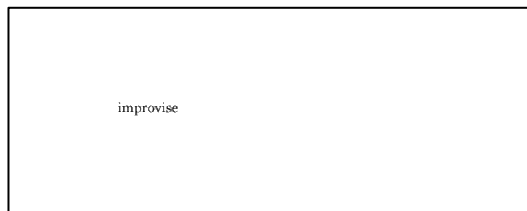


Figure 10: Sage Harlow’s *Thirteen pages of improvisation* (excerpt)

4. (RE-)DEFINING THE POETIC SCORE

Of central interest to this paper are text scores which neither clearly describe or prescribe acts *nor* placement in time. As noted above, my preference is for the terms poetic text score as such scores are defined by their poetic nature. As Montgomery suggests:

The poem is the utterance that most tests the meaning-making capacity of language. In the parallel practice of the poem, the text score finds its most potent analogue, in which the lucid instruction for performers dissolves under the pressure of entirely different conventions of reading and writing. [3, p. 90]

Montgomery further notes, through analysis of composite instructional and poetic scores by Michael Pisaro and more minimal non-instructional text scores of Manfred Werder, that while use of poetry and poetic language in scores does not provide clear purpose to an interpreter, it may serve to orient a performer. He discusses how within Pisaro’s works poetic qualities set conditions for an interpreter to respond to other forms of notation present in a work, and thus bring sounding qualities to a work that would be otherwise absent, while Werder’s scores offer vectors of exploration in and out of the work, acting as a “frame for the world” [3, p. 99]. However, while Montgomery’s observation of the use of poetic language is apt, of most interest is his suggestion that text can “exert a linguistic pressure on the performative realisation of the poem.” [3, p. 93] As follows I suggest that it is not the use of poetic language or poetry nor the implementation of para-poetic qualities alone that define such scores as poetic, but that they function poetically, in linguistic terms.

4.1 The poetic function

To better understand the linguistic properties of poetry, and thus poetic text scores, we turn to the work of Roman

Jakobson.⁵ In his *Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics* Jakobson [15] outlines six factors involved in verbal communication - addresser, addressee, context, message, contact, and code:

The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT...; a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and the addressee; and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication (p. 353)

Linda R. Waugh [66, p. 58] expands on these factors as follows:

1. addresser (speaker, [...] poet, author; narrator)
2. addressee (decoder, hearer, listener; reader; interpreter)
3. code (system, langue⁶)
4. message ([...] parole, the given discourse, the text)
5. context (referent)
6. contact

It is relatively straightforward to apply this model to the context of musical score interpretation: The *addresser* can be viewed as either the composer, or the literary voice of the score itself⁷; the *addressee* the interpreter; the *code* the system of symbols and signs - traditionally music notation and its syntax; the *message* the text itself, or the specifically used musical symbols; the *context* both the specific situation surrounding a given work, in addition to rules and conventions of a given musical style and context, and interpreter practice; *contact* the way the score is in dialogue with an interpreter’s practice and genre as means to understand and realise the score, or if taking the addresser as composer (or other musical mediator such as a music director) the channel of communication. It should be noted that these same factors could apply between interpreter/sounding of the score and listener, but that this lies outside of the scope of this study.

Jakobson further suggests six functions of language, each corresponding to one of the six factors:

1. emotive, focusing on language the addresser uses to express their internal state;
2. conative, directly communicating with the addressee, primarily using imperative (commands) and vocatives;
3. metalingual, communication used to clarify the code;
4. poetic, language which deals with the message or form itself;
5. referential, descriptive statements, including those referring to time, place or person;
6. phatic, messages pertaining to the establishment, continuation or ending of communication.

Jakobson quite importantly notes that each function does not exist in a vacuum, and that it is rare that verbal messages only fulfil a single function. As Waugh suggests, verbal messages are multifunctional, each

⁵ As McKay argues in *A Semiotic Approach to Open Notations* [54], Jakobson’s work is essential to understanding open notations, and thus poetic text scores.

⁶ *Langue* referring here to the shared system of language, and *parole* the individual act of using language, as defined by Saussure.

⁷ Additionally, within post-structuralism, in absence of a present composer, we take the score to be the addresser.

fulfilling diverse functions integrated within a single message, but depending “primarily on the predominant function” [15, p. 353]. Although also outside the main focus of this paper it is not difficult to conceive of compositional practice as relating to Jakobson’s six functions, at least when viewed from the perspective of the composer. For example, some work is primarily *emotive* in that aims to express a composer’s internal or emotional state, other *referential* in the sense it is written “about something”, while some practice is centred on the limits or potentials inherent in musical *code*.

Although Jakobson defined six functions of language, his central interest lay predominately with the poetic function, and the ways language and linguistic form constitute the aesthetic centre of the poetic genre. In Jakobson’s view the poetic function focuses primarily on the intrinsic qualities of the message or form itself, with meaning supporting the form rather than the form supporting meaning, thus revealing linguistic form as being essentially human and exposing fundamental subjectivities of language [67]. As Waugh (1980) suggests, “the set toward the message brings forth the question of the nature of the message” (p. 60).⁸ Viewed in the language of sign and signified, the signified illuminates the nature of the sign.

As we have already demonstrated with Harlow’s *Thirteen pages of improvisation*, the use of ambiguous language in instructional scores may impel an interpreter to engage with the nature of the score and make interpretative decisions (implicitly or explicitly) about the ways in which the score signifies time. It is not a large leap to consider that scores completely lacking in instructional function similarly. Thus, without the expected instructional symbols that otherwise define a score, the interpreter of scores lacking in instruction engages with the nature of the form itself, and interpretation will inevitably be based on an interpreter’s understanding of what a score is and how the symbols or code presented do or do not relate to said understanding. Further, depending on interpreter experience they may engage metalingually, using language to clarify the nature of the score, asking the questions “how is this a score and what do I do?”. Indeed, as previously noted, ambiguity is a feature of poetry, and poetic text scores as are in part defined by the ways in which their ambiguity extends to their meaning, definition and interpretability as scores.

As with the poetic function, the meaning of poetic text scores supports its form. As a form of open score featuring a heightened degrees of sounding difference between performances, a non-instructional text score’s is defined by how it is used and how interpretations existing within a larger field relate to one another and point back to the original text. As Montgomery elegantly states “travelling in the opposite direction, the performance of the score ... always gestures back towards the words that give rise to it and which condition the sounds in ways that apply in no other compositional or improvisational domain” [3, p. 87]. As such the score is not defined by how interpretations function as reproductions of an

original score,⁹ but instead in how they function as manifestations contributing to the expressive potential of a greater work. In short, interpretations tell us what the score is, as opposed to the other way around.

Further, in the same ways poetry reveals that linguistic form as being essentially human and expose fundamental subjectivities of language, poetic scores analogously by nature expose the human aspects of score interpretation. It is not difficult to conceive of how the sounding end-result and qualities thereof of a given realisation of a score is shaped by the skills, abilities, and aesthetic practice of the interpreter. As such, poetic scores highlight the subjective aspect of score interpretation, re-emphasising interpreter practice and humanity present in the interpretation of all works.

5. EPILOGUE: FURTHER MUSING ON GENRES

Expanding on Jakobson’s work, Cureton [67] suggests the ways that different literary genres use language in distinct manners, consequently leading to different aesthetic centres for each genre. For example, he posits the predominant use of language within drama as sociolinguistic and pragmatic, centring aesthetically on the ways language is used in different contexts; prose as semantic and rhetorical, centring on ideas and what they point to; song as paralinguistic and physical, centring on the ways we use factors such as pitch, volume, and intonation to modify meaning. As with Jakobson and Waugh, Cureton carefully notes that while these are observable predominant features of each genre, they additionally employ features from other genres.

Viewing text scores as a hybrid literary-musical genre we can similarly consider the distinct ways in which both instructional and poetic text scores use language, and thus their aesthetic centres. By Jakobson’s categorisation instructional text scores are conative, as the text directly communicates to the interpreter using primarily directive or imperative language, descriptively or prescriptively, to clearly communicate actionable musical ideas, as demonstrated in the previous section. As follows, the aesthetic centre of instructional text scores is not unlike song, being both physical and musical, focusing on ways in which acts in time are incited towards musical ends, including factors like the paralinguistic - pitch, volume, intonation, rhythm, timing, and timbre.¹⁰ To an interpreter, instructional text scores provide relatively clear pathways towards musical realisation.

Conversely the central use of language in poetic text scores is decidedly non-conative, lacking directive or imperative language, instead commonly considered poetic by nature of their suggestive or enigmatic qualities

⁸ For further detailed linguistic explanation, see Waugh’s *The Poetic Function in the Theory of Roman Jakobson* [66].

⁹ This parallels Susan Sontag’s, John Berger’s and Walter Benjamin’s respective views on photography, art, and translation.

¹⁰ Although paralinguistic and musical expression share many qualities, the distinction is made here to account for the field of paralinguistics’ primary focus on *vocal* utterances, and additional comparisons between paralinguistic and musical expression lie outside this work.

and use of ambiguously language. As hybrid literary-musical genre we understand their aesthetic centre to be poetic for the reasons demonstrated above, and musical¹¹, in that expression is towards musical ends. However, given a score signifies acts in time, and the poetic text score's aesthetic centre must also be physical. As such an interpreter is presented with an apparent paradox: how does a poetic text score signify acts in time while the language therein provides relatively unclear pathways towards musical realisation?

The simple answer is that poetic text scores signify acts in time poetically, and as such interpretation is a poetic process, involving engagement with both form and content of a score, shaped by the life and practice of the interpreter. Notably, Jakobson also viewed the effects of poetic language as subliminal and subconscious, suggesting the possibility to consciously articulate the structure and effect of poetry as secondary to its pre-lingual effects. While definitively proving that poetic scores signify to an interpreter subliminally, subconsciously, or pre-lingually lies elsewhere, it is beautiful to consider the clear parallel to be drawn here in the interpretation of poetic text scores, projecting a potential for interpretation of scores to lay outside of fully controlled or rational processes.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] J. Lely and J. Saunders, *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*. New York: Continuum, 2012.
- [2] J. Walshe, *The Text Score dataset 1.0*. Darmstädter Ferienkurse, 2021.
- [3] W. Montgomery, "Text-Score-Text," in *Writing the Field Recording*, S. Benson and W. Montgomery, Eds., Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 86–105.
- [4] V. Anderson, "The beginning of happiness: Approaching scores in graphic and text notation," in *Sound & Score: Essays on Sound, Score and Notation*, P. de Assis, W. Brooks, and K. Coessens, Eds., in Orpheus Institute Series. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013, pp. 130–142.
- [5] G. Bryars, "On verbal notation," in *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*, J. Lely and J. Saunders, Eds., Continuum, 2012, pp. 124–126.
- [6] A. Lucier, "Notes on verbal notation," in *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*, J. Lely and J. Saunders, Eds., Continuum, 2012, pp. 253–254.
- [7] M. Pisaro, "Writing, Music," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental music*, J. Saunders, Ed., Routledge, 2016, pp. 27–76.
- [8] C. Cox and D. Warner, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. Continuum, 2004.
- [9] J. Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*. Bloomsbury, 2016.
- [10] J. Saunders, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, 1st ed. Routledge, 2009.
- [11] J. Cage and A. Knowles, *Notations*. Something Else Press, 1969.
- [12] T. Sauer, *Notations 21*, 1st ed. New York: Mark Batty Publisher, 2009.
- [13] L. Young, "Piano piece #3 for David Tudor (1960)," *An Anthology of Chance Operations*. New York Fluxus, 1963.
- [14] G. Brecht, *Water Yam*. Parrot Impressions, 1972.
- [15] R. Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, T. A. Sebeok, Ed., in M.I.T. paperback series. , M.I.T. Press, 1964, pp. 350–377.
- [16] S. P. Su, *Lexical Ambiguity in Poetry*. London: Longman, 1994.
- [17] C. Pedersen, "October 24, 2022." *Mystery & Wonder*, 2022.
- [18] Y. Ono, "Hide Piece (1961)," *Grapefruit: A Book of Instruction and Drawings*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- [19] Y. Ono, "Cut Piece (1964)," *Grapefruit: A Book of Instruction and Drawings*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- [20] G. Brecht, "Suitcase (1963)," *Water Yam*. Parrot Impressions, 1972.
- [21] L. Wie, *wind*. self-published, 2007
- [22] L. Wie, *grass*. self-published, 2007
- [23] M. Werder, *2005¹*. Edition Wandelweiser, 2005.
- [24] M. Werder, *2008³*. Edition Wandelweiser, 2008.
- [25] M. Werder, *2012⁴*. Edition Wandelweiser, 2012.
- [26] H. Skempton, "for Strings (1969)," *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*. Continuum, London ; New York, p. 350, 2012.
- [27] G. Brecht, "Three Aqueous Events (1961)," *Water Yam*. Parrot Impressions, 1972.
- [28] M. Werder, "2010¹." Edition Wandelweiser, 2010.
- [29] G. Brecht, "Chair Event (1963)," *Water Yam*. Parrot Impressions, 1972.
- [30] Y. Ono, "Earth Piece (1963)," *Grapefruit: A Book of Instruction and Drawings*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- [31] C. Pedersen, *April 14, 2022*. *Mystery & Wonder*, 2022.
- [32] S. Hughes, *Sifted Ashes of Air*. self-published, 2022. Accessed: Jan. 02, 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://sarahhughes.info/Scores>
- [33] P. Oliveros, "The Earthworm Also Sings (1992)," *Anthology of text scores*, S. Golter and L. Hall, Eds., Deep Listening Publications, 2013, pp. 1–16.

¹¹ Non-musical scores would have a non-musical aesthetic centre.

- [34] E. Millar, *envelopes*. self-published, 2020.
- [35] G. Brecht, “Two Definitions (1963),” *Water Yam*. Parrot Impressions, 1972.
- [36] W. Amnon, “February 26, 2000,” *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*. Continuum, London ; New York, p. 419, 2012.
- [37] C. Cardew, “Sextet: The Tiger’s Mind,” *Music Times*, vol. 108, no. 1492, p. 527, June 1967, doi: 10.2307/951366.
- [38] S. Harlow, *a column of sound*. self-published, 2025. Accessed: Jan. 02, 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://www.sagepbbbt.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/a-column-of-sound.pdf>
- [39] S. Thut, *eine/r*, 2. Editions Wandelweiser, 2008.
- [40] P. Oliveros, “Piano Piano (1988),” *Anthology of text scores*. Deep Listening Publications, p. 19, 2013.
- [41] R. Akama, *e.a.c.d.* self-published, 2014.
- [42] Craig Pedersen, *22 September 2024*. Mystery & Wonder, 2024.
- [43] K. C. Doyle, “Exquisite mind, euphoric knowing: Sound, language, and consciousness in experimental music and conceptual art after 1960,” Case Western Reserve University, 2018.
- [44] C. Fox, “Opening offer or contractual obligation? On the prescriptive function of notation in music today,” *Tempo*, vol. 68, no. 269, pp. 6–19, July 2014, doi: 10.1017/S0040298214000023.
- [45] K. Coessens, “Interlude I: Exploring musical integrity and experimentation,” in *Sound & Score: Essays on Sound, Score and Notation*, P. de Assis, W. Brooks, and K. Coessens, Eds., in Orpheus Institute Series. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013, pp. 5–11.
- [46] P. de Assis, “Prelude,” in *Sound & Score: Essays on Sound, Score and Notation*, P. de Assis, W. Brooks, and K. Coessens, Eds., in Orpheus Institute Series. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013, pp. 5–11.
- [47] C. Seeger, “Prescriptive and descriptive music-writing,” *Music. Q.*, vol. XLIV, no. 2, pp. 184–195, 1958, doi: 10.1093/mq/XLIV.2.184.
- [48] M. Kanno, “Prescriptive notation: Limits and challenges,” *Contemp. Music Rev.*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 231–254, Apr. 2007, doi: 10.1080/07494460701250890.
- [49] E. Tarasti, *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. doi: 10.1515/9783110899870.
- [50] F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, England: Bloomsbury, 2013. doi: 10.5040/9781350284968.
- [51] G. Bryars, “1, 2, 1-2-3-4,” *Verbal Anthology*. Experimental Music Catalogue.
- [52] J. Eckhardt, “Eliane Radigue OCCAM OCEAN,” *Interpretations. – the book*, q-o2, 2014, pp. 74–79.
- [53] C. D. Dworkin, *No Medium*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013.
- [54] T. McKay, *A Semiotic Approach to Open Notations: Ambiguity as Opportunity*, 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi: 10.1017/9781108884389.
- [55] J.-J. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- [56] N. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.
- [57] L. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford University Press, 1994. doi: 10.1093/0198235410.001.0001.
- [58] A. Beuger, *one tone. rather short. very quiet*. Edition Wandelweiser, 1998.
- [59] J. Saunders, “Commentary: one tone, rather short. very quiet,” in *Word events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*, J. Lely and J. Saunders, Eds., New York: Continuum, 2012, pp. 106–108.
- [60] J. Tenney, *Postal Pieces*. Smith Publications, 1971.
- [61] J. Tenney, “Swell Piece: for Alison Knowles,” *Postal pieces*. Smith Publications, 1971.
- [62] J. Tenney, “Swell Piece No. 2,” *Postal Pieces*. Smith Publications, 1971.
- [63] J. Tenney, “Swell Piece No. 3,” *Postal pieces*. Smith Publications, 1971.
- [64] S. Reich, *Writings on music: 1965-2000*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [65] S. Harlow, *Thirteen pages of improvisation*. self-published, 2017. Accessed: Jan. 06, 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://www.sagepbbbt.com/scores/>
- [66] L. R. Waugh, “The Poetic Function in the Theory of Roman Jakobson,” *Poet. Today*, vol. 2, no. 1a, p. 57, 1980, doi: 10.2307/1772352.
- [67] R. D. Cureton, “Jakobson Revisited: Poetics, Subjectivity, and Temporality,” *J. Engl. Linguist.*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 354–392, Dec. 2000, doi: 10.1177/00754240022005108.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Commonwealth through an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

[DOI: <https://doi.org/10.82133/C42F-K220>]