

Argentinian composer and choreographer Ellen C. Covito has been gaining wide recognition in the recent years for her “Composed Improvisation” and “Improvised Composition” series. This book brings together for the first time all her major works along with theoretical essays that analyze her approach in depth and an exclusive interview with Covito herself. Edited and compiled by No Collective who has organized four concerts of Covito’s music and dance in New York, Tokyo and Berlin, this is the definitive overview on the output of one of the most radical artists working today.

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ELLEN C. COVITO : WORKS AFTER WEATHER

NO COLLECTIVE

ELLEN C. COVITO

WORKS AFTER WEATHER

EDITED AND COMPILED BY NO COLLECTIVE



ELLEN C.

COMMIT TO

[A N Y O 1]

WORKS

AFTER

WEATHER

ANY 01 | Ellen C. Covito: Works After Weather

© 2014 No Collective (You Nakai, Kay Festa, Earle Lipski, Jay Barnacle, Ai Chinen), Ellen C. Covito, Lindsey Drury, Cody Eikman, Shu Nakagawa, Esther Neff, Shinichi Takashima.

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Cover image: Ellen C. Covito, Score of *Composed Improvisation G* (2011), as realized by No Collective.

Cover and book design by You Nakai, Kay Festa & Earle Lipski

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Edited and Compiled by No Collective
(You Nakai, Kay Festa, Earle Lipski, Jay Barnacle, Ai Chinen, et al)

ALREADY NOT YET is a publisher run by members of No Collective, dedicated to consummating the age to come by making available unprecedented texts that question and/or traverse the boundaries of art, theory, fiction, and other curiosities, primarily via the medium of language.

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 ALREADY NOT YET

Brooklyn, New York

2014

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A ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 0 0 1	G GENERAL USAGE INSTRUCTIONS 0 0 2	E ELLEN C. COVITO 0 0 6	O Of Specters and Spectacles 0 0 8
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VAUDEVILLE PARK

PRESENTS

NO COLLECTIVE
& THE PAN OPLY
PERFORMANCE LABTHE MUSIC OF
ELLEN C COVITO*Acknowledgments*

WITH OPENERS → HAG

7:30 P.M.

\$7

We thank first and foremost all the brilliant musicians, composers, choreographers and dancers who have participated in the three concerts of Covito's music co-organized by No Collective. They include Sean Ali, Gelsey Bell, Corinne Cappelletti, Diana Crum, Lindsey Drury, Kaia Gilge, Travis Just, LJ Leach, Brian McCorkle, Ivan Naranjo, Esther Neff, Catherine Provenzano, Aliza Simons, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Akiva Zamcheck (from the first concert in New York, Brooklyn), Tomoko Hojo, Takumi Ikeda, Satoko Inoue, Motoharu Kawashima, Satoko Kono, Midori Kubota, Tomoki Tai, Masuhisa Nakamura, Haruyuki Suzuki, Hikaru Toho, Hiroshi Yokoshima (from the second concert in Tokyo), Luis Tabuenca and Devika Wickremesinghe (from the third concert in New York, Queens). These concerts would not have happened if not for our brilliant co-curators: Brian McCorkle and Esther Neff from Panoply Performance Laboratory, Ensemble for Experimental Music and Theatre, and Lindsey Drury from Dreary Somebody. Ana María Alarcón lent us an indispensable hand in translating Covito's texts from Spanish. Also, we are grateful to Shu Nakagawa, Esther Neff, and Lindsey Drury for generously allowing us to use their documentation for this publication. Lastly, we thank Ellen C. Covito for her enthusiastic support in making this book possible.

General Usage Instructions

Kay Festa, You Nakai & Earle Lipski

For a long time, we have felt distant from the majority of music being written and performed today. Yet, we admit to finding a strange reassurance in the fact that it has mostly been theatre directors, performance artists, dancers, painters, or poets, who seem to appreciate what we make, works that other musicians and composers tend to dismiss or ignore.

In early 2012, Kay Festa discovered the “score” of *Composed Improvisation G* on the online repository ‘Upload..Download..Perform.net’ (<http://uploaddownloadperform.net/>) and sent the link to You Nakai. You clicked the link. On the downloadable PDF score was a peculiar instruction whose succinct wording only served to amplify its idiosyncrasy: to glue all the pages of a score and play whatever notes that show up when the same pages are ripped open during the performance. Unlike most of so-called ‘new music,’ which is not much more than a moniker for a certain style of music, there was something actually new here, which also reflected upon the endeavors of the post-war avant-garde from a fresh perspective. Moreover, this was an utterly strange ‘composition.’ As a composer, Covito had written down not a single note, had instructed not a single way to produce sound. Directives solely concerned on how the performer should use a given score—and this usage could be applied to any kind of score written by any composer. Evidently, it seemed, the composer was making the content of the score secondary to its use. Eventually we learned that all the other works in her “Composed Improvisation” and “Improvised Composition” series took the same highly strategic and often times humorous approach to scores. Laudably original, Covito’s work thus became our fascination.

Latching onto this discovery, we began to plan a concert of Covito's music in New York. Earle Lipski contacted Issue Project Room who had been interested in Covito's music, but the curators of the experimental music venue wanted to see previous documentations of her concerts to know what was to be expected in advance. No such materials existed, since Covito feared that fixed documentation could misleadingly emphasize the "compositional" aspect of her works at the expense of diminishing the necessity of "improvisation." The brilliant composer and musician Brian McCorkle from Panoply Performance Laboratory joined the project around this time, and it was through him that Vaudeville Park agreed to host us. With luck we managed to assemble a group of twelve excellent musicians, as well as four dancers led by choreographer Lindsey Drury. Over the course of a month, as we prepared for the concert constructing the giant floor score for *Composed Improvisation M*, or trying to write a score with glow-in-the-dark ink for *Composed Improvisation L*, we learned how the apparent simplicity of Covito's instructions often occluded the actual amount of labor required to stage them. You had some issues with this matter which he wrote down in his essay contained in this publication.

Ellen C. Covito's first concert outside Argentina was held on May 24, 2012, and attracted a fair number of Brooklyn audience members who responded with excitement. After the Brooklyn concert, we curated two other concerts of Covito's work: the second concert in September 2012 at Shibuya Koen-dori Classics in Tokyo, in collaboration with Ensemble for Experimental Music and Theater, and a third one in April 2014 at the Woods Cooperative Space in Queens, New York, as part of {The Room} series in collaboration with Dreary Somebody. Regrettably, distance has precluded the composer from attending any of these concerts but her works have been gaining wide interest in spite of

her absence. Soon after the first concert, composer Elizabeth Hoffman interviewed You about the staging of Covito's works, which was subsequently published in the journal *Perspectives of New Music* (Winter 2013). A number of people have started teaching pieces from the "Composed Improvisation" series in MFA seminars. Grafting Covito's idiosyncratic approach to the current practices and discourses of experimental music, and to see what new endeavors might emerge—this has been our shared interest. Our hope with this publication, which brings together most of her works after the early exploration of *Musica del Tiempo* (Music of Weather/Time)—hence the subtitle—along with theoretical essays contemplating her approach as well as an exclusive interview with Covito herself, is none other than to instigate more of these already ongoing discussions.

April 2014, New York

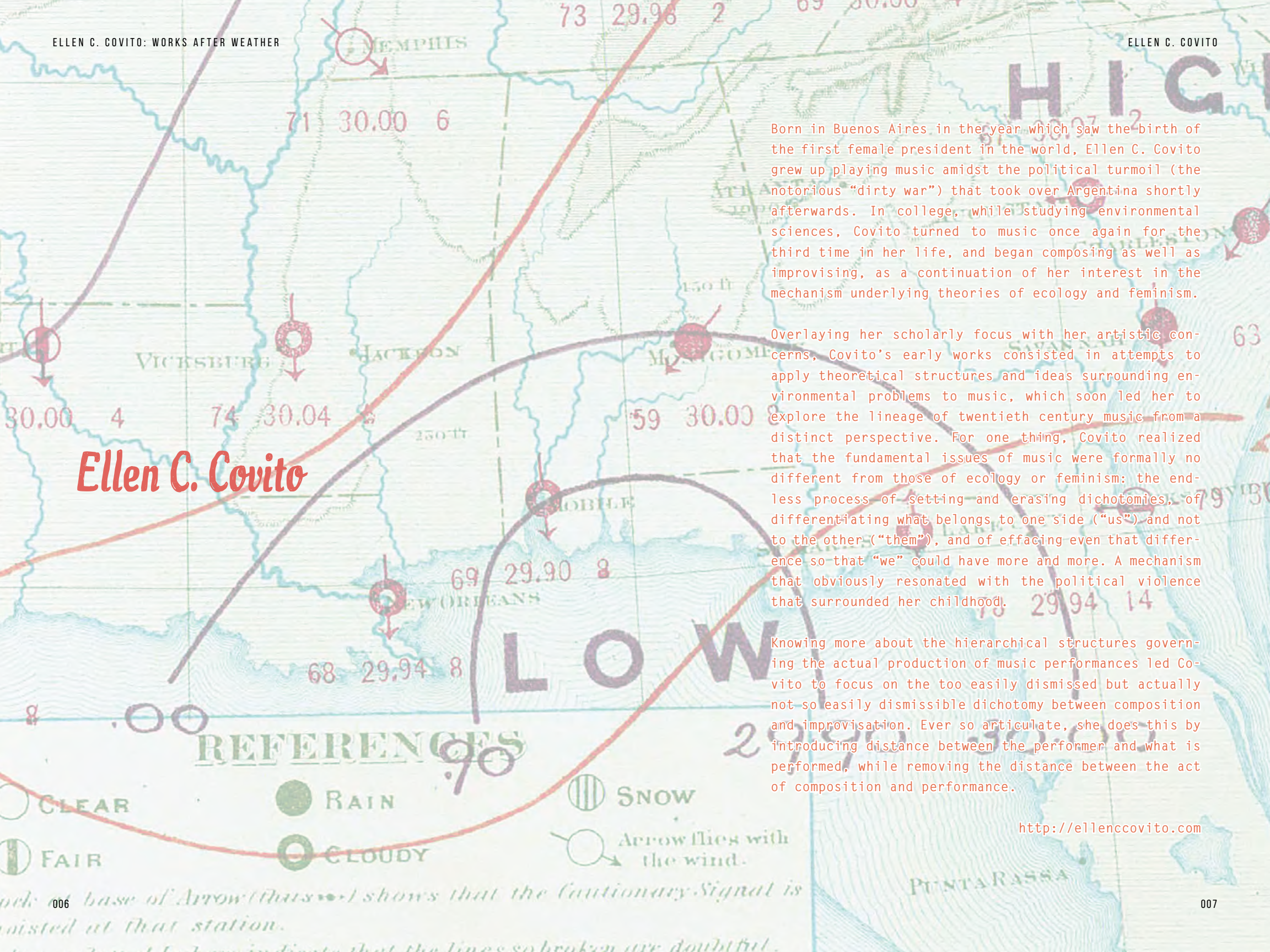
Ellen C. Covito

Born in Buenos Aires in the year which saw the birth of the first female president in the world, Ellen C. Covito grew up playing music amidst the political turmoil (the notorious "dirty war") that took over Argentina shortly afterwards. In college, while studying environmental sciences, Covito turned to music once again for the third time in her life, and began composing as well as improvising, as a continuation of her interest in the mechanism underlying theories of ecology and feminism.

Overlaying her scholarly focus with her artistic concerns, Covito's early works consisted in attempts to apply theoretical structures and ideas surrounding environmental problems to music, which soon led her to explore the lineage of twentieth century music from a distinct perspective. For one thing, Covito realized that the fundamental issues of music were formally no different from those of ecology or feminism: the endless process of setting and erasing dichotomies, of differentiating what belongs to one side ("us") and not to the other ("them"), and of effacing even that difference so that "we" could have more and more. A mechanism that obviously resonated with the political violence that surrounded her childhood.

Knowing more about the hierarchical structures governing the actual production of music performances led Covito to focus on the too easily dismissed but actually not so easily dismissible dichotomy between composition and improvisation. Ever so articulate, she does this by introducing distance between the performer and what is performed, while removing the distance between the act of composition and performance.

<http://ellencovito.com>



REFERENCES

○ CLEAR ● RAIN ◐ SNOW
 ◑ FAIR ◒ CLOUDY ◓ Arrow flies with the wind.

...at base of Arrow (this ◓) shows that the Cautionary Signal is
 ...

Of Specters and Spectators

Ellen C. Covito

No. 01 - Spectra Corps - back view - Watters Glen

I do not believe in *historia* ("history/story"). I believe in structures and I aim to devise events which unbalance and reconfigure imposed structures. This may be the driving force that builds history, but it is not history *per se*. It is mythical, and hence it is recurrent.

The basic unit of structures is differentiation and thus the creation of dichotomies. There is no absolute way of getting rid of dichotomies (male/female, composition/improvisation, composer/performer, artist/spectator...), because, for one thing, they do not really exist. But we all know that we all see, hear, and think through things that do not really exist. These filters of reality haunt us like ghosts, and haunt us recurrently despite our desperate attempts at exorcism (a spectator is a specter!). And perhaps out of fatigue we choose to confound them with reality. But the only plausible way of dealing with them, as I see it, is to change them, and to keep changing them to show that they can be changed.

For me, the function of art lies precisely in this necessarily localized and tentative securing of potentials and possibilities for changes. Otherwise any given work of art would seem too fragile, too transient and thus utterly impotent in the face of radical establishments and implementation of establishments via technological, economical and/or political channels. But it is the very tentative and impotent character of artworks that allow them to return without any care to history. In other words, art serves its purpose, precisely because we don't confound it with the so-called reality or life. We fight ghosts with ghosts.

WITCHCRAFT
Moderately
18
These are...

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A : w o r k s

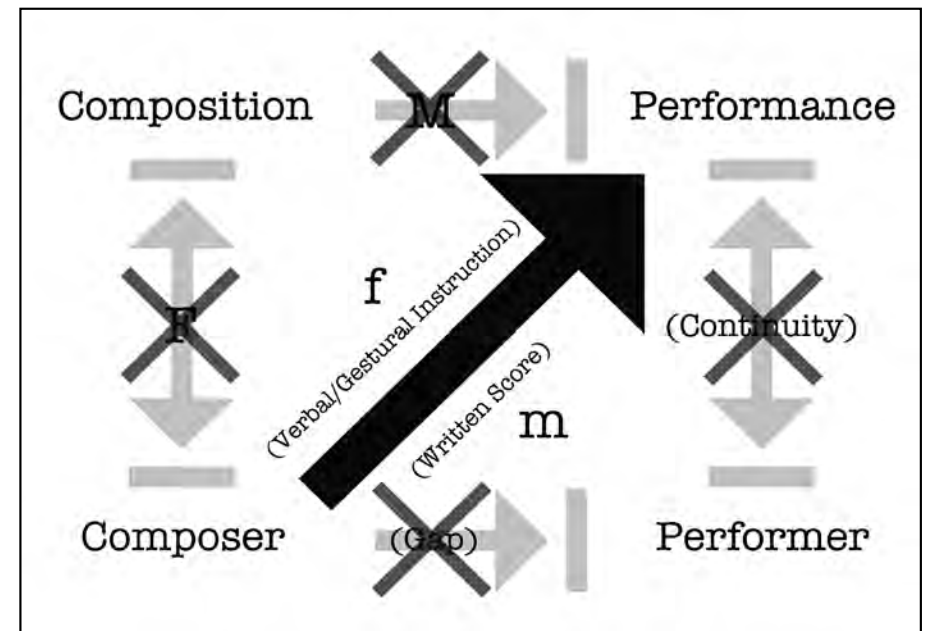




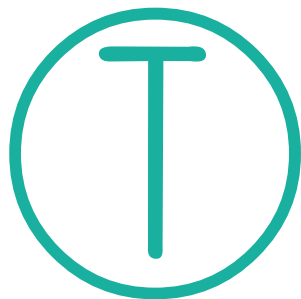
COMPOSED IMPROVISATIONS (2009-)

Brian McCorkle playing *Composed Improvisation E*
during the set-up for the concert (Brooklyn, 2012)

“*Composed Improvisations and Improvised Compositions* are attempts to deal with what I see as problematic in improvisation and composition. For the former, the physical-psychological continuity between the performer and the performance, which ultimately reduces the performance to what the given performer is able, ready, and willing, to do (a *feminine* problem); for the latter, the institutional-hierarchical gap between the composer and the performer, which potentially reduces the performance to a predetermined plan (a *masculine* problem). My solution: to introduce distance between the performer and what is performed, as well as to remove the distance between the act of composition and performance.”



Covito's diagram depicting the relationship between composition and improvisation

COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2009

Version A: Gather as many performers as possible. All performers wear a T-shirt with fragments of scores printed or written on. The score can be newly composed, or can be a transcription of a “found-score.” No clef signs should be used to provide maximum flexibility for available instruments. Prepare two special T-shirts with barlines for the beginning and ending of the piece. Each performer starts playing after s/he sees the T-shirt with the beginning barline. During the performance, the performers must constantly move around and play whatever fragment of score (on the T-shirts of other performers) that they see. They each stop playing when they see the T-shirt with the final barline. The performer with the final barline T-shirt may choose to hide from the other performers for as long as s/he sees fit.

Version B: Same as Version A, but the entire performance happens in total darkness. Each performer carries a flashlight or a candle, or wears a headlight.

Version C: Version for dancers and musicians. The dancers wear the T-shirts. The musicians sit around the dancers and perform the visible score on the T-shirts. Dancers dance to the music. The same instruction for the beginning and ending as Version A applies.



▲ Score of *Composed Improvisation T* (front and back) as realized by No Collective (Brooklyn, 2012)

> Sean Ali, Gelsey Bell, Travis Just, Brian McCorkle, You Nakai, Ivan Naranjo, Esther Neff, Catherine Provenzano, Aliza Simons, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Akiva Zamcheck performing *Composed Improvisation T*, with Lindsey Drury wearing the final barline T-shirt (Brooklyn, 2012)



COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2009

For a pair of a composer and a performer. An exploration of the primordial contact between the score-as-text and the performer-as-reader. The composer writes a musical score which entails not only musical notes but also jokes. Compose the relationship between the notes and jokes contrapuntally. The performer performs from sight-reading. In addition to performing the notes correctly he reads all the jokes which may trigger unintentional sonic (expressive) responses or not.



> Brian McCorkle performing *Composed Improvisation J*
with a score written by Esther Neff (Brooklyn, 2012)

COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2010

For any number of performers, but no more than four. If there are more than two performers, they should be positioned as far away as possible from one another. Each performer selects an instrument that s/he either doesn't know how to play, or can only play poorly. S/he practices this instrument until s/he is able to perform by sight-reading from a given score, but only very erratically. When this state is attained, practice no more. The performer(s) then writes a new score, or transcribes a "found-score," using a luminous (glow-in-the-dark) marker. If there are more than one performer, the chosen score should be an ensemble piece that accommodates all the instruments. In the performance, the lighting of the venue is set as dark as possible to make the reading of the glow-in-the-dark score possible, and the visual recognition of the instrument(s) impossible.

COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2010

For any number of performers, but no less than four. Write a score, or transcribe a “found-score,” in the form of an eye-chart so that the notes gradually decrease in size as they proceed. Use the Snellen chart as model and arrange the notes in eleven vertical rows. The exact number of notes in each row may not follow the Snellen chart but must increase according to the changes in size. The size of notes should follow the Snellen chart but with the following modifications: the standard optotype size should be vertically divided to accommodate three notes (four staves). The fifth staff should be added keeping the same interval. So a note should be 29.6 mm (88.7 mm/3) tall on the topmost row (20/200), 2.96 mm tall on the eighth row (20/20), and so on. Arrange the intervals between the rows to accommodate note stems and ledger lines. When written instruction is used, the letter size should also follow the Snellen chart. The green and red blocks usually inserted after the sixth and eighth rows respectively in the Snellen chart, may or may not be used. At the performance, all the performers stand twenty feet away from the score and perform in unison. Each performer drops out when s/he can read no more. The piece ends when the last performer drops out.



▲ Sean Ali, Gelsey Bell, Travis Just, Brian McCorkle, You Nakai, Ivan Naranjo, Catherine Provenzano, Aliza Simons, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa & Akiva Zamcheck performing *Composed Improvisation E* (Brooklyn, 2012)

1 20/200

2 20/100

3 20/70

4 20/50

5 20/40

6 20/30

7 20/25

8 20/20

9

10

11

▲ Score of *Composed Improvisation E* as realized by No Collective (Brooklyn, 2012)



▲ Travis Just, Catherine Provenzano & Maria Stankova performing *Composed Improvisation E* (Brooklyn, 2012)

> Tomoko Hojo, Takumi Ikeda, Satoko Inoue, Motoharu Kawashima, Satoko Kono, Midori Kubota, Tomoki Tai, Masuhisa Nakamura, Haruyuki Suzuki, Hikaru Toho & Hiroshi Yokoshima performing *Composed Improvisation E* (Tokyo, 2012)



COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2010

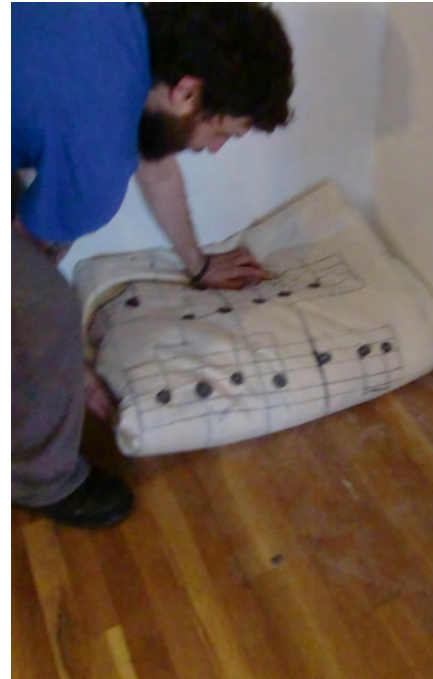
For as many number of performers as possible. To be performed in a venue with no risers or separate stage space. Prepare a score that is the same size and shape as the floor of the concert venue. Use paper or fabric. In case of paper, let the movement of the audience upon it cause tears and rips. The score can be newly composed, or a “found-score” may be transcribed. Start writing on one side of the score. When the space is filled up, fold the score in half and continue writing. And so forth until the score can not be folded anymore. The size of the notes should be modified in relation to the size of the given space. The performance starts with the score covering the entire floor of the venue. Performers must find a position/location from which they can read the entire score. Each performer may start playing as soon as s/he secures an adequate position. When all the performers finish playing all the visible notes, the score is folded in half, and the performers reposition themselves to resume their playing. The piece ends when the score can be folded no further. Duration is not specified but performers should never dilly-dally.



▲ Brian McCorkle walking on the laid out score of *Composed Improvisation M* (Brooklyn, 2012)

> Brian McCorkle and Masami Tomihisa folding the score of *Composed Improvisation M* (Brooklyn, 2012)







< / ^ / > Sean Ali, Gelsey Bell, Travis Just, Brian McCorkle, You Nakai, Ivan Naranjo, Catherine Provenzano, Aliza Simons, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa & Akiva Zamcheck performing *Composed Improvisation M* (Brooklyn, 2012)







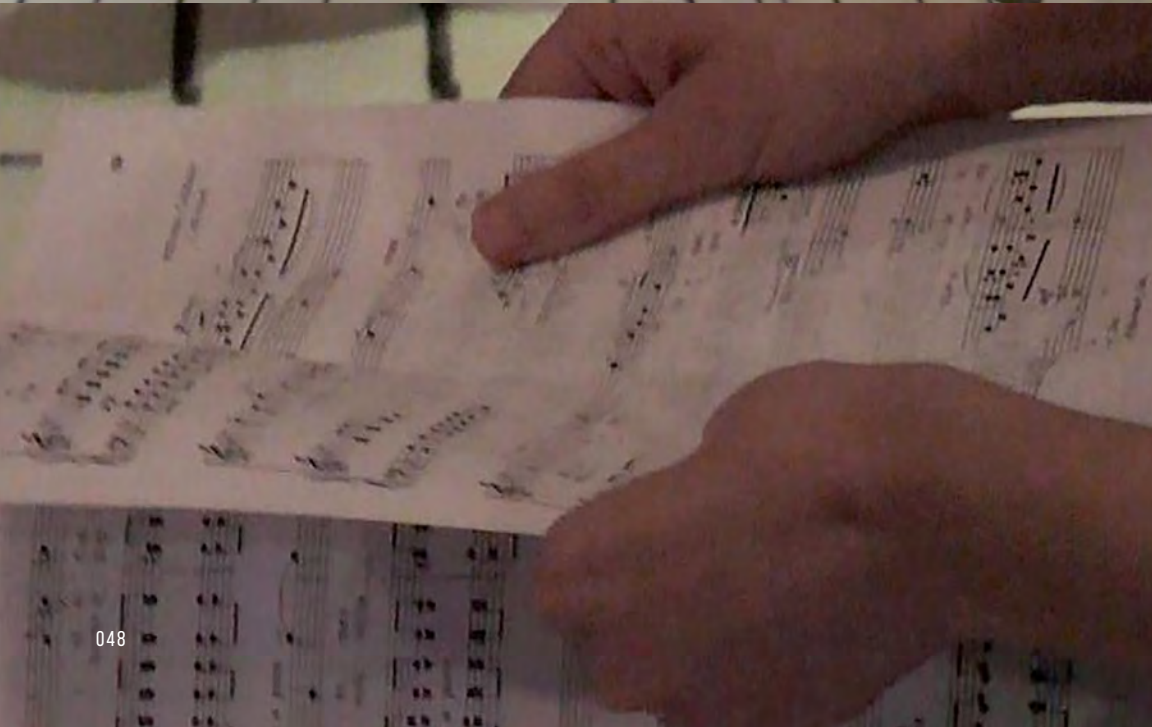


COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2011

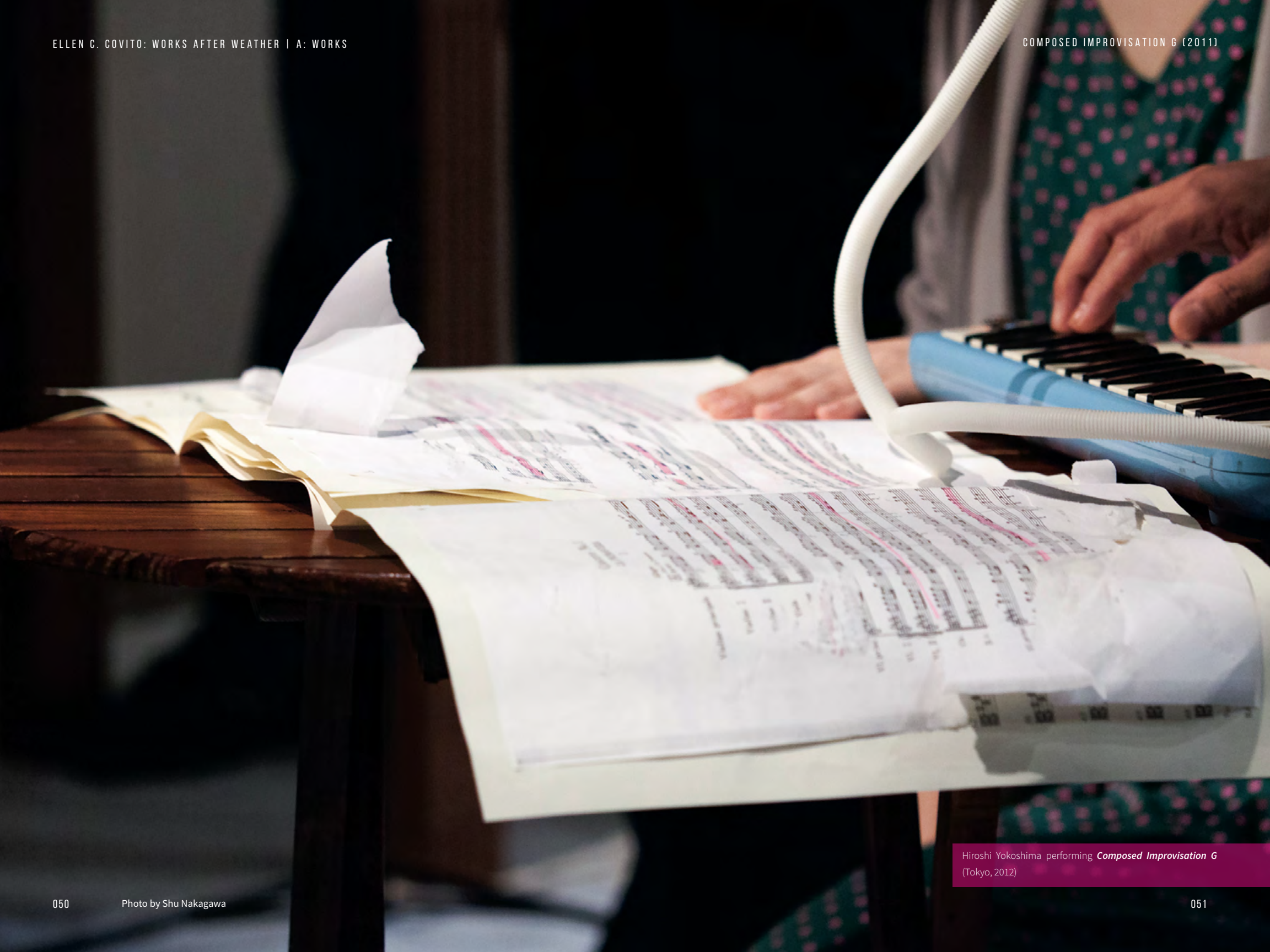
For any number of performers. Write or find a notated score of at least three pages, preferably longer. The performer(s) may choose to rehearse or not. Stick all the pages of the score together with glue or any other adhesive. At the concert the performer(s) proceeds by ripping each page open, and playing whatever note(s) that show up. The performer may choose to collaborate with a page turner.

▲ Score of *Composed Improvisation G* as realized by No Collective (Brooklyn, 2012)



◀ Travis Just, Maria Stankova & Masami Tomihisa performing *Composed Improvisation G* (Brooklyn, 2012)

▲ Tai Tomoki performing *Composed Improvisation G* (Tokyo, 2012)



Hiroshi Yokoshima performing *Composed Improvisation 6*
(Tokyo, 2012)

COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION



2012

For a solo performer. The performer selects a piece s/he doesn't know and requires practice in order to play in public. At every rehearsal, the piece is performed (at least once) from the beginning to the end. This is recorded every time and transcribed onto a transparent sheet of paper. The transparent sheets are prepared in advance with staves of equal size on each. Once the rehearsals are finished and the piece is ready to be performed, all the accumulated transcriptions on the transparent sheet of paper are superimposed on top of each other. Align the superimpositions using the staves of each sheet. In the actual performance, the performer plays from the superimposed score.



▲ / > Score of *Composed Improvisation R* as realized by Masami Tomihisa and No Collective (Brooklyn, 2012)

COMPOSED IMPROVISATION



2012

A musical exploration of quasi-ESP exercises (after Vito Acconci). The composer writes a score in a state of sensory deprivation: i.e., blindfolded and ear-plugged. At the concert, the performer plays the score in the same state of sensory deprivation, while attempting to read the score with utmost concentration. The composer sits in the audience seat and shouts out directions and suggestions to the performer.



▲ Akiva Zamcheck writing the score for *Composed Improvisation S* blindfolded, and with headphones on

➤ Brian McCorkle performing Zamcheck's score while Zamcheck gives directions from the audience seat (Brooklyn, 2012)





COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

B

2012

For any number of duos. If more than one pair, a score written for the given number of instrumentalists should be found (or composed). The instrumentalist plays by reading from the score. His/her partner stands behind him/her. At any given moment the partner can cover the eyes of the instrumentalist. Whenever this occurs the instrumentalist should try as much as s/he can to continue playing as if nothing has happened.

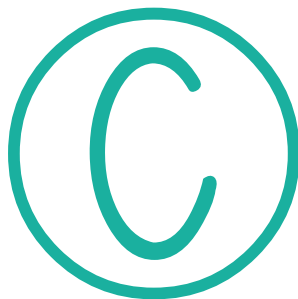
COMPOSED IMPROVISATION B (2012)



▲ *Composed Improvisation B* performed by Catherine Provenzano & Masami Tomihisa (Brooklyn, 2012)

> *Composed Improvisation B* performed by Masuhisa Nakamura & Hikaru Toho and Tomoko Hojo & Midori Kubota (Tokyo, 2012)



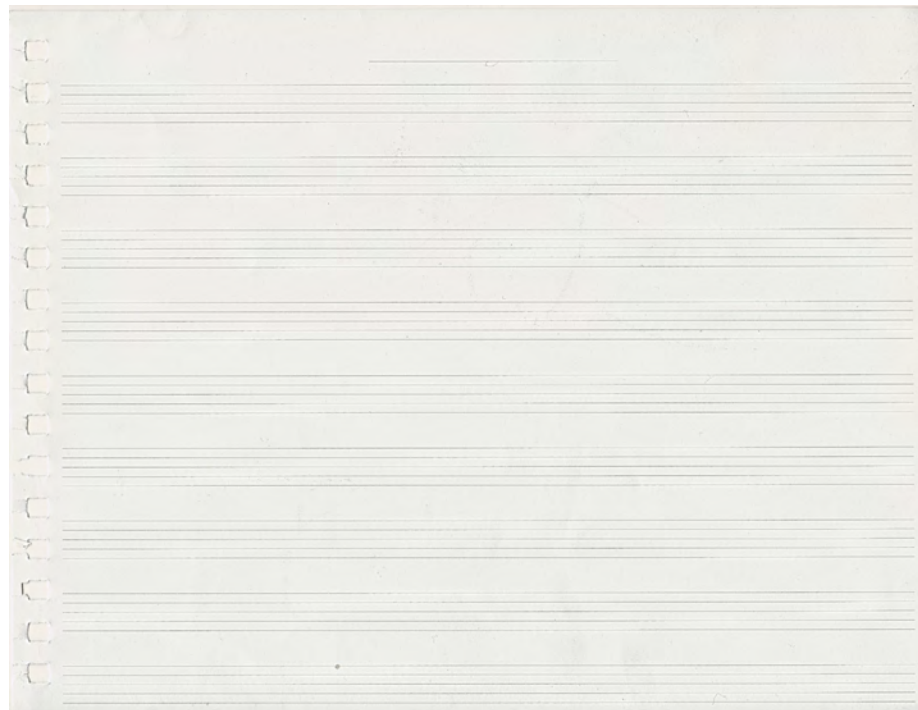
COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2013

For a solo percussion performer. Place a carbon copy paper over a blank staff paper placed on the surface of a percussion instrument(s) to inscribe every hit the performer makes. Perform a short piece following a “found-score” or a composed score of no longer than one page. When this first piece is performed until the end, use the carbon copied score (the staff paper with the inscribed hits read as notes) as the next score, with a new staff paper on the instrument, but adding the first score on top of the carbon copy paper. Keep adding the used scores on top of the carbon copy paper to increase the buffer each time, until no hit is inscribed anymore, and thus there are no more notes to play.



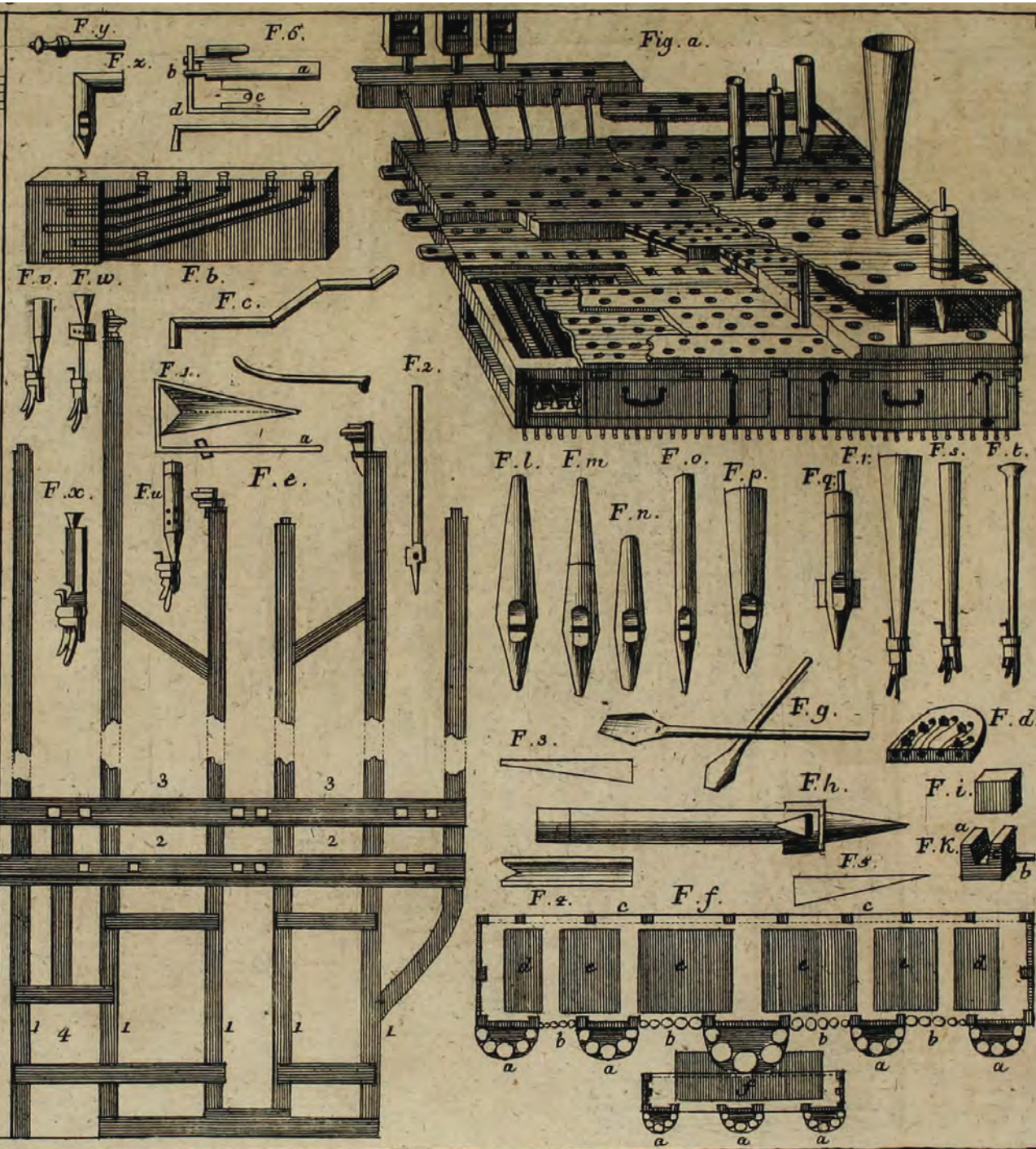
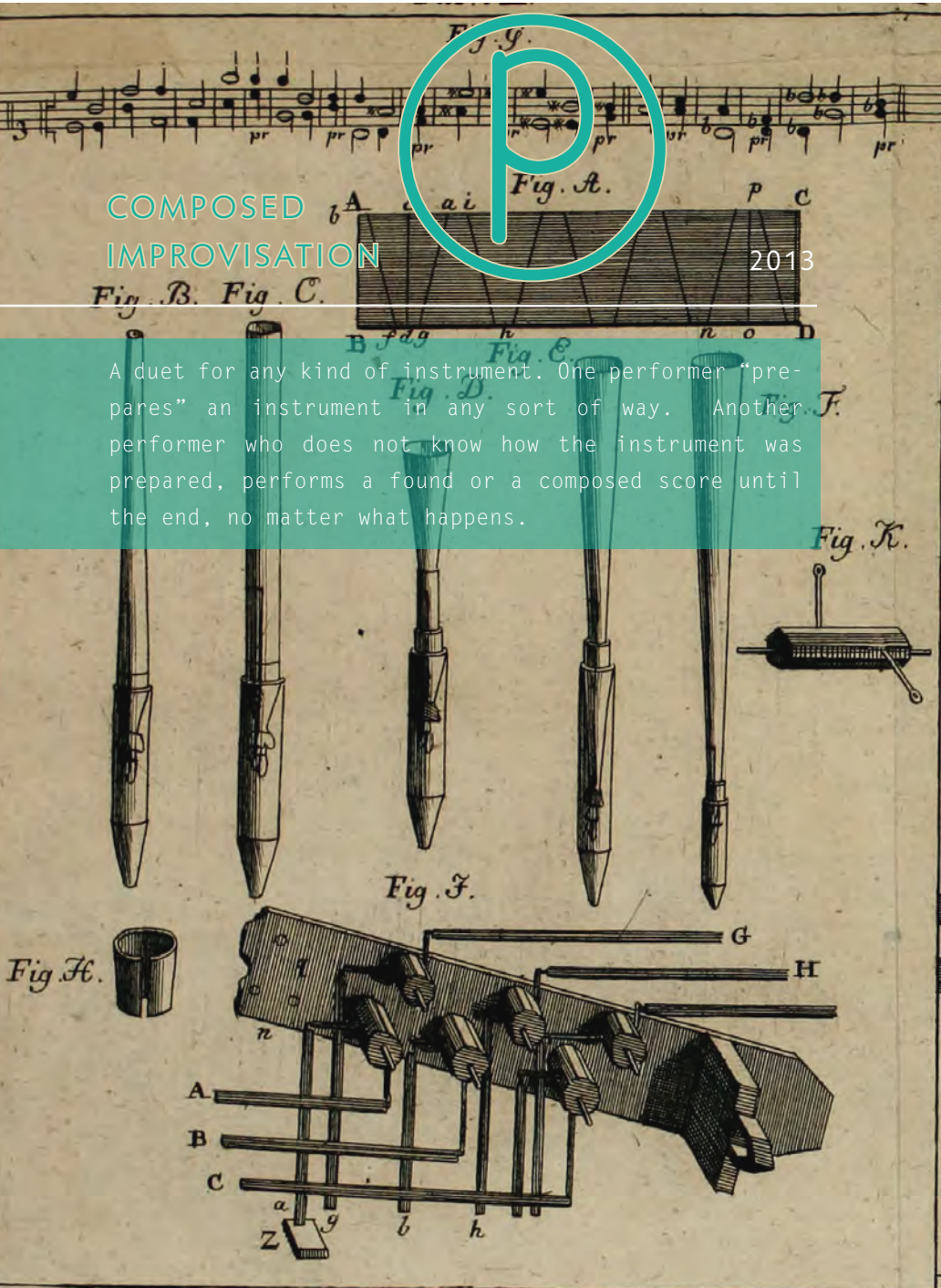
> Score of *Composed Improvisation C* as realized by
Luis Tabuenca and No Collective (New York, 2014)



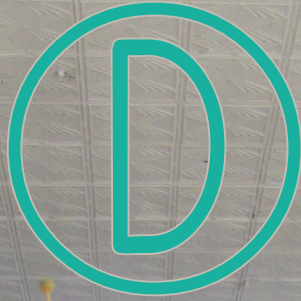
COMPOSED IMPROVISATION

2013

A duet for any kind of instrument. One performer "pre-
pares" an instrument in any sort of way. Another
performer who does not know how the instrument was
prepared, performs a found or a composed score until
the end, no matter what happens.



COMPOSED IMPROVISATION



2014

A duet for any kind of instrument. One performer tries to play a “found” or a composed score on any given instrument. S/he may not touch the instrument, but must use the body of the other performer to play the piece.



▲ / > Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe
rehearsing *Composed Improvisation D* (New York, 2014)



COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION



2014

A duet for any kind of (preferably fragile and/or expensive) instrument. One performer tries as much as s/he can to play a “found” or a composed score on the instrument. The other performer tries as much as s/he can to prevent the first performer from playing.



> Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe performing
Composed Improvisation V (New York, 2014)





COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION

2014

Arrange musical-note magnets on a metal surface with sufficient resonance. The arrangement may replicate a “found-score” or be composed anew. One performer holds the metal score/instrument as the other plays it or tap dances (on) it as accurately as possible. All modifications to the score that occur as the result of performance should subsequently be read into the performance. The score is repeated until all the magnetic notes fall off from the surface. The performer holding the score/instrument may choose to move or not.



▲ / > Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe
performing *Composed Improvisation I* (New York, 2014)

COMPOSED
IMPROVISATION



2010

Compose or find a score (films may also be used) for dance and percussion. Only metal instruments should be used, and the dance should be performed in contact with a metal surface(s). Rehearse to coordinate the rhythms as well as possible. In performance, attach strong magnets to drum sticks and the dancer's body (including shoes).

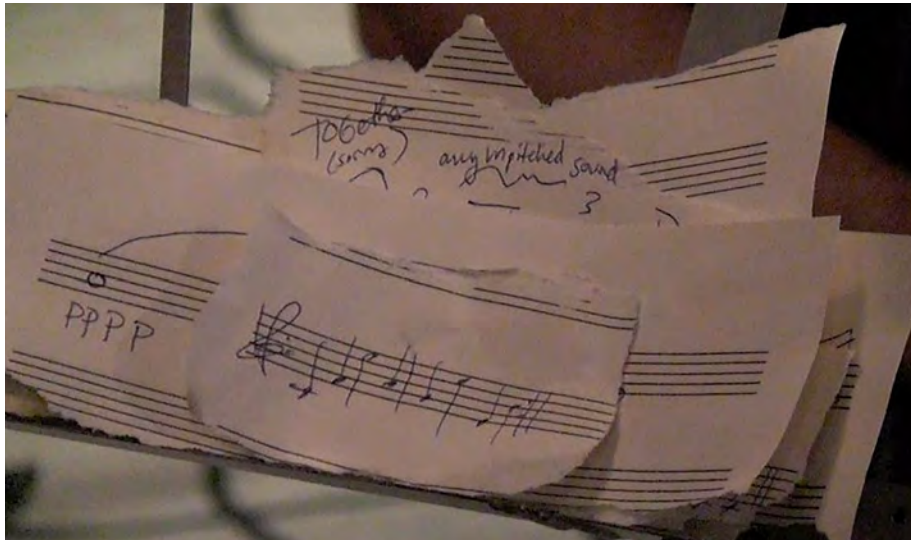


- ▲ Drum stick with magnets attached
- ◀ Devika Wickremesinghe wearing a suit and high-heels with magnets attached
- ▶ Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe performing *Composed Improvisation A* (New York, 2014)





IMPROVISED
COMPOSITIONS
(2011-)



Score fragments on a music stand during a performance of *Improvvised Composition M* (Brooklyn, 2012)

“*Improvvised Composition F* has been primarily performed as dance, and *M* primarily as music, but genre designations are not essential—the difference is between two modes of conveying what is composed: verbal/gestural instructions (a *feminine* mode) and written scores (a *masculine* mode). In fact, the first can also be arranged to be performed as music, and the second as dance (or any other genre where the issue of performance and composition is relevant, such as theater). But yes, the dichotomy persists.”

F

IMPROVISED COMPOSITION

2011

A piece for equal number of choreographers and dancers. All dancers and choreographers appear on stage; the latter is also free to move around. Each choreographer chooses one dancer to pair with, which once decided, may not change. The choreographers choreograph in real-time, and transmit the movement verbally or gesturally to his/her dancer throughout the performance. The pairing is, however, never discussed neither among the choreographers, nor with the dancers. So any dancer may potentially react to any instruction from any choreographer. Contact Improvisation will, at last, be interesting. The ending is also instructed by the choreographer.

> Gelsey Bell, Corinne Cappelletti, Diana Crum,
Lindsey Drury, Kaia Gilge & LJ Leach performing
Improvvised Composition F (Brooklyn, 2012)



IMPROVISED COMPOSITION F (2011)



IMPROVISED
COMPOSITION

2011

A piece for equal number of composers and performers. All performers and composers appear on stage; the latter sit at a table(s). The composers compose in real-time. As soon as he/she finishes a fragment of any length, that fragment is passed to a performer (or performers) who immediately perform(s) it. The performer plays the fragment until the end, or until another fragment is passed over to him/her. If no new fragment appears by the end of a given fragment, the performer repeats the same part again, until a new fragment is given. The composer-performers may not collaborate. The performance proceeds on a first-come, first-served basis, so the composer who writes his/her fragment most quickly, and to the most number of performers, gets to be performed the most. However, reasons to decide otherwise may exist: (a) one wants to have his/her fragment repeated (a *7a* minimal music) over and over again, (b) one likes what the other composer has composed and decides to listen, or (c) one prefers to work on a single performer rather than dealing with the whole group. How these desires and interests differ and are adjusted or not between the composers should not be decided in advance. The ending is also composed by the composer.



Sean Ali, Gelsey Bell, Travis Just, Brian McCorkle, Ivan Naranjo, Aliza Simons, Maria Stankova & Masami Tomihisa performing *Improvised Composition M* (Brooklyn, 2012)

ARCHIVES
D105-10 Staff

play harmonics freely
and fast in any order

ARCHIVES
D105-10 Staff

Score Fragments from *Improvised Composition M* (Brooklyn, 2012)



Takumi Ikeda, Satoko Inoue, Motoharu Kawashima, Tomoki Tai, Haruyuki Suzuki & Hiroshi Yokoshima performing *Improvised Composition M* (Tokyo, 2012)

STRAIGHT LINES (2013-)

“Straight Lines is a project in progress in which a found orchestral score is entrusted to an individual who has no previous knowledge on how to read musical notation, but is nonetheless equipped with other forms of knowledge that s/he might employ to decode the score. The individual works with an orchestra, giving the musicians instructions as to how the music should be played. The instructions must be as precise as possible, and derived solely from his or her reading of the decoded score. Any questions that might arise in the process of decoding, as well as questions that may be posed by the musicians, must be answered through further reading of the score. Currently, I am working with the following individuals: (a) a police detective, (b) an 8-year-old elementary school student, (c) an archaeologist, and, (d) a Star Trek aficionado.”

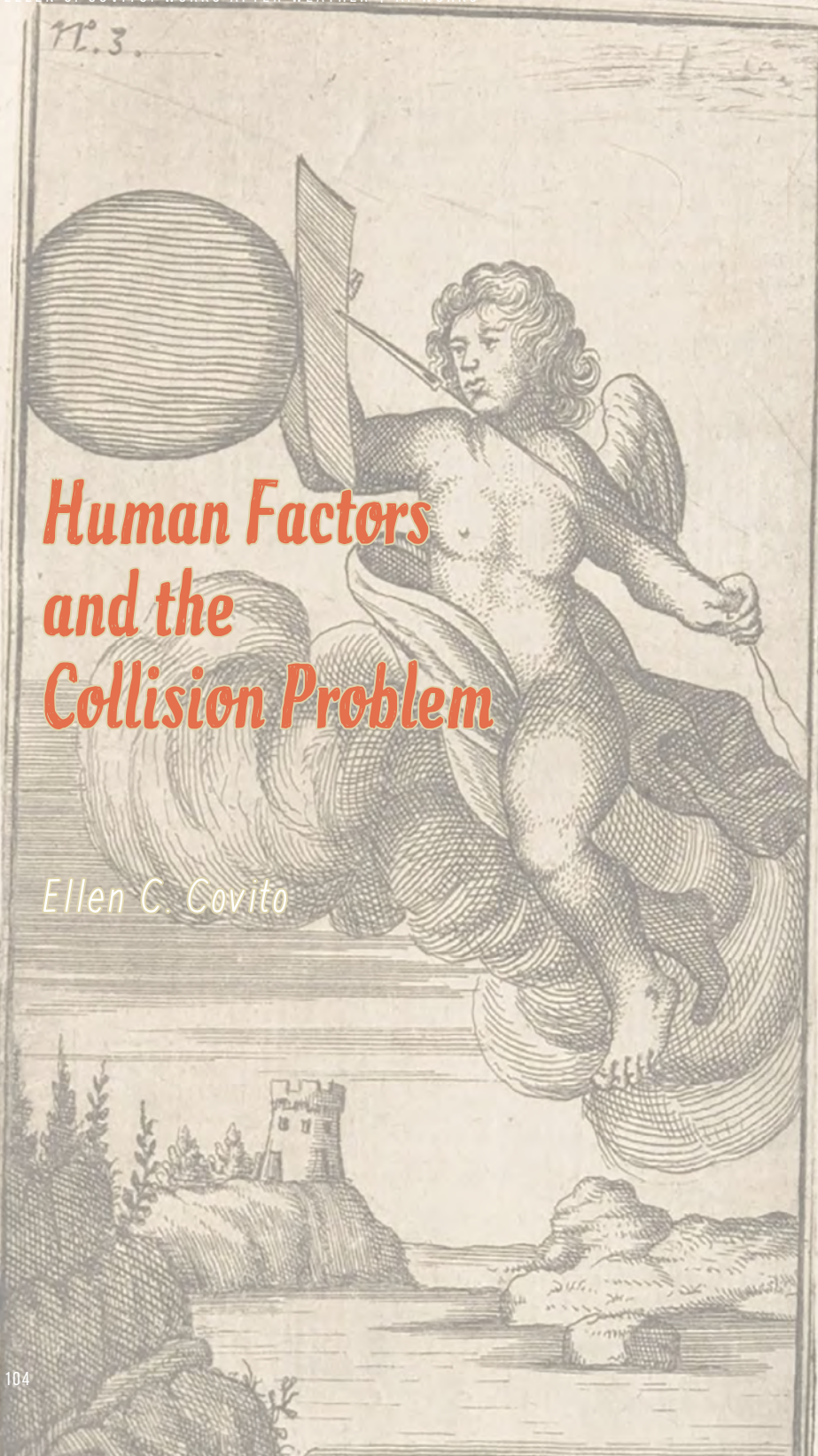


PERCUSSIONS/
REPERCUSSIONS
(2014-)

11.3.

Human Factors and the Collision Problem

Ellen C. Covito



12.4.

Pierre Schaeffer's notion of "acousmatique" refers to the separation of sound from the sounding body which caused it. This disembodiment of sound was crucial for *Musique Concrète* which aimed to establish a whole new system of musical organization for recorded sounds. The erasure of its physical origin facilitated the sound material's entry to a new systemization solely based on the purity of reduced listening. But of course neither a complete disembodiment nor total reduction can actually be achieved. Outside the safe havens of the Parisian RTF electronic studio, the absence of sounding body first and foremost triggers the listener to search for, or deduce at least, the unknown origin of the sound. This is for a simple reason that in real life, encounters between bodies can be violent and even deadly. So the listening body attempts to identify, visually or conceptually, the sounding body to avoid the dangers of collision. For the composer to close his eyes and forget the physicality of sounds, he needed to retrieve into his studio, safely detached both in space and time from any effects of the sounding body. In this way, the notion of acousmatique along with reduced listening bases itself on a primal reduction of collisions—an annulment of physical percussions and repercussions.

But the very technology that enabled this annulment also adds an ironical twist to the tale. For the spatial and temporal separation of sound from its body relied on recording technology, and the recording and playing back of sound—from microphones to magnetic tape, and from the tape to the loudspeaker—were enabled and regulated primarily via the mechanism of electro-magnetic forces. In this trajectory, sound waves were first transduced into electric signals through the workings of a coil and a surrounding magnet inside the microphone, which then were used to move the electromagnet so

N. 1.

that a magnetic flux would be applied to the oxide on the tape. The play-back simply reversed this process, outputting the sound from the loudspeakers by transducing the electric signal back into sound waves. The invisible power of magnetic field thus made it possible to make sounding bodies invisible. But what is magnetism if not the very force responsible for attracting and repelling bodies? The very technological condition for acousmatique disembodiment thus turns out to be the central force to dismantle the Schaefferian reduction of collisions. The works from the "Percussion/Repercussion" series all hinge on this curious paradox of the notion of acousmatique under the metaphoric and literal rubric of magnetism. They intend to demonstrate, as well as feed upon, the fact that percussions and repercussions of bodies are not only the source of accidents but also constitute the primordial condition of sound, and therefore, music.



N. 2.



Co-composed with
Cody Eikman



PERCUSSION
REPERCUSSION

2014

Place a Radio-Controlled car inside a container turned upside-down. The container can be of any material but should be big enough to enclose the RC car. Both performers are blindfolded. One tries to hit the container while the other manipulates the car, and gives instructions on how to reach the car. Other obstacles may be placed around the stage. It is also possible to use two cars and have each operated by one performer simultaneously.



▲ / > Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe
performing *Percussion/Repercussion A* (New York,
2014)



PERCUSSION
REPERCUSSION



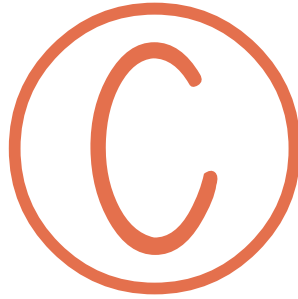
2014

Performer places his/her head inside a metal can. The can should be big enough to cover the performer's eyes, with blank staves inscribed on the top surface. In this state, the performer throws magnetic musical notes up in the air and tries to catch them with the can on his head. Use as many magnets as necessary.



▲ / > Luis Tabuenca performing *Percussion/Repercussion B* simultaneously with Devika Wickremesinghe performing *Percussion/Repercussion C*. The “found task” for the latter was to pick up any magnetic note that Tabuenca failed to catch (New York, 2014 - rehearsal)

PERCUSSION
REPERCUSSION



2014

Performer balances a metal plate or a cymbal on his/her head, and executes a found task until it falls to the floor. The task can be any other piece that can be performed simultaneously. Use as many plates or cymbals as necessary.





PERCUSSION
REPERCUSSION



2014

One performer sings a found or composed score. The other performer plays a different found or composed score on the body of the first performer.



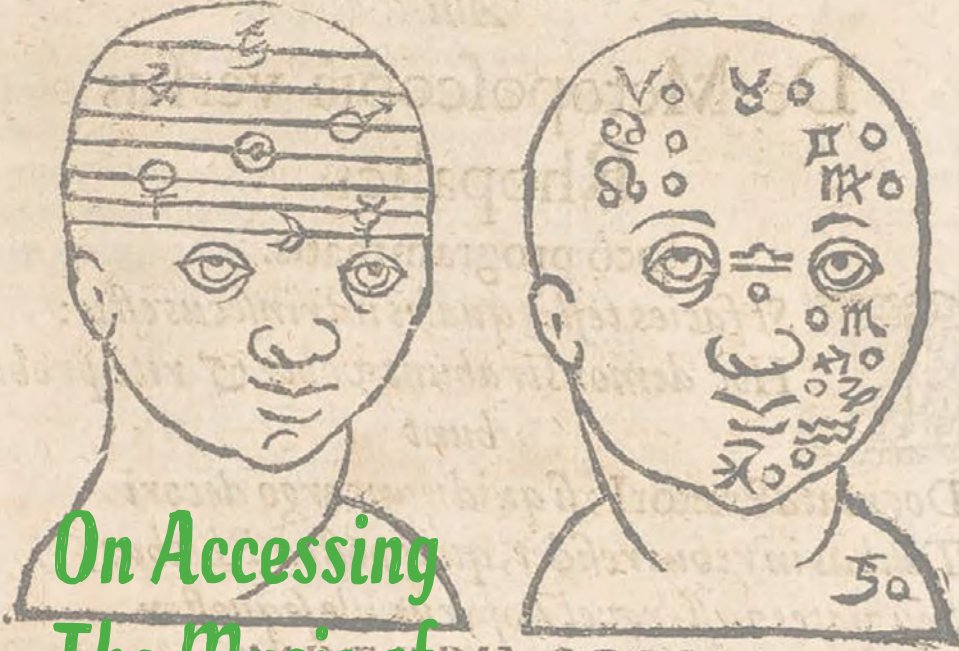
> Luis Tabuenca & Devika Wickremesinghe performing
Percussion/Repercussion D (New York, 2014)

2 b r o r W : B

B : W o r d s

METOPOSCOPIA.

157



On Accessing
The Music of
Ellen C. Covito

You Nakai

U-SCOPIA.

per Anagramma.

IPSE HOMO.

Mundi totius Naturam, & Munera Mundi
 Edidit Homo: ast Hominis vice versa dona, Physisq;
 Totam offert Faciesve Caputve decente Synopsi.
 Facitque animas, quibus haec cognoscere primum
 Primumque cura fuit mysteria tanta docere,
 Unicuique viro sua fata, in fronte notata,
 Spectare, & Momo ignotas aperire fenestras.
 Cum nunc ex Dominis Studiofis collubet haecce
 Omina scrutari, & mecum admirarier ultrò;
 Per caput, omnis homo quò pacto eluceat ipse:
 Ille sequente die Lunæ, post temporis horam
 Audiam primam, Paullinum invisat: id optat.
 die 16. Jan. 1659.

M. Johannes Prætorius.

1 Ellen C. Covito, "Los Umwelten de Músicas," in *Contra Paragwas: Revista de Música Protesta* 24, 2009.

As she herself has proclaimed at least on one occasion (1), Ellen C. Covito is not the first composer to explore the potentials of the seemingly oxymoronic term "composed improvisation." John Cage reconciled with his long hatred towards improvisation late in his life, engaging in a series of compositions to which he bore the very word that had troubled him throughout his career. These pieces, the composer explained, circumvented the general danger that lurks in improvisation—that of falling back to one's boring habits and subjective tastes—by taking recourse to either of the following two tactics: 1) the use of indeterminate instruments in which the causal relationship between their manipulation and the resultant sound is unknown and thus uncontrollable; 2) the use of "variable" timebrackets which are flexible in terms of their beginnings and endings, as well as the exact timing for the occurrence of sounds inside them. The former approach created pieces such as *Child of Tree (Improvisation 1)* (1975) or *Inlets (Improvisation 2)* (1977) in the mid-1970s; the latter resulted in a series of works collectively entitled *Composed Improvisation* (1987-90) towards the end of the following decade (and all the so-called "number pieces" actually, though these were never referred to as 'improvisation' per se).

2 Christian Wolff, "Taking Chances: From a conversation with Victor Schonfield," in *Cues: Writings & Conversations*. Cologne: MusikTexte, 1998, 72.

3 Wolff, "Program Note for Duo for Pianists I (1957)," in *Cues*, 488.

Nevertheless, as most things concerning Cage, this resolution with improvisation had an unacknowledged precedent. Already in the late 1950s, Christian Wolff, upon facing a shortage of rehearsal time before a concert, began introducing a certain degree of freedom into the system of time brackets he had previously learned from Cage: "What we did was a kind of improvisation—the score dealt only with spaces of time and groups of notes from which we could select." (2) In the program note for *Duo for Pianists I* (1957), the first piece composed in this manner, Wolff described his approach with a peculiar wording: "an experiment in 'composed' improvisation." (3) In the subsequent years, Wolff would pursue the logical extension of these initial experiments, developing an intricate system which employed sonic cues (mis)heard by performers during performance. Thus, the brackets are

not just “variable,” but they remain indeterminate until the actual performance. One prime motive to move in this direction, Wolff explained, was the fact that David Tudor always prepared determinate scores from any given indeterminate graphic score, successfully relinquishing all indeterminacy by the time he performed it on the piano. Around the same time, however, Tudor had begun to tackle the same problem on his own: implementing electronic amplification to his piano to attain a state where “you could only hope to influence” (4) the instrument. In both cases, then, indeterminacy is obtained in the phase of performance through the intervention of an external element that cannot be fully composed beforehand. For Wolff, it is the fluctuating sonic cue that serves as a real-time score; for Tudor, it is the indeterminate instrument.

4 Quoted in Ray Wilding-White, “David Tudor: 10 selected realizations of graphic scores and related performance (1973),” Los Angeles: David Tudor Papers, Getty Research Institute, Box 19, Folder 2.

Accessed via these historical precedents, the distinctness of Covito’s *Composed Improvisations* becomes readily apparent: while preserving the determinacy of both the instrument and the score, it is the access to them that her works render indeterminate. Thus, for instance, in *Composed Improvisation L* (2010), the necessity of light to see the score, as well as the instrument, is subverted through the use of a glow-in-the-dark score; *Composed Improvisation G* (2011) distorts the physical articulation of the score pages, whereas in *Composed Improvisation T* (2009), the generally presumed singularity and staticity of a score is nullified; *Composed Improvisation E* and *M* (2010) both play around with the scale of the score and of the individual notes respectively, putting into question the appropriate distance for perceiving a score (an important precursor piece which implements the same principle to instruments, is Toshi Ichianagi’s *Distance* (1961)); *Composed Improvisation J* (2009) extends the same problematics to time, by exploiting the lack of temporal buffer generally presupposed in the act of sight-reading.

Grasped from a slightly different angle, Covito’s indeterminacy can be seen as being located within the physical conditions that govern the visual intelligibility of music

notation (and instrument, albeit to a lesser extent). Curiously, this paraphrase brings Covito’s *Composed Improvisations* closer back to Cage—not to his later improvisational pieces, but to his much earlier pursuit of graphic scores beginning in the 1950s. For the basis of Cagean graphic notation was a simple, yet radical, recognition: as a graphic composed of points and lines, any notation is indeterminate to begin with (and herein lies the crucial difference between his and other composer’s—such as Morton Feldman’s—approach). Determinacy, in other words, is never an attribute of a given score; it is rather a correlative of the convention that governs the translation from the graphics on paper to the notes to be performed (though Cage himself too often confounded this fundamental insight with a facile fetishization of the graphic; and others, of course, followed suit.) Cage could thus refute with a simple argument the blind belief in an singular relationship between the score and sound, shared among so many of his contemporary composers: “If it is on paper, then it is graphic.” (5) In other words, a (graphic) score for Cage could be thought of as a giant indeterminate machinery (which includes the performer) that obfuscates any determinate causality between its input and output. But unfortunately, this indeterminacy exists only for the composer. As the performer inside the machinery, Tudor spent days and weeks making determinate performance scores out of Cage’s indeterminate graphic notations. The composer’s solution succeeds in eradicating the score’s predetermined control over the performance, but it does so only by relegating the same control to his performers.

5 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1961, 177.

Rather than establishing a definite answer, Cagean indeterminacy remains therefore merely a way to procrastinate the problem of control, leaving it to be solved within the time of performance. Tudor and Wolff’s struggles to overcome this issue have already been depicted. Covito’s solution, however, takes place right in between that of Cage and Tudor/ Wolff. On the one hand, she preserves Cage’s idea of rendering the very reading of the score (the composition) indeterminate,

but on the other, she enacts this very indeterminacy in the real-time of performance (as improvisation). What differentiates her strategy from countless other employments of graphic notation is the shift from readability to visibility that she applies to the Cagean model when transferring it to the phase of performance. The score is present at the performance, but no longer functions as a determinate controlling device over the sounds to be produced—and not because what is written remains ambiguous and merely suggestive (an elusiveness which tends to be bartered quickly with a fetish for the graphic), but because the physical conditions which allow a score to be seen in the first place is altered. The question thus becomes focused on how things are read, and not what. Hence, the notion of “found-score”—the score need not be invented; it merely suffices for it to be found.

As for the two part *Improvised Composition F+M* (2011), Covito’s focus seems to have switched from the performer and the act of reading a score to the composer and the act of writing a score. It is still possible to observe—rather tenaciously—a resonance with Cage’s *0’00”* (4’33” No.2) (1961) where the composer, at the premiere, chose as the instructed “disciplined action,” the writing of instructions for the same piece with contact microphones attached to his pen. Thus, the act of composition is itself staged as performance. But the differences are also obvious, for Covito preserves the basic distinction between the functional roles of the composer and performer: the former writes what the latter renders into music. Both what is written, and the process of its rendition, remain determinate. The only intervention here is again on the level of accessibility. The singular and predetermined access to performers is cancelled by the pluralization of the composers/choreographers who either rush to provide their scores to the performers who wait on a first come, first served basis in *M*, or must rely on a unconfirmed pairing with a given dancer in *F*.

Maybe there is something that Covito’s *Improvised Compositions* and *Composed Improvisations* both leave out of sight.

The performer’s reading process of the score is treated as a given when the writing process is put into question, and the process of obtaining scores (whether composing or transcribing them) never becomes part of the performance when the focus is on the visibility of the ready-made notation. *Improvised Composition* thus assumes that instrumentalists can always sight-read; *Composed Improvisation*, that scores are always found. For this reason, it is interesting to notice that the most recent of her compositions, *Improvised Composition S* and *R* (2012) seem to be attempts to deal with this issue. The former by an uncanny setting of equality between the process of writing a score and performing it (in addition to the usual removal of accessibility); the latter by demanding a radical annulment of the very procedure required to write the score (which is none other than the process of rehearsal) in order to perform it. Sure, the results might be less visibly entertaining in these works, but more seems to be kept in sight. (And that leaves us pondering about the only remaining level in Covito’s works that never seems to be questioned nor relativized: her linguistic instructions.)

You Nakai either makes music, dance, haunted houses and other works as part of No Collective, or publishes books and other paraphernalia as part of Already Not Yet, or does research on music and other curiosities and writes papers about his findings. His account on Ellen C. Covito’s music and the works of No Collective can be read in “The Music of Ellen C. Covito: An Interview with You Nakai by Elizabeth Hoffman,” *Perspectives of New Music* (Winter, 2013).

The Authority of Composition and Its Outside

Shinichi Takashima

Why is it that in the production process of music a line is drawn between “composers” and “performers”? In the case of dance, for instance, it seems that the maneuvering of one’s own body constitutes an equal, if not a more basic, condition as choreography for the imposition of control over other people’s bodies (a “pure” choreographer is almost an impossibility). Being a dancer thus precedes being a choreographer. In comparison, however, it is as if all composers start off by losing their own bodies, turning themselves into ghostly figures who lack the hands and the feet required to enact a performance. Or would it be more accurate to say that the ephemeral nature of music requires the planner to double as the documentarian of the executed plan? The existence of a score certainly contributes to the reproducibility of a given music. But does the coupling of score and performance permeate and legitimate the entire genre of music? These are all pertinent questions, given that the existence of a ‘composer’ could be seen as nothing more than a white elephant whose only role is that of preserving the antiquated production model wherein a pre-conceived idea becomes realized through particular channels of materialization.

For instance, it might seem that Fluxus, whose works simplified many of John Cage’s methods and short-circuited them into brief comedy-like performances, advocated an anti-music music. But what they actually practiced was a deductive musical fundamentalism. In the Fluxus movement, the relationship between a score and a performance was regarded as a type of axiom that could not be validated by any other system beyond its own existence. Once a certain time frame is constituted through the relationship between the score and performance (instruction and execution), this becomes established as music. The particular material could be anything—water drops, telephone calls, or sneezes. The content is arbitrary. Even the question of what kind of sound is produced as a result of executing the score is not of prime importance. In other words, the process of expanding the material of music can only be accomplished formally. In order to render even an ab-

stract notion such as “contingency” into something that can be manipulated (or an object of cognition), one needs first and foremost to enclose it inside a frame. There is no way to deviate from the frame without setting it up in the first place. That is why Fluxus chose to explicitly show the rules of the game being played, or to impose a minimum limitation that would confine the range of possible happenstances within the frame of cognition.

Perhaps it may sound far-fetched, but this attitude of Fluxus resembles the procedures taken by the “Supports/Surfaces” group of artists in France, who reduced painting to the relationship between the “support” and the “surface.” What makes painting a painting, they claimed, was neither the material used (such as paint or canvas) nor the motifs or techniques of how and what to paint. The condition of painting is instead solely grounded on the relationship between the support and the surface. “Surface” here addresses a field with a certain volume and an equally distributed density upon which the painter can paint, inscribe, distain, damage, or project. “Support” is the infrastructure that establishes such surfaces. As long as this relationship is maintained, anything could become painting. The main issue was not in any positive features that made a thing appear as painting. It was rather in the negative postulate of not possessing any functionality when compared to other artifacts it otherwise resembles, that made something a painting. The creation of such peculiar objects was the program set by the Support/Surface group (to be clear, the specificity they aimed for was not something that is “neither painting nor sculpture” as Donald Judd envisioned, but rather the extraction of idiosyncracies contained as potentials within the very production process of painting).

The support that enables the surface—the score that enables the performance. But compared to the physical connection between a support and a surface, the temporal difference (issue of precedence) between a score and a performance entails

no necessary causal relationship. Perhaps a more adequate comparison in music to the relationship between surface and support is that between the instrument and performance. And indeed, there has been attempts to create music solely through the interaction between several instruments, without the intervention of neither composer nor performer (even when a performer is involved, it is not as the manipulator of the instrument, but rather as another instrument). But contrary to these endeavors, we can ask what kind of problem may be dealt if one were to persistently hold on to the act of composition that cannot be incorporated or reduced to the act of performance. Then one finds an ‘opening,’ so to speak, for modifying or expanding causal relationships on the level of “instructions” that cannot be reduced to the physical specificity of any medium. The battle over initiatives and concessions that emerges from such openings is what characterizes the actualities of the production process when the level of “composition” is added (or preserved). These issues pertinent to the coupling between scores and their performances do not belong to a particular genre, but rather foregrounds a general problem of hierarchical relationships within a society.

In the works of Fluxus, the assigned, arbitrary content never actually undermined the relational equation regulating the instruction and its execution. In other words, the rules regulating the rules given to the performer were never questioned. The expansion of materials did not invite in a state of exception where established principles collapsed; it only demonstrated that certain principles contained more flexible multiplicity, which in return served to fortify it (“you cannot deal with X using your form, but if you use mine, you can articulate widely different materials and modify them in an equal manner”—the range of available materials justifies the universality of a given form). Moreover, the discrepancies between the instruction and its execution were almost never considered within the text of instruction (even though the notion of ‘noise’ was understood as addressing such

discrepancy rather than any concrete feature of sound). In other words, the view that the instruction-execution (score-performance) relationship is institutional and arbitrary, and therefore a hierarchy that can be restructured, is absent here. And this is precisely the problem that Ellen C. Covito deals with.

For instance, *Improvised Composition M* takes as its principal material the very relationship between the composer and the performer. During the performance, the same number of composers as there are performers (in the Tokyo concert which the author attended, there were three of each) compose in real time, handing fragments of the written score to one or more performers who plays them as they come. The order in which a composer presents the score is not determined in advance, and the performed music thus changes according to what becomes composed when. Consequently, the composer who writes the most number of scores in the shortest amount of time gets to be performed the most, precipitating a racing conflict between composers over time. Here, time is treated as space, or more accurately, as a territory to be occupied or seized. Though the nature of the performance is comical, the figure of the composer portrayed in this piece resembles the true founder of civil society who Rousseau once criticized as an impostor: “The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said ‘This is mine,’ and found people naïve enough to believe him...’” (*Discourse on Inequality*) Covito re-enacts a temporal version of this pre-contractual inequality (the genesis of ownership) that Rousseau portrayed in order to claim the necessity of social contract. And she does so by exploiting the textual form of “instruction,” which necessarily accompanies contractual relationships.

The act of composition is related to the issue of how an authority emerges. For instance, how does one distinguish between a description and an instruction? Whereas “description” addresses something that has already happened, “instruction” is a speculation into the future that attempts to

create something that has not yet taken place. The validity of a “description” is generally measured by its correspondence with events. “Instructions,” on the other hand, are defined by their incompleteness, the absence of any correspondence with events (realization). Then what validates an instruction? (This question is actually homologous to the one posed by Clement Greenberg concerning “pure” which asked whether there was any characteristic immanent to a work that defines it as an art piece). Ultimately speaking, there is nothing that validates it. The validity of an instruction is merely shown by a collateral: an authoritative figure behind the presented text. The question thus becomes, “who gave out this instruction?”—to which the act of composition answers by *composing* this assumed authority. Thus, the act of composition ultimately attempts to compose the composer.


Once this authority is successfully composed, the speculation in the name of ‘instruction’ can be validated, and it becomes possible to frame an absent event through the presence of the composer figure. Under this validation, the instruction which pre-embraces events to come, assumes the seal of neutrality (in relation to the said events). However, we should note that this established neutrality of the score actually functions as an accomplice to the widely-shared fetish for the singularity of performance and performed presence. In particular, the genre of music has long enjoyed the notorious collateral (pretext) of the “ephemerality of sound” to claim its singular relevance to the blind faith towards the absolute irreducibility of the event taking place in the here and now. But we do not need to cite Jacques Derrida to see how such metaphysical ideology of presence does not in any way contradict the neutrality of the authoritative text (the singularity of ‘speculation’) which frames the event in advance—it merely complements it.

There is, however, another route of mediation that sustains the coupling between instructions and executions, due to the fact that the score *must be read* in order to be executed.

The process of reading, which inevitably introduces the material particularities of each reader's bodies, underlies the conceptual universality of the composed authority. The introduction and proliferation of these disparate bodies can neither be contained nor controlled by the composed authority of the composer, or the authority of composition. This is why composers such as Stravinsky had to maintain that the ultimate truth of music lay in the score itself, and that the particular performances were a necessary evil that had to be resorted to in the absence of more sophisticated methodologies. We know that these methodologies were dreamed into the emerging media technologies of the gramophone record, for instance, that seemed to realize a performance which bypassed the incomplete human performer, and we also know how these dreams failed.

Covito's "Composed Improvisation" series exposes and is grounded on the simple fact that the individual phase of 'reading' an instruction cannot, in principle, be reduced to the instruction itself. In comparison, the "Improvised Composition" series foregrounds the individual phases of 'writing' (or 'enunciating') an instruction as a conflict between composers over territories of time. Here again, what is denounced is the complicit relationship between the composed authority of the instruction and the ideology of presence enwrapping its execution (performance). In other words, beneath a seemingly established "contract"—which serves as the conceptual link between the authority of the composer, the neutrality of the score, and the singularity of the performance—lies the acts of 'writing' and 'reading' the contract. The inequality inherent in these physical acts that must precede and follow the contract pertains strictly to the domain of performance, for the contract by definition cannot account for it. It is this inequality that serves as an 'opening' for Covito to reconfigure pre-established contracts and pre-composed causalities.

Shinichi Takashima has been creating performance and video works since 2003. He is interested in the feeling of floating (sensation of zero-gravity) which can be gained by treating his own body both as material and function. Major solo exhibitions include "One foot on the moon" (05), "These fallish things" (08) (Gallery Objective Correlative, Tokyo); major group exhibitions include "Body as Interimage" (Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media, 2009), "Weather and Lifetime: Installation of a Crick, Transportation by Paralysis" (Asahi Art Square, Tokyo, 2010), & "14 Evenings" (The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 2012).



Covito's Performer Pedagogy

Lindsey Drury

The purpose of this essay is simply to consider Ellen C. Covito's work not from the idea of what it does for its audiences, but instead from what it does for its performers. I write it because I understand what work does in the world as equally relevant to both groups. The basic idea I posit here is that Covito's works are a form of pedagogy for performers. Her works begin with the assumption that a performer is already a skilled technician, and as a result do not seem to employ pedagogy as method that teaches artists skills. Instead, her works address training itself as problematic by challenging the access of the performer to skills they have learned.

A true analysis of performers, however, is beyond the scope of this short essay. This is in part due to the fact that the work of performers is, in itself, too far-reaching in its subjectivity. The basis for the existence of performers takes for granted the idea that mastery is a point reached when certain people are more worth watching than others because they have trained to be so. This pedagogical idea of mastery extends beyond measurable skill, becoming instead an issue of captivation. Performer education assumes this ability to "captivate" is a nuanced matrix of powers obtainable through knowledge of techniques, instincts, experience, and sometimes (and hopefully) further augmented by apparent "natural" access, variously attributed to beauty, originality, charisma, etc. It is therefore the situation of the performer to not be able to conceive of the value of their ability, but simply to attend to its continued progress by any means considered possibly useful. These means usually take the shape of an activity called practice. Performers work toward naturalizing the various techniques of their trade, transferring non-natural actions like reading music and dancing ballet into intuitive availability. Such performers bring the act, for example, of reading music, as close to the act of seeing itself as possible. And these are the kinds of performers most interesting in Covito's works, precisely because they have habituated the abilities that Covito challenges by, for example, rendering the ability to sight-read subject to the quality of one's vision.

Covito's work intentionally confounds traditional conceptions of skill by turning to the most basic technologies of the performing human body. The physical "givens" of the performer's bodies are just as relevant to the work as given trained abilities. In the simplest example, eyesight is as important as the ability to sight-read in the eye-chart score (*Composed Improvisation E*). In this kind of work, what the performer cannot do, as determined by the physical properties of their bodies, is as relevant to the production of the performance as is skill. In *Composed Improvisation E*, instruments drop out as various performers cease to be able to read the eye chart. The sound of the work is determined by the way in which the training of the performers is subjected to the properties of their eyesight.

The perspective of performers typically isolates conditions from actions. This perspective assumes that because the condition of the body is always compromised, the action of performance must be one of transcendence. Covito's work ignores this basic formula, opting instead for the idea that all abilities (and therefore possible actions) are conditions for a performance work. The performance of Covito's work is a byproduct of the interaction between all the conditions present, and the performers are but a part of that total, interactive system. In this case, technique is but one of many "technics." As a condition of performer bodies, it is taken at face value in Covito's work, and manipulated through its physicality, regardless as to whether it be an acquired capacity (playing an instrument, reading music, dancing a jig) or one "inherent" to the body of the performer (eyesight, height, etc). As such, technic also encapsulates the conditions of the objects put into use, which are also manipulated via their physicalities. Giant cloths inscribed with music notation are folded up into their most compact sizes, drumsticks are retrofitted with magnets so they attach to the metal objects played, pages of a score are glued together. In this way, conditions continually manifest as the interactions between the various components (both human and object) brought together within Covito's work. In the case of the giant "floor score" of *Composed Improvisa-*

tion M, for example, the conditions of the score determine the conditions of how the performers stand and move in the space, which determines the conditions under which the score is folded, which determines the conditions under which the performers read the score, which determines the conditions of their playing of the instruments. In this domino effect of conditions, the composer has bracketed out the pathos of performative intent, opting instead for physical conditions. But for the performer, whose only way to relate to everything-as-conditions is to "do the best I can," the experience is marked deeply by a kind of pathos of proverbially "captaining a sinking ship." In this case, mastery is not a means toward transcendence, but instead a means by which physical compromise is navigated. And in this way, Covito's work unhinges what is and has always been the greatest burden of the performer: That of being worth watching. What is seen in Covito's work is not the worthiness of the performer but conscious contention with physical conditions in which both the consciousness and the conditions are equally powerful.

I have long thought that the master improviser should understand all works as flops, and must therefore consider every work as one that must be saved, not through the undoing of the flop, but through the intelligent navigation of malfunction (in which the assumption is that malfunction is always a driving creative force in the state of improvisation). Covito's works operate like a computer bug; they crash the performer's known methods for information transference. And in this situation, the audience is left to observe the breakdown of a system and the instant coping methods of the conscious performers within that system as they seek to navigate the disabled vehicle of the piece toward a safe landing.

In most cases of improvisational works, the basis for malfunction is simply that the performers don't know exactly what is supposed to be done. Yet, in the case of Covito, the malfunction is more likely a form of sabotage designed into the work itself, and directed precisely at the most primitive of the performer's technic. In many cases, the performer him or herself unintentionally drives this sabotage. The

score is precise and determinate, for example, in *Composed Improvisation G*, but as the pages of the score are glued together, it becomes compromised when the performer separates the pages in order to read them.

To perceive composition, or “intelligent design,” one must perceive something that has the quality of reliability. And this perception of composition is as necessary to performers within works as it is to the audiences who view from the outside. Covito’s works are designed to be clear, complete, and vastly unreliable. Her works are specifically designed to be subject to various forces of de-composition often caused by their very performance. Facing this scenario, performers turn to themselves as the only reliable compositional factor (by perceiving themselves as the subject of their own limited control), thus following the traditional mode of improvisation. Yet they find in themselves their own foil. In the case of Covito, to be a good follower of instructions is to set one’s own booby-trap. The most common response of performers in such cases is to thus escalate their own reliability and seek to provide the consistency that the composition itself abandons as it is being fulfilled. And there the construction of the work emerges, between the decomposition of the conditions and the steadfastness of the performers, who, in various states of compromise, carry her works to their ends to the best of their abilities.

In the simplest terms, what performers experience in Covito’s work is that to be good at something is not good enough. And so, the question becomes: What value is that information to the performer? Through all her hindrances and methods of handicapping, Covito exposes to the performer the experience of being a component in a system designed to expose its own operations through malfunction. As such, the performer can experience him or herself as (1) a component and (2) necessarily malfunctioning. Though I doubt Covito would agree with this statement (she would not consider her own works as “malfunctioning” at all—they are instead operating exactly as planned) I maintain that the pedagogical experience of performers in the work begins with the issue

of malfunction, or the sensation that the performance of the work gets in the way of the performance of the work. Never able to complete the task without anomalies, or only saddled with task-as-anomaly-producer, successful performers weather Covito’s work more than aptly perform it.

Lindsey Drury is a dance artist, body studies scholar, and curator from Brooklyn, New York. Recent collaborative projects with No Collective include curating and producing Ellen C. Covito’s Percussions/Repercussions at The Woods Cooperative for their jointly-run performance series {The Room}, and the large-scale work Vesna’s Fall (2014-).



The Weathers of Our Bodies

Interview with Ellen C. Covito

Kay Festa

Kay Festa Having organized two concerts of your music now, we have become quite acquainted with your Composed Improvisation and Improvised Composition series. But we don't know so much about what you did before these pieces and what led you there. Could you talk a bit about your background and how you arrived at the Composed Improvisation series? I heard you studied environmental sciences in college...

Ellen C. Covito Yes, and having studied environmental sciences was what brought me back to music after a hiatus of several years. I was doing all these studies of climates, formation of weathers and their effects and side-effects. And I started to wonder why most music necessitates a weather-proof condition to be performed. I mean that's why we have concert halls—to isolate and shelter the production and consumption of music from the weather. This also applies when the music is played outdoors, because most of the time, the weather is something that just happens outside the work and from which the performance of music may or may not be shielded. And, since the majority of music played outside nowadays employ tons of electricity, with all the amplification and loudspeakers, God help them if the music is not properly shielded! It seemed to me that music was trying hard to ignore the fact that there was always a changing weather in the world around itself. The environment is always a contingent factor, but one that could still bring catastrophic effects to music—just like to any other phenomena in society.

So I started making a work that did not aim to render the effects of weather as neutral as possible, but on the contrary, inserted them into the very mechanism of the music. I created a series of composed modules that corresponded each to a certain weather condition, that could be arranged together to form a performance based on the particular weather of a given day, time and location. I called the whole series, *Musica del Tiempo*. In Spanish 'Tiempo' means both 'weather' and 'time,' and the modules were devised so that the temporal progression of the music would mostly be determined by

the exposure of the score or instruments to the weather. In *Lluvia* (Rain), for instance, the number of raindrops that could be heard determined the number of notes that could be played from the score, or in *Viento* (Wind), the turnover of the score pages were controlled by the wind. I had separate instructions on how to mix the modules together which was based on the forecast probability. These defined the mixture in terms of percentages, like ‘80% Sunny and 20% Rain.’

KF What kind of scores were you using?

EC I collected various scores of music that had a certain weather-related word in its title, and used them one after the other. I ended up with quite a variety of music, from Listz’s *Chasse-neige*, to *Windy* by The Association, and so on. The choice of music added a kind of a meta-caption to the piece, which often times was odd and funny, since you might be performing *Sunny* by Bobby Hebb in the midst of a rainstorm.

KF So is that where your idea of “found-score” comes from?

EC I started using that term later, when I began the *Composed Improvisation* series, but yes, it was already in practice in *Musica del Tiempo*.

KF Why did you decide to use found-scores?

EC I decided to use scores that were already written by other people, since my focus was not so much in the scores themselves, but in how they are altered through their exposure to the weather. Also, like I said, the discrepancy or gap between the given music and the given weather in which it was performed added an interesting layer of linguistic commentary that I appreciated.

KF How did you move from *Musica del Tiempo* to the *Composed Improvisation* series?

EC After doing my weather music for some years, I became acquainted with several groups of people who were feminist activists. Influenced by them, I started reading several theoretical texts on feminism, or of feminism. Particularly, I became fascinated by the writings of Donna Haraway and Marilyn Strathern. By reading their texts, I began to see that the “environment” or “weather” I had been dealing with in my works, could be, and should be, extended from the exterior conditions surrounding me to the interior of my body. My “body” is also an “environment” and had its own “weathers.” And as long as that is the case, there is no such thing as a neutral body. Now as you also probably know, John Cage with his graphic scores, had criticized the conventional belief that musical notation of any kind is determinate. There is no such thing as a neutral notation or a determinate score. You Nakai explained this very clearly in that text he wrote on my music. (1) The seeming determinacy is actually the result of an institutional codification about how the score should relate to the sound. In other words, what is determinate or indeterminate is never the object, but always its usage. This was an important criticism. But I was always curious why Cage never went on to extend that criticism against the “bodies” of the performers who necessarily come in contact with the score. Somehow Cage and all the composers after him criticized the seeming neutrality or the singularity of the score, but retained the neutrality of the body. This always puzzled me, but one day I started to think if that had anything to do with the fact that most of these composers were men.

1 You Nakai
“On Access-
ing: The Mu-
sic of Ellen
C. Covito.”
included in
this book
(p. 127-131)

KF That is interesting. So I assume that would relate to the whole discussion about marked and unmarked gender...

EC Yes, well it was a thought. Perhaps the marked-unmarked gender discussion that you say has to do with a certain tendency for females to be more susceptible to the weathers of her body... though that is also a generalization that doesn’t really go so far. But in any case, that was what occurred to me.

KF So you're saying that the Cagean indeterminacy between the written note and the sound actually brackets out the indeterminacy of the performer's body that is inserted between the score and the music?

EC Yes, because what connects the note with the sound is on the one hand institutional codification, but on the other, the performer's bodies. Cage revealed the first layer of indeterminacy, but preserved the second one. His graphic scores never really questioned the physiological and technical particularities of each body that accesses them. But obviously, there is a vast domain of indeterminacy there that cannot be generalized so easily. So that's where I decided to delve into with my *Composed Improvisation* series.

KF I see how that resonates with Haraway's theory of "Situated Knowledge."

EC Yes, Haraway speaks of knowledge, as well as body, as being always situated within a particular condition. (2) And music always requires some kind of body, or more accurately, an assembly of bodies, including that of instruments as well as listeners. But I also think that my readings of these texts made me aware that these particularities of the "environment" or the "body" is not a simple given, but is always a construction. That's the difference between "weather" and "body" in my opinion (at least in the current state of technology, though I have heard that Russian army drops bags of concrete onto clouds to prevent rain). So it is one thing to expose the system to those particularities, but quite another to think of these particularities as absolutes and let them have the final word, so to speak. I felt that was where I could not agree with many of my activist friends. The particularities needed to be exposed, but also needed to be inspected and be opened for other possible configurations. There is no absolute neutrality of the body, but neither is there any absolute particularities that the body is confined to. But there is a tendency with male composers to lean towards the former and feminist activists to lean towards the latter.

² Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1988)

KF When we did your *Composed Improvisation* pieces, I was struck by how much focus is placed on the issue of visibility/invisibility. Could you talk a bit about that particular focus on the eye, in regards to the situatedness of the body that you were just saying?

EC As with any indeterminacy, the indeterminacy between the score and the body explored in the *Composed Improvisation* pieces problematizes the issue of pre-established hierarchical control. And I think the visibility of the score, both for performers who read them, as well as for the audience who sees the performers reading them, has functioned as the primary channel for this hierarchy in Western music. I mean, the whole training of solfege that you do as a child is to make sure you listen to what you see, or what you are able to see, and not vice versa. So that gives the sight a privileged status in my works as well. But of course the visual channel cannot be isolated; seeing is crucial only because it affects other capacities of the body. You see in order to listen, you see in order to play an instrument. And I believe some pieces in the *Composed Improvisation* series focus on these couplings of visibility with other physical activities that necessarily employ other body parts. So the emphasis on visibility is only a starting point from which indeterminacy spreads out to permeate other modes of perceiving and doing.

KF Is that also why you introduced dance in *Improvised Composition F*?

EC Yes, but you must know that when I wrote that piece, I didn't intend it to be solely a dance piece. That is why the instructions say that it could be done as a theatre, or music, or any other kind of performance art. The difference between *Improvised Composition M* and *F* is not rooted in the difference between genres. I am not interested in genre divisions, nor do I believe that there is a fundamental difference that one can pin-point between established genres. I think it is primarily a matter of established history and discourse around it, and if works of art have anything to

say about that, it should be aimed to disintegrate those establishments, not to reinforce given boundaries by blindly reaffirming them. The difference that interested me more was the difference between modes of conveying instructions, of establishing hierarchical control. I thought one way of doing that was by writing and the other by speaking. Now there are tendencies in music to employ the former, and in dance to employ the latter, but obviously there are countless examples where that is not the case. Also, in many cases, both of these modes are employed throughout the production of a work, and they can be distributed among different people—the composer and the conductor, the choreographer and the rehearsal director, and so on. But I decided to emphasize the distinction so that I could explore the indeterminacies concealed in each mode separately.

KF But still, it seems that generally dance would connect easier to the entirety of the situated body than most music?

EC Well that could be the case, but you also have to remember that there is no such thing as dance in general, as there is no such thing as the entirety of the body. Every generalization and totalization depends on efforts to make a particular, provincial channel of control absolute. The only thing that exists are tendencies, and these tendencies, like I said, belong to establishments. If you take them too seriously, you'll end up transfixed. You become paralyzed by the weather. Having said that, I do admit that I am interested in a particular tendency of dance in comparison to music, because it seems to me that dance has always struggled and failed to establish an authoritative format for conveying and documenting movement. Although I have traced the history of dance notation, there is nothing that has attained the level of staff notation, and except for a few attempts, video recording of dance has obviously not enjoyed the immense success of sound recording in music. So it seems that for the major part, the authority of dance is rooted in the body, and direct contact of one body and another whether that entails speech or demonstration of movement. There are many

ways to explore indeterminacy there, but they require taking quite a different route than when you deal with channels of control based on writing.

KF In relation to what you just said, could you explain why you differentiated the two *Improvised Compositions* in terms of gender? Do you think gender difference is more fixed than genre difference?

EC Oh yes. But I don't think so in terms of physical difference. I think the difference of gender is primarily a conceptual and discursive difference. Therefore it is constituted, rather than being a given. And in that sense, it is an established difference, so there is only a difference in degree with the issue of genre divisions that I just mentioned. But the effects of gender difference do dominate and structure our lives on a deeper level, as well as across many regions and layers. I have a feeling that that is because this difference is ultimately grounded in the biological fact that only women can bear a child and reproduce. I know that a lot of this biological premise is changing quickly and I hope to see how our notions of gender difference will be radically altered when the technological conditions allow men to have babies as well. The other thing I was thinking when I related the two modes of conveying instructions to the two genders, was Marilyn Strathern's discussion in *The Gender of the Gift*. (3) In this book she analyzes the structure of many customs in Melanesia where gender difference plays a crucial role. But she maintains the perspective, derived directly from her ethnography, that the distinction of gender is not a predetermined, absolute regulation based upon bodily differences, but something that is constructed within particular "transactions" between people. Therefore, she claims that not only biological females have feminine identities. This resonated well with the ideas that I had about determinacy and indeterminacy not being a function of the object, but of how the object is used; never in the essence of the body but always in the relations or transactions between bodies. I think that is also what the idea of

3 Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

“situated knowledge” implies, that bodies are always situated in relationships.

KF But there is also the problem of relationships being reified, as if they were bodies.

EC That is precisely why it is important to remember that bodies are situated, but not completely reduced to situations. Like I said, neither an absolute neutrality nor absolute particularity...

KF I want to ask you a very straightforward question: do you think of yourself as a composer?

EC Umm, are you asking me if I think of myself as a composer?

KF Yes.

EC Well, honestly I don't think about what I am except in occasions where I am asked to provide a biography or to describe myself to other people. It is always the others who need to identify you as something. So a straightforward answer to your straightforward question would be: of course not, because composers are only composers in relation to other people. But let me also put it differently. Because I think what was implied in your question was the fact that the role I play in my works differs greatly from what composers are usually expected to do. I don't write scores, I give instructions, and I use other people's works in the form of “found scores.” In the past, people have criticized me for being a “parasite.” But for me, any kind of work must be built on the platform provided by other people. The whole notion of scores being determinate, for example, was not established by a single composer overnight. So you could say that all the works that depend on that particular determinacy are necessarily parasitic to all the works that prepared that condition. The difference between their attitude and mine is this: I not only acknowledge the fact that

my endeavors are parasitic, but I put that forward and I exploit that condition as the essential factor in my strategy. And moreover, this strategy is aimed at exploring and revealing aspects of power that have been concealed by the same platform that other composers build their works upon. So you could say that it takes one parasite to expose the workings of another.

KF I'm quite interested in that metaphor that you just used: the word “blindly.” It seems to reconnect to the issue of visibility and invisibility that we were talking earlier on. It is as if you are saying that the blindness of composers is constituted in not seeing that people see differently.

EC That's a nice way to put it, Kay.

KF But do you think that there is anything that you or your works are blind to?

EC Absolutely. And I know very well that our friend You Nakai has been mildly pointing at several things that he thinks I have left out of sight. (laughter) I am very grateful for that. But at the same time, blindness is not something you can get rid of. I mean, even in physiological sense, the ability to see something is conditioned by blindness. You see something because you are blind to something else. In other words, seeing is always situated and therefore localized. So the issue is always on selecting what to see and to what ends, rather than trying to see everything.

Kay Festa is a composer, poet, and an independent scholar who makes music and performance, and writes about them as part of No Collective. Her most recent writings include: “More than Meets the Ears: An Account on the Shared (Ac)counts of John Cage and Igor Stravinsky” (TDR, Summer 2015, 59-2: 92-102)



APPENDIX:
Concert
paraphernalia

APPENDIX:
Concert
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Panoply Performance Laboratory

PPL is two artists (Esther Neff and Brian McCorkle), a flexible collective, and a space. PPL's work is staging social gathering, organizing performance situations as performance, and making of performances. Institutional engagements have involved LMCC's Swing Space, Performance Project at University Settlement, Performance Lab at LaGuardia Community College, and performed research at the Anarchist Book Fair, FIGMENT, SPARK, University of Kentucky, Ohio State, High Concept Laboratories (Chicago), and elsewhere. PPL has also held residencies in public spaces through chashama, constructed situational, durational actions at Grüntaler9 (Berlin), Fitness Center for Arts and Tactics, Glasshouse Projects, and Grace Exhibition Space (NYC), made social projects with IV Soldiers, The Compendium, and others, performed at English Kills, Dixon Place, CultureFix, the cell, BOB The Pavilion at Columbia University, AUNTS, Casita Maria, Bronx Arts Space, ABC No Rio, ISSUE Project Room (Movement Research Spring Festival), and Momenta Art in NYC, Defibrillator (Chicago), Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit, LA GALERIA at Villa Victoria (Boston), The Lemp (St. Louis), 119 Gallery (Lowell, MA), Charlotte Street's La Esquina Gallery (Kansas City), ACUD, KuLe Theater, and BLO Atelier in Berlin and at the Pumpehust during Hitparaden in Copenhagen, and as a band with Valerie Kuehne across the US, Montreal, and Germany. PPL the project space is in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and is a small garage. The two lead artists live there and host weekly interdisciplinary performance practices and projects from around the world. Through this space, and in conflux with performance practices, PPL co-organizes projects like Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival (BIPAF), performance conferences-as-performances like MODE METHOD MEDIUM and Operations and Participations, and the ongoing PERFORMANCY FORUM. www.panoplylab.org

The Music of Ellen C. Covito

May 24, 2012
 Vaudeville Park, Brooklyn, New York
 co-curated with
Panoply Performance Laboratory



▲ Flyer for *The Music of Ellen C. Covito* concert
 ▼ Program of the same concert

No Collective and Panoply Performance Laboratory present the first concert of the Argentinian composer/improviser Ellen C. Covito outside Buenos Aires.

One of the most radical composers of her generation, Covito's *Composed Improvisations and Improvised Compositions* put the problematic dichotomy between composition and improvisation in perspective via highly inventive, lucid and humorous maneuvers: a score of the same size as the floor of the venue, a score written in the form of an eye-chart, a score whose pages are glued together, or a group of composers racing to compose in real-time.

Her concerts in Buenos Aires are a sensation among the young musicians and a source of perplexity for the conservative local media, one of which took pains to describe her music: "I'm not sure if it is John Cage plus Jorge Luis Borges divided by three (or maybe it's more related to calculus); but I'm sure neither of them could have ignored her iconoclastic presence."/>

Her more concise formulation is provided by Covito herself: "My solution is to introduce a distance between the performer and what is performed, while removing the distance between the act of composition and performance."

Performed by an array of outstanding musicians, composers, choreographers and dancers, this concert introduces the stupendous collection of Covito's works (along with an extended program note containing an essay by Covito) to the people of New York.

No Collective performers include:

Aliva Zamcheck	Esther Neff	Maria Stankova
Aliza Simmons	Gelsey Bell	Masami Tomihisa
Brian McCorkle	Ivan Naranjo	Sean Ali
Catherine Provenzano	Lindsay Drury	Travis Just
		You Nakai

No Collective (You Nakai, et al.) makes music performances which explore and problematize both the conceptual and material infrastructures of music and performance. Recent works include the publication *Concertos Ugly* (Dudding Press, 2011), which describes and prescribes the rehearsal, performance and documentation of music concert in the form of a playscript. On June 15, we will premiere *Concertos No.3* at the Incubator Art Project (St. Mark's Church). On August 26, we will present another full-scale work at the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. (nocollective.com)

Panoply Performance Laboratory (PPL) is a performance collective formed by Esther Neff and co-directed with Brian McCorkle. PPL's public opera projects have included a trilogy of operettas called *The Transformational Grammar of the Institutional Gephyroid*, operas like *The Last Dreams of Héloïse Wégel [...]* and *On the Criminal Nerves of Barbarians*, and (with ThingNY), *A Complete Explanation in Three Parts*. Other projects include installations, a miniature museum, video, and performance art and music pieces. PPL also curates the PERFORMANCY FORUM, a platform for hybrid performance acts, and organizes performance conferences. (panoplylab.org) and (panoplylab.wordpress.com)

The Music of Ellen C. Covito

Vaudeville Park, May 24, 2012, 8pm

Program

- 1. Composed Improvisation E** (left eye) (2010)
 Found Score: *Mikrokosmos* ("Six Unison Melodies") - Béla Bartók
 Akiva Zamcheck, Aliza Simmons, Brian McCorkle, Catherine Provenzano, Gelsey Bell, Ivan Naranjo, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Sean Ali, Travis Just, You Nakai
- 2. Composed Improvisation J** (2009)
 Composer: Esther Neff, Performer: Brian McCorkle
- 3. Composed Improvisation B** (2012)
 Found Score: *Prière de La Porte Héroïque du Ciel* - Erik Satie
 Masami Tomihisa, Catherine Provenzano
- 4. Composed Improvisation T** (2011)
 Akiva Zamcheck, Aliza Simmons, Brian McCorkle, Catherine Provenzano, Gelsey Bell, Ivan Naranjo, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Sean Ali, Travis Just, You Nakai
- 5a. Improvised Composition F** (2011)
 Choreographer/Dancer: Lindsay Drury, Corinne Cappelletti, Diana Crum, Kaia Gilge, LJ Leach
- 5b. Improvised Composition M** (2011)
 Composer: Aliza Simmons, Brian McCorkle, Ivan Naranjo, Maria Stankova
 Instrumentalist: Gelsey Bell, Masami Tomihisa, Sean Ali, Travis Just
- 5c. Improvised Composition F** (2011)
 Same as 5a

Intermission

- 6. Composed Improvisation E** (right eye) (2010)
 Akiva Zamcheck, Aliza Simmons, Brian McCorkle, Catherine Provenzano, Gelsey Bell, Ivan Naranjo, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Sean Ali, Travis Just, You Nakai
- 7. Composed Improvisation G** (2009)
 Found Score: *Schboh, crudèle* - Antonio Cladara
 Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Travis Just
- 8. Composed Improvisation L** (2010)
 Found Score: *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* - Wallace Willis
 Brian McCorkle, Gelsey Bell, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa,
- 9. Composed Improvisation S** (2012)
 Composer: Aliva Zamcheck
 Performer: Brian McCorkle
- 10. Composed Improvisation M** (2010)
 Found Score: *Ne Me Quitte Pas (If You Go Away)* - Jacques Brel/Nina Simone
 Akiva Zamcheck, Aliza Simmons, Brian McCorkle, Catherine Provenzano, Gelsey Bell, Ivan Naranjo, Maria Stankova, Masami Tomihisa, Sean Ali, Travis Just, You Nakai

Ellen C. Covito no Ongaku

September 19, 2012
Koen-dori Classics, Tokyo
co-curated with
Ensemble for Experimental Music and Theater

Ensemble for Experimental Music and Theater

Formed by participants of Tomomi Adachi's workshop at the Yotsuya Art Studium in 2011, EEMT focuses on the inquiry into the nature of theatre and notation as initiated by John Cage, and engages in an examination and re-construction of works that pertain most often to the genealogy of Conceptualism and Minimalism. Their repertoire spans from the works of Fluxus, Scratch Orchestra, early Minimal Music, to more recent endeavors by Post-Wandelweiser composers. The group assembles members of diverse backgrounds, including music, performance art, visual art, and poetry.

No Collectiveと実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブルの合同企画として、アルゼンチンの作曲家/コレオグラファー Ellen C. Covito (エレン・C・コビト) の、日本初となるコンサートを開催します。

近年盛り上がりを見せるアエノスアイレスの実験音楽シーンにおいても、ブエノスアイレスとエコロソニーに立脚した明晰な理論と、それに裏打ちされたユニークな方法論によって知られ、同世代で最もダイナミックな作曲家」とも称されるコビト。コンサート会場と同じサイズのスコア、視力検査表のスタイルで表記された楽譜、蛍光塗料で書かれた音符たち、あるいはリアルタイムで作曲を観るという作曲家たちのグループなど、彼女のComposed Improvisation (「作曲された即興」)とImprovised Composition (「即興された作曲」) は、ジョン・ケージやクリスチャン・ウツェルプの先例を踏まえながら、[即興/作曲]、[楽譜/演奏]などといったものもろの対立を、ユークラスに脱臼させ、独創的に組み換える試みとして、世界各地でさまざまな作曲家たちの関心と注目をいま寄せ集めています。『学術誌 Perspectives of New Music』でも近日中に、No Collectiveメンバー—中井悠へのインタビューを含む特集を予定)。

今年6月にNo CollectiveとPanoply Performance Laboratoryの共同主催により、ニューヨークで行なわれ、盛況を博したアメリカ初のコンサートに続き、東京でも、第一線で活躍する卓越した作曲家/演奏者たちによってコビトの主要な作品を網羅します。

主な出演者：
井上郷子 川島素晴 鈴木治行 東保光 中井悠 北條翔子

No Collective (中井悠、その他)：音楽がフォーマンズの物質的/概念的インフラを探索し、問題化する音楽ハブフォーマンズを制作する集団。現在はニューヨークが主な拠点。最近の活動として、2008年に行なわれたコンサートの準備、公演、およびドキュメンテーションの過程を演劇として再構成した台本Concertos (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011) の出版、国立近代美術館の「14のタペ」で初演されたConcertos No.4 (2012) など。

実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブル：ケージの提起したシアターと記譜を巡る問いかけを軸に、フルカサス、スクラッチ・オーケストラ、ミニマル、ミュージックからヴァリアントルヴァイザ—楽派以降の流れに至るコンセプチュアルリズムとミニマリズムの系譜の検証と再創造をおこなっている。

No Collective+実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブル (EEMT)

Ellen C. Covitoの音楽

2012年9月19日 (水) 20:00 公園通りクラシックス (東京都渋谷区宇田川町19-5 東京山手教会B1F) 2000円

<http://nocollective.com>

▲ Flyer for Ellen C. Covito no Ongaku concert
▶ Program of the same concert

No Collective と実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブル合同企画：

Ellen C. Covito の音楽

Composition Performance
Composer Performer

(Verbal/Gestural Instruction) (Written Score) (Community)

f m

Improvised Composition のためのダイアグラム

公園通りクラシックス
東京都渋谷区宇田川町 19-5
東京山手教会 B1F

2012年9月19日

Ellen C. Covito の音楽

公園通りクラシックス、2012年9月19日

- 1 : Composed Improvisation E (2010年)
演奏：全員
- 2 : Composed Improvisation G (2009年)
演奏：井上郷子、川島素晴、多井智紀、鈴木治行、横島浩
- 3 : Composed Improvisation B (2012年)
演奏：実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブル+東保光
- 4 : Composed Improvisation L (2010年)
演奏：実験音楽とシアターのためのアンサンブル+東保光
- 5 : Composed Improvisation S (2012年)
作曲：川島素晴、演奏：多井智紀
- 6 : Improvised Composition M (2011年)
作曲：川島素晴、鈴木治行、横島浩
演奏：池田拓美、井上郷子、多井智紀
- 7 : Composed Improvisation M (2010年)
演奏：全員

— 休憩 —

Ellen C. Covito

Percussions-Repercussions

Dreary Somebody

Dreary Somebody is totally temporal, totally permeable, and constantly in flux. It rearranges itself around each new project, redefining itself and its mission in relation to the work at hand. At the moment, Dreary Somebody is the creative entity by which Lindsey Drury has orchestrated a number of dance works. These projects (2012-2014) include the collaborative opera *Any Size Mirror is a Dictator* with Panoply Lab and the large-scale work *Vesna's Fall* created with No Collective. Previous works include *Run Little Girl* (2012), in which the progression, intention and interaction of the eight performers and 20 dance modules were choreographed live, and *I am My Shitty Little Box* (2011), a solo performed both for and as one audience member by first exchanging clothing with them. Curatorial projects include *Post-Dance* for the Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival (2013).

April 12, 2014
 The Woods Cooperative, Queens, New York,
 co-curated with
Dreary Somebody
 (part of the on-going performance series
 {The Room})



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▲ Flyer of Ellen C. Covito: Percussions/Repercussions concert
 > Program of the same concert

{ [The (First) Room] presented by No Collective and Dreary Somebody }

Ellen C. Covito: Percussions/Repercussions
 by Luis Tabuenca and Devika Wickremesinghe
 April 12, 8:00 pm at The Woods Cooperative
 1826 Palmetto Street #1, Ridgewood, NY (M to Seneca or L to Myrtle/Wyckoff)
 \$10 suggested donation

Ellen C. Covito returns to New York with an evening of entirely new works for percussion and other sounding bodies. Coupling two virtuosos, percussionist Luis Tabuenca and dance artist Devika Wickremesinghe, this concert focuses on the available percussions and repercussions between two (or more) bodies under the influence of seen and unseen forces. Covito's new endeavor take cues from Pierre Schaeffer's notion of "acousmatic" (the separation of sound from the sounding body), and the meditational effect of magnetic forces (tape, microphone and loudspeaker) that was crucial to the acousmatic disembodiment of sound. To these references, Covito adds idiosyncratic twists to formulate highly inventive, lucid and humorous works that expand the celebrated approach of her "Composed Improvisation" series. This evening will thus present an exciting new phase not only for Covito's art or percussion music, but for all art forms that entail composition and improvisation of sounding bodies—from music to dance, and beyond.

Ellen C. Covito is an Argentinian composer and choreographer mostly known for her "improvised Composition" and "Composed Improvisation" series which deconstructs and reinvents the problematic dichotomy between composition and improvisation. Her music has been performed worldwide, with two major concerts in New York and Tokyo in 2012. An account of her music was portrayed in: "The Music of Ellen C. Covito. An Interview with You Nakai by Elizabeth Hoffman" (*Perspectives of New Music* (Winter, 2013)). <http://ellencovito.com>

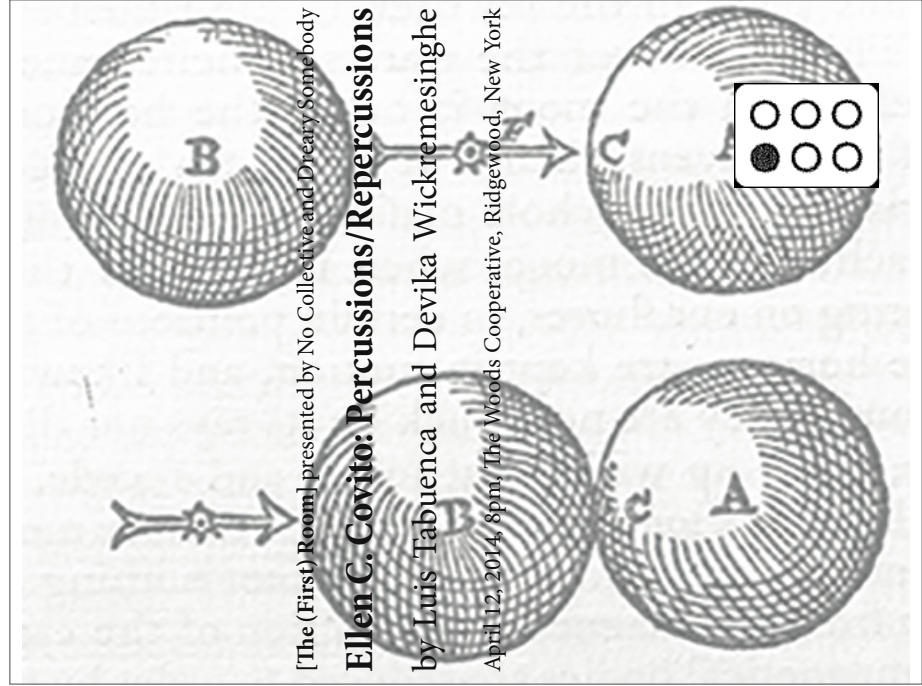
Luis Tabuenca is a percussionist, improviser, and composer born in Zaragoza, Spain. For the past years he has focused on contemporary and experimental percussion music both as a performer and a composer. More information at: <http://www.luisabuenca.com>

Devika Wickremesinghe is a dance artist and pilates teacher based in Brooklyn. Devika has had the pleasure of working with a host of NY artists, including K.J. Holmes, Jill Sigman/Thinkdance, Vanessa Justice, am and alex make dances, Ana Isabel Kellison, Buck Wanner, and Mariangela Lopez/ACCIDENTAL MOVEMENT.

[The Room] is an occasional event series hosted by Dreary Somebody and No Collective, intended to bring forth the most conceptually radical and physically ground-breaking works that has very little or zero regard to the expediences of communitarian activities taking place outside in the so-called here and now. Primary focus is instead placed on the nourishment of techniques and crafts pertaining to the mind and the body that not only prepare, but are themselves, revolutions. <http://nocollective.com> <http://www.drearysomebody.com>

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Program

1. Percussion/Repercussion A (2014)
 written in collaboration with Cody Eikman
2. Composed Improvisation D (2013)
- 3-4. Percussion/Repercussion B (2014)
 simultaneously with
 Percussion/Repercussion C (2014)
5. Composed Improvisation I (2014)
6. Composed Improvisation V (2013)
7. Percussion/Repercussion D (2013)
8. Composed Improvisation A (2014)
9. Composed Improvisation D (2013)
10. Composed Improvisation I (2014)

A photograph of a rooftop terrace. A large white tarp is spread out on the tiled floor, covering most of the area. A person is crouching on the left side of the tarp, looking down at it. The terrace is bordered by a metal railing. In the background, there are trees and a building with a glass facade. The lighting is soft, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Visit
ellencovito.com
for videos of performance, new works,
and updated information.

No Collective (Jay Barnacle, Ai Chinen, Kay Festa, Earle Lipski, You Nakai, et al.) makes various works that examine and (re)construct different modes of temporalities. Most often, these have resulted in music performances which explore and problematize both the conceptual and material infrastructures of music and performance. Other formats of work include playscripts, picture books, haunted houses, and performance art. Since its inception circa 2007, members of *No Collective* have varied both in quantity (from one to fifty) and quality (from reluctant music novices to professional instrumentalists) according to each work's objective and situational conditions. Recent works include *Vesna's Fall*, a decidedly modernist, large-scale dance piece made in collaboration with Lindsey Drury (Judson Church, Black Mountain College, 2014), and *Concertos No.4*, performed with ball-shaped speakers operated by blind performers in a completely darkened 16,000 square feet performance space (National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, 2012); publications include *Concertos* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011), a book which describes and prescribes the process of preparation, performance, and documentation of a music concert in the form of a playscript, and *Sonnet for 'Concertos No.4'* (National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, 2013), a score of a nursery rhyme whose lyrics are the entire instructions for making another ('serious') music concert. A brief portrayal of *No Collective's* activities can be found in "The Music of Ellen C. Covito: An interview with You Nakai by Elizabeth Hoffman," published in *Perspectives of New Music* (Winter, 2013).

<http://nocollective.com>

Gelsey Bell, Ivan Naranjo & Maria Stankova creating the score of *Improvised Composition M* (Brooklyn, 2012)

