

PEDAGOGICAL USAGES OF PROCESS MUSIC: A CURRICULUM FOR VOICE  
PERFORMERS

BY

CHRISTA J. RUIZ

Submitted to the faculty of the  
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree,  
Doctor of Music  
Indiana University  
May 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the  
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Music

Doctoral Committee

---

Ayana Smith, Research Director

---

Patricia Stiles, Chair

---

Mary Ann Hart

---

Teresa Kubiak

21 April 2015

Copyright © 2015

Christa Ruiz

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1 : Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2 : Teaching Authentic Performance.....	12
Chapter 3 : "Art is the Tracks, Not the Animal" .....	21
Chapter 4 : Conclusion.....	87
Appendix: Course Calendar .....	89
Bibliography .....	92

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The music of the postwar avant-garde is not well established in the standard vocal performance repertoire, and is often underutilized as a pedagogical tool. I believe pieces from this period, especially those which can be defined as “process music” are particularly well suited to engaging students with new ways of thinking about and performing music, developing musicianship skills, and giving students performance practice. Process music is one of the subgenres of the avant-garde that mainly flourished in the 60s and 70s, although much of Cage’s output in the 50s, and Pauline Oliveros’ writing into the 1990s certainly count. However, in general, most of music in this style was composed during the “long 1960s,” a period from the mid-1950s to the mid 1970s that historians have combined due to overarching social and political movements.<sup>1</sup>

The social climate in the United States during this time was one of upheaval, questioning, hope, and change. The century had seen the horrors of two world wars, genocide, and the aftermath of the atomic bomb, which was a very real threat throughout the cold war. People began to question the political and social systems that brought such destruction, and began creating new systems with the ideals of equality, peace, and love.

In *The Times were a changin’: The Sixties Reader*, Irwin and Debi Unger explain:

Life blueprints were rejected; people struck out on new courses. The air resounded with harsh voices demanding; raging, promising, accusing, cajoling... The Sixties delegitimized all sources of authority—governments, universities, parents, critics, experts, employers, the police, families, the military. In this decade’s wake, all hierarchical structures became more pliant, all

---

<sup>1</sup> Jon Agar, “What Happened in the Sixties?” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41, no. 4 (December 2008): 567-600.

judgments and critical evaluations and ‘canons’ less definitive and acceptable.<sup>2</sup> Questioning of hierarchy and traditional rules also translating into new techniques and aesthetics in music, as was the influence of new technological advances changing our interaction with sound.<sup>3</sup> Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner explain in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* that the new commercial availability of the tape recorder was particularly influential:

The tape recorder played a crucial role in blurring the lines of distinction between music and its others. Tape compositions allowed the composer to bypass musical notation, instruments, and performers in one step. Further, it gave composers access to what John Cage called ‘the entire field of sound,’ making conventional distinctions between ‘musical’ and ‘non-musical’ sounds increasingly irrelevant.<sup>4</sup>

This changing aesthetic allowed for definitions of what music is to expand greatly and for traditional compositional structures to become much more flexible and often disappear altogether. The musical output of this period is extremely diverse and includes minimalism, free-improvisation, jazz, electronic music, and popular genres like Rock and Roll, funk, soul, disco, and pop among others. For the purposes of this project, experimental music is the main focus, specifically pieces that outline a process for the performer. In Michael Nyman’s book *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, he explains what he means by experimental:

Experimental composers are by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined *time-object* whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining a *situation* in which sounds may occur, a *process* of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a *field* delineated by certain compositional ‘rules.’

---

<sup>2</sup> Irwin Unger and Debi Unger, *The Times were a changin’: The Sixties Reader*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Johnson, *Scores: an anthology of new music*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 5.

The composer may, for instance, present the performer with the means of making calculations to determine the nature, timing or spacing of sounds. He may call on the performer to make split-second decisions in the moment of performance. He may indicate the temporal areas in which a number of sounds may be placed. Sometimes a composer will specify situations to be arranged or encountered before sounds may be made or heard; at other times he may indicate the number and general quality of the sounds and allow the performers to proceed through them at their own pace. Or he may invent, or ask the performer to invent, particular instruments or electronic systems”<sup>5</sup>

Nyman defines a number of subgenres: “Chance Determination Processes” (like Cage’s *I Ching*), “People Process” (performers move through materials at their own speed), “Contextual Process” (actions dependent on variables that come up in the musical continuity), “Repetition Process” (includes much of minimalism) and “Electronic Processes.”<sup>6</sup>

“Process” pieces show a radical shift from the traditional composers’ complete control of the musical result to a model that values and integrates input from the performer on unprecedented levels. In addition, the resulting performances from the composed processes are never identical which shifts the music’s value from a static ‘material’ result to a one centered on unique, human action. Due to this shifting focus, many of these pieces have remarkable pedagogical possibilities and can not only isolate certain musical skills to focus on, but will help students learn how to focus and divide their concentration as they wish, all while learning to make creative choices in the moment.

“Process” pieces also have an ability to give students a performance experience in a classroom, without an audience. Practice performing is an extremely important part

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-8.

of music curricula, but unfortunately, oftentimes the only time students have the opportunity to practice this skill is in high-pressure evaluation situations like juries. Gaining the opportunity with regularity in a classroom setting would be very beneficial. Performance of standard repertoire helps students find a mental performance space as well, but time constraints often prevent everyone in a class from having the opportunity to perform every class period. Also, younger students will not always have the skill to adequately prepare new repertoire for performance at a speed conducive to regular performance. This is where process music has a real pedagogical advantage because much of it does not require a great deal of technical skill, and the duration of the pieces is usually longer than the average standard vocal repertoire, giving students more time to settle into a performance mentality. Many students will not have the opportunity for sustained performance until they are ready to give a recital or perform in an opera which may not even happen on the undergraduate level, and definitely not for all of the students. Performing in ensembles is beneficial, but most time is spent in rehearsals, not in performance, and students do not experience the same kind of responsibility they have in solo work. Process music's ability to create the feel of active and concentrated performance without rehearsal makes it particularly useful from a pedagogical standpoint. Process music can quickly get a group of musicians with varying levels of skill into a performance mentality without rehearsal.

Part of the reason process music can mimic the feel of performance quickly is the nature of the scores. Usually they are textual directions that are easy to memorize, which give students the opportunity to have 100 percent of their focus and energy on the performance right away. With standard repertoire, it would take them a long time to reach

such a level of memorization, because even a well-learned piece requires some thought, especially to young musicians. In addition, all of these pieces have some degree of indeterminacy and give much more responsibility of the musical material to the performers. For our purposes, emphasis was placed on what Nyman would call “People Process” and “Contextual Process,” where students must make musical choices based on what they see, feel, or hear. These are very important skills for young singers to develop, especially those who wish to go into opera and must learn to watch, listen and react to multiple stimuli at once.

The purpose of this study is to research and compile “process” pieces for pedagogical purposes, suited for a semester-long undergraduate performance-based class of vocal performance majors. The class is designed to spend much of the time performing the pieces in a classroom setting, with readings assigned for weekly discussions. In addition to improving musicianship skills, the pieces were selected for their ability to facilitate a performance experience in the classroom and for their potential to alleviate performance anxiety and develop the capacity for more authentic performances in students.

## **Chapter 2: TEACHING AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE**

### **Teaching Philosophy**

I come from a family of teachers, and I have seen my parents act as caring and creative guides to their students my whole life. Perhaps this is why teaching has been a natural inclination of mine for as long as I can remember. My father is a scientist, and my mother is an artist, who spent much of her professional life working with disabled adults. Their two different outlooks were a profound influence that shaped my own teaching philosophy.

My favorite childhood memories include the afternoons when my father would teach me math. He never focused on how to get to the right answer the fastest way, and he never made me blindly memorize equations. Instead, he focused on the process of problem solving. He would always have me find at least two different ways to solve each problem so that I would think creatively and that the fun part was not the answer, but finding ways to get there. If I forgot a necessary formula, he would explain the principles behind it and how to go about deriving it, so that I could always figure it out again myself. At the time I was quite annoyed that he wouldn't just tell me the quadratic equation and made me derive it again every time I forgot (even blindfolded onetime when I complained too much!), but it instilled in me a self-reliance and confidence in my ability to figure things out that translated into other areas of my life. Though I have long since forgotten many of the mathematical principals from our work together, my father's practical, process-oriented approach taught me that education is not about learning facts,

but as teacher and artist Robert Irwin says, “learning how to learn.”<sup>7</sup>

As a sculptor, my mother works with her hands, with clay. Her descriptions of her creative process are always sensual, personal and spiritual. She instilled in me the importance of stillness and meditation, and gave me a great gift in valuing my intuition; encouraging me to listen and give power to the voice-within. One of the most influential figures on my mother’s outlook is American poet and artist M.C. Richards, who in turn has become a great influence on my own thinking, especially in terms of pedagogy.

Richards was involved in the alternative, humanistic and egalitarian Black Mountain College<sup>8</sup>, and credits Rudolf Steiner<sup>9</sup> as an influence in her writings about pedagogy.

Richards talks about the “different modes of knowing”<sup>10</sup> existing within us. She says

...rarely does formal education seek a balance between them. We are asked to explain, to justify, to cite causes; we are asked to defend our point of view, and to prove. And proof, we are assured, is always sense-perceptible or logically demonstrable. We tend to hold our intuitive gifts in low esteem<sup>11</sup>

One of Richards’ main aims as a teacher is to help students work directly with themselves, developing observation and intuition. To her,

...wisdom is not the product of mental effort. Wisdom is a state of the total being, in which capacities for knowledge and for love, for survival and for death, for imagination, inspiration, intuition, for all the fabulous functioning of this human being who we are, come into center with their forces, come into an experience of meaning that can voice itself as wise action.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin*, expanded Edition, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 124.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Caroline Richards, *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry and the Person*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 120.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 109

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

This integration of the whole person into the creative process and an emphasis on the experiential side of education is the thing that draws me the most to Richards' teaching style. It is especially suited towards music, since performance does not involve linear processes and is much more complex and multi-layered. Musicians use sophisticated coordinated mechanisms that they are oftentimes not able to consciously control, and they often have difficulty articulating these processes on the intellectual level.

Richard's reverence for the creative potential of everyone is also a position I strive for as a teacher. She says

Every person is a special kind of artist and every activity is a special art. An artist creates out of the materials of the moment, never again to be duplicated. This is true of the painter, the musician, the dancer, the actor; the teacher; the scientist; the business man; the farmer—it is true of us all, whatever our work, that we are artists as long as we are alive to the concreteness of a moment and do not use it to some other purpose<sup>13</sup>

As a teacher, I see my primary responsibility as helping to facilitate students in connecting deeply with themselves and being and alive and intentionally present in the moment. Oftentimes it's just giving students permission to experiment, and creating an atmosphere that fosters openness, creativity, and integration of the whole self. My goal is to guide students to discover their own methods and techniques, allowing them to test their emotional, expressive, and vocal boundaries safely, in a non-judgmental environment. All of the activities in this class were picked with this in mind.

### **Course Objectives**

In Richards' *Centering* she retells a joke about a heterosexual couple that has been successfully married for a long time. When asked the secret to their longevity, the husband says his wife makes all the minor decisions like where to send their children to

---

<sup>13</sup> Richards, 40.

go to college, and he makes all the major decision, like how to achieve world peace.<sup>14</sup> She goes on to say there are “minor” and “major” problems in pottery as well—how to shape a lid, and what is the meaning of art. Music also has these at times contradictory concerns. How does one worry about technically turning a phrase, while maintaining a deep intuitive expressivity in performance?

This course attempts to address these two levels. Though important, the more superficial goals of the course are: to help students learn how to prolong concentration, to listen, to respond creatively to things they see, hear, and feel, to improvise, to increase awareness of and ability to interact with their surrounding environment, and to improve non-verbal communication techniques with others. These skills are individually helpful, but also come together to achieve the “major” goals of the course.

On the “major” level, the course is designed to give students tools to handle performance stress, to help them become aware of the deeper levels of their minds through a connection to their bodies, to better access an intuitive performance “zone,” to acquire self-esteem, musical autonomy, and to trust in their expressive abilities. Another big overarching goal of the course is to help students find more authenticity in their performances.

What makes a performance authentic is one of most fundamental yet elusive questions about the performing arts. No matter how much we try to break it down into measureable component parts, it remains an ineffable quality that provokes individual emotional responses in the audience, and is impossible to quantify. One thing that seems certain is that it is a human element. Dr. Daniel J. Levitin, director of the laboratory for

---

<sup>14</sup> Richards, 10-11.

music perception, cognition and expertise at McGill University is trying to quantify what makes music expressive, and has found that no machine is able to surpass a pianist's ability to convey emotion to an audience.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Levitin found that "...what really communicates emotion may not be melody or rhythm, but moments when musicians make subtle changes to the those musical patterns."<sup>16</sup> Dr. Levitin's experiment was with a piano, whose musical mechanism is rather simple for a computer to imitate. However the human voice has even more variables in its expressive capacities, as the body itself is the instrument and as a living creature is more complex than a man-made instrument.

Even as people, mimicking the actions of others does not equal a compelling performance. If that was the case, every young actress would learn to raise her eyebrows just like Meryl Streep and win an Oscar, but it's clearly not so simple. Performers are not directly experiencing the emotion they portray, yet are not imitating it either. They are somehow connecting to deep levels within themselves that are unique to every individual performer. I would call this deep level on par with intuition, which the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines as "a feeling that guides a person to act a certain way without fully understanding why." As famed dancer and choreographer Martha Graham explains it<sup>17</sup>

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique... It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate YOU.

---

<sup>15</sup> Pam Belluck, "To Tug Hearts, Music First Music Tickle the Neurons," *New York Times*, April 18, 2011, accessed December 20, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/19/science/19brain.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/19/science/19brain.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Audrey Borenstein, *Chimes of Change and Hours: Views of Older Women in Twentieth-century America*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 404.

As teachers, we want students to tap into the urges that motivate them; to learn to access their intuitions and give authentic performances that have a feel of spontaneity and ease. However the process of intuitive expression is personal to each performer, and is notoriously hard to teach as many natural performers do not know how they do it. Even if a performer is extremely aware of what they are doing, their process and experience will not be universal. Due to this, most time in the music classroom and studio is spent on more practical, concrete goals like technique, aural skills, and theory. Oftentimes musical expressivity is only superficially addressed—in terms of dynamics and style. Working with the deeper levels of expression is generally character based and reserved for acting classes, and opera workshop.

Expressivity coming from a connection to the intuitive level of the self is the quality I think makes a performance authentic, and is something that psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi calls flow. He describes it in his 1975 book *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play*:

In the flow state, action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future.<sup>18</sup>

Helping students find this flow is challenging, but process pieces can help achieve what Csíkszentmihályi says are the necessary elements for a flow state, whose clearest sign is

“...the merging of actions and awareness.”<sup>19</sup> For this to occur,

...the activity must be feasible. Flow seems to occur only when tasks are within one’s ability to perform. That is why one experiences flow most often in

---

<sup>18</sup> Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975), 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

activities with clearly established rules for action, such as rituals, games, or participatory forms like the dance.<sup>20</sup>

The directions for all the process pieces are simple, and feasible for all students. However they are not so simple as to become boring, since they demand involvement and creativity. They will often push students gently to their limits, especially with the pieces near the end of the course. This emphasis on creative exploration and challenge are all necessary elements for Csíkszentmihályi's flow:

...they all give participants a sense of discovery, exploration, problem solution—in other words, a feeling of novelty and challenge...they are all exploring the limits of their abilities and trying to expand them.<sup>21</sup>

Process Pieces are particularly well suited in giving students a sense of participatory discovery and of expanding their abilities to listen, concentrate, and communicate. The hope is that this will result in many flow experiences for students throughout the course, familiarizing them with the state and how they got there, which will enrich their performing and expressive potential a great deal in the future.

### **Course Design**

The course is designed to be an elective for vocal performance majors. It is performance based, with weekly readings and an emphasis on class discussion. Though performance is the most important part of the class, discussion is also emphasized. This will give students a forum to explore the ideas from the readings and their experiences in the performances on an intellectual level. Articulating what they think and feel may be difficult, but it will help them process the experiences they have and better understand them. It will also facilitate a safe, cooperative, non-judgmental atmosphere for students to

---

<sup>20</sup> Csíkszentmihályi, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

explore new ideas and new aspects of themselves and build trust that will also help in promoting flow.<sup>22</sup>

There are nine major sections, each with its own pedagogical focus. Bridge Pieces and Trust-Building Pieces encourage cooperation; musicianship skills are the focus of Continuous Concentration Pieces, Listening Pieces, and Environmental Exploratory Pieces. Perception Altering Pieces, “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces are designed to broaden students’ sensory horizons and help them connect to their bodies. Improvisatory Pieces are focused on creativity, and Intuitive Pieces are geared towards expressivity.

All of the thirty-four pieces chosen were written in the late 60s to mid 70s, with the exception of John Cage’s 4’33” (1952), Steve Reich’s “Clapping Music” (1980), and three of Pauline Oliveros’ *Deep Listening Pieces* (1980, 1982 and 1988). Pauline Oliveros is the major composer of the class (14 pieces). Four of Frederic Rzewski’s pieces were chosen, as were two each from Karlheinz Stockhausen, Daniel Goode, Kenneth Maue, and Barbara Benary. Bonnie Mara Barnett, John Cage, Tom Johnson, Michael Parsons, Steve Reich, Dennis Riley, Terry Riley, and Christian Wolff represent one selection each. Most of the scores are published in *Scores: an Anthology of New Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981) with the exception of Cage’s 4’33”, Oliveros’ *Deep Listening Pieces*, and *Sonic Meditations* (partially published in *Scores*).

Most of the authors of the assigned readings wrote during the “long 1960s”: Dick Higgins, Roger Johnson, M.C. Richards, Frederic Rzewski, R. Murray Schafer and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The others either wrote about the time period or the pieces

---

<sup>22</sup> Csíkszentmihályi, 30.

themselves (Heidi von Gunden and Linda Sargent Wood), or develop ideas important to the course that have their roots in the 60s (Meribeth A. Dayme, Mark Slouka and Christopher Small).

Since the class is completely based on the free, open-minded participation of experimental music and discussions of oftentimes abstract and unfamiliar ideas, it is important that there be an interview or other screening process to select students. They must agree to give their best effort, have a receptive attitude, and hopefully exhibit a curiosity and interest in unconventional learning processes, and the avant-garde.

## Chapter 3: “ART IS THE TRACKS, NOT THE ANIMAL”<sup>23</sup>

### Bridge Pieces

“But it is a teacher’s skill to disarm resistance, just as it is a student’s to understand his own”<sup>24</sup>

The major points of the Bridge Pieces section of the class are to get students to start working cooperatively and listening to each other, to familiarize them with pieces that focus on process instead of result, and encourage an awareness of the body through breath. It will help them become comfortable with scores that look different than they are used to, and increase their autonomy as participants in music making. The assigned readings that challenge the composer and performer hierarchy also reinforce the students’ autonomy, empowering them to fully participate and take responsibility for their choices in music making.

The first piece is “Solkattu”<sup>25</sup> (1975) by Barbara Benary, which introduces students to an unconventional score and has an emphasis on fun and bonding within the group. It will also acquaint students with the idea that music does not exist without their embodiment of it. Solkattu works well with groups up to fifteen. Everyone sits in a circle, with one player playing a drone instrument on the outside of the circle. Participants improvise rhythmic patterns based on solkattu syllables<sup>26</sup> and one by one, they “pass” them around the circle. One person begins by repeating his or her pattern twice, clapping on the downbeats, and directly after, the person next to him or her repeats this same phrase without pausing. In many circles everyone will start to clap together intuitively,

---

<sup>23</sup> This is a Japanese proverb quoted by Paulus Berensohn.

<sup>24</sup> Richards, 107.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Benary, “Solkattu,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 34.

<sup>26</sup> Benary defines these as the Tamil name for the spoken recitation of drum strokes: ta, taka, tom, and takita—each with its own rhythmic pattern.

which is not specifically in the directions, but fine if it happens naturally. After the first person's pattern makes it all the way around the circle back to the initiator, the next person sends their phrase around until everyone has had a chance for their phrase to pass around.

After the spoken phrases go around, there is a variation where phrases are sung, so students must improvise a melody as well as rhythm. The third variation is a "Chaotic Section" where entrances are staggered, but everyone comes in with their own phrase. The resolution of this section comes where players begin to join each other at will, matching up their syllables with others, while maintaining their own melody.

"Solkattu" is a good starting piece because it is fun, and breaks the ice in a class where students may or may not know each other. It is not technically difficult, but does take moderate listening skills, and necessitates that students make up melodies and rhythms on the spot. This may be difficult for very deliberate and conscientious musicians who like to have time to plan, but the playful atmosphere of the piece should alleviate any initial discomfort they may have. This piece also clearly puts a focus on process since, instead of worrying about how the music is sounding, students' attention will be on interacting with others and watching the patterns pass around the circle. This will most likely be unlike many of the performing experiences they have had up until this point.

Afterwards, students can discuss how it changes a performance when the participants are improvising the material, and how that may change their thoughts about and relationship to the composer. Also up for discussion will be the idea that music is a verb instead of a thing. This is a theme in the assigned reading for this week and has a

direct connection to this type of piece, which does not exist in a complete way on paper, and must be actively performed to be fully realized. This is much different from pieces in the traditional repertoire that one can hear in one's head just from reading a score.

In Dennis Riley's piece, "What is a Kiss"<sup>27</sup> (1968), students work with a six-bar section of music that is notated conventionally, but they have to make a choice about the piece's length, as well as deciding how many people should participate in any given performance. Since the number of performers is not notated in the score, it should be brought up to students that D. Riley has made them responsible for making this decision.

They will begin singing the melody in unison, and then in a round with two entrance points, with as many repeats as the group desires. The melody is atonal, but if students think intervallically, they should be able to memorize it quickly. They will have to pay careful attention to tune the half-step motion accurately, and to take care if thirds are major or minor, as they alternate. There is also a jump of a major seventh that may be a challenge initially. It could be difficult to maintain the integrity of individual parts as the round begins, because singers will have dissonances with other parts, starting with the entrances that make a major second between the first and second parts, and an augmented fifth between the first and third parts. In the class, the piece should be performed in a variety of different ways, with different numbers and combinations of students. Afterwards, the group can discuss how the piece was different depending on the variable factors, and which piece, if any, was 'truer' to the score and why. It can also be discussed how a score with so much variability affects the participants' perception of it, and of their role in it.

---

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Riley, "What is a Kiss," in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 61.

The piece “Mindfulness of Breathing”<sup>28</sup> (1969) by Michael Parsons helps encourage self-awareness and autonomy in students, and has two parts for voice that are performed simultaneously. One is a wordless drone on G (in any comfortable octave to maintain for a long period of time). The second part is chant-like melody in g minor that even young singers should be able to sight-read. It is written in bass clef, and more inexperienced higher voiced students may need a transposition into treble clef to read it well the first time. The range is only a fourth, going from an F to B-flat and the motion is repetitive, alternating between whole steps and minor thirds. Between each note is a breath mark that specifies the singer should take five seconds to breath in, and then sing each note for ten seconds. The text is from a Buddhist teaching, which describes the awareness and experience of respiration. This reinforces the self-awareness that students’ will begin to experience as they deliberately take five second breaths. This heightened awareness of breath also begins to encourage a connection with the body, which will become more and more distinct in later pieces in the class.

The piece lasts about ten minutes, and it would be good to perform it at least twice so that students on the drone part could have a chance to perform the text part and vice versa. The suggested number of participants is ten people, with four on the drone and six on the text, but more can be added if the drone/part ratio remains roughly the same. However more than ten on the text can be problematic as the singers stagger their entrances by approximately five seconds, and the texture will become opaque if too many singers partake. Singers are to go through their text at their own rate, each counting their

---

<sup>28</sup> Michael Parsons, “Mindfulness of Breathing,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 11.

breathing and notes individually. The breath is part of the texture of the music, and the rhythm of the piece becomes linked with breathing, and hence the body of the performer. Discussion points for this piece are how counting in seconds instead of beats affected the relationship singers had with other performers, and how bodily-linked rhythm changed their experience of timing, and the piece as a whole. They can also discuss how the added autonomy of deciding how long to take to go through the material affected their experience of the piece. How did they decide when to move on? Why?

The piece “Olson III”<sup>29</sup> (1967) by Terry Riley is similar to the iconic “In C” in its minimalist aesthetic, but it is more suited to the voice. Like “In C” there are short melodic fragments, each one to be repeated an indeterminate amount of times before performers move to the next section independently. Unlike “In C,” the melodic fragments do not contain instrumental gestures, and suit singing for long periods of time comfortably. This piece continues the emphasis on performers’ autonomy. Though the score provides a framework and the melodic and rhythmic material, it is entirely up to each individual when to move on to the next section. This piece usually lasts anywhere from ten to thirty minutes depending on the choices of the performers, and could theoretically go much longer than that. These last three pieces are particularly helpful in bridging the gap between typical repertoire and less traditional pieces since the scores all use conventional notation that will look and sound familiar to students, but with elements of improvisation included.

---

<sup>29</sup> Terry Riley, “Olson III,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 229.

## Readings to correspond with Bridge pieces

One reading that is a good addition to beginning classes is from the book *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* by Christopher Small. The selection “Prelude: Music and Musicking”<sup>30</sup> is key because it introduces the idea that music is not in fact, a thing and explains that this “prevailing modern philosophy of art” is problematic.<sup>31</sup> He explains what he sees as a wrong focus on abstractions, a mentality he traces all the way back to Plato.

Music is not a thing at all, but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing ‘music’ is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it closely...It is very easy to come to think of abstractions as more real than the reality it represents, to think, for example, of those abstractions which we call love, hate, good and evil as having an existence apart from the acts of loving, hating, or performing good and evil deeds and even to think of them as being in some way more real than the acts themselves, a kind of universal or ideal lying behind and suffusing actions. This is a trap of reification, and it has been a besetting fault of Western thinking ever since Plato, who was one of its earliest perpetrators.<sup>32</sup>

Focusing on music as a thing can be extremely detrimental to musicians, and lends itself to perfectionism. If music exists without a performer, then it exists in a perfect form that makes “each performance...at best only an imperfect and approximate representation of the work itself.”<sup>33</sup> Since Dianna Kenny refers to the psychological effect of “perceived imperfections” as “associated with higher distress, higher performance anxiety, somatic complaints, and emotional fatigue,”<sup>34</sup> it’s fair to assume the

---

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 1-18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Small, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Kenny, 77.

idea of an “ideal” manifestation of the music existing in an unobtainable state would only escalate this anxiety further.

Christopher Small responds to this idea with what could be taken as one of the thesis statements of the avant-garde: “The fundamental nature and meaning of music lies not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do.”<sup>35</sup> He emphasizes that “*performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform.*”<sup>36</sup> This illustrates the shift of emphasis from composer, to performer, that is seen throughout the movement. This shift also implies the focus from result-oriented, to the process of the individual. The discussion of the reading will bring students to start and question the fundamental meaning of music, and what it means for them as performers.

The second reading included under Bridge Pieces in the chapter “Summoning Up the Dead Composer,”<sup>37</sup> also from Christopher Small’s book. In this section, Small begins to explore the hierarchy of composer, conductor, score and performer. Small describes performing in a traditional concert situation as being part of an elaborate ritual with almost spiritual devotion to the composer: “In charge of the ceremony is the conductor, he is the magus, the shaman, who immerses himself in the sacred book and summons up the spirit of the dead composer.”<sup>38</sup> He goes on to talk further about the dead composers holding a special place in the minds of performers and concertgoers.

For most people here, a great composer is almost by definition a dead composer, and no musician who is alive today, or who even lived past the first two decades

---

<sup>35</sup> Small, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 87-93.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 87.

of the twentieth century, has the hold that dead composers have on the imagination of either listeners or performers in concert halls.<sup>39</sup>

Small argues that this admiration and veneration of the past is unique among musical cultures and that this whole musical system is based on revered composers being dead in the first place.

In that they handed down to us scores whose content is stable and unchanging, those mythological creatures themselves appear stable and unchanging. They cannot be alive in the present. They *have* to be dead in order to be immortal, and they have to be immortal to be mythic heroes. I intend no sarcasm when I characterize the composer as a kind of prophet, the score as his sacred text, and the conductor as his priest. Like priests generally, the conductor claims the right to interpret the score and to impose his interpretation on others.<sup>40</sup>

Verbalizing this musical hierarchy in such strong and colorful language is a great starting point for the class to discuss this system and their place in it as performers. Being critical of this hierarchy can encourage students to have more artistic autonomy and to think of themselves as contributing artists instead of being totally subservient to the wishes of a conductor's interpretation. This is not to suggest that students should completely disregard all conventions and refuse to cooperate with the conductor, who most likely hired them, but questioning why musical performance is set up in our culture the way that it is can be empowering to students. It also gives them a chance to talk about how this hierarchy affect's their nerves, perfectionism, and how they judge their own performances.

---

<sup>39</sup> Small, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 89.

## Continuous Concentration Pieces

“Everyone really knows that education goes on all the time everywhere all through our lives, and that it is the process of waking up to life.”<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that good concentration is an important element in performance, and it is also an element of flow. Csikszentmihály says that “this merging of action and awareness [which is a characteristic of flow] is made possible by a second characteristic of flow experience: a centering of attention on a limited stimulus field.”<sup>42</sup> This centering of attention is a focus of concentration, and he also says that, “In some activities, the concentration is sustained for incredible lengths of time.”<sup>43</sup> This is definitely true in music, where musicians must routinely keep concentration going for extended periods.

These pieces are designed to help students find focus and practice maintaining that focus for extended periods. In the book *The Inner Game of Tennis*, W. Timothy Gallwey explains that “the focused mind only picks up on those aspects of a situation that are needed to accomplish the task at hand. It is not distracted by other thoughts or external events, it is totally engrossed in whatever is relevant in here and now.”<sup>44</sup> A fast way to foster focus in music is to find pieces that are easy enough to sight-read, but difficult enough to force a full and continuous concentration to be successful. The pieces in this section all do this in unique ways.

“Clapping Music”<sup>45</sup> (1980) by Steve Reich is a percussion piece for two performers. The part marked Clap 1 claps the same pattern throughout the piece. Clap 2

---

<sup>41</sup> Richards, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Csikszentmihály, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis: The Classic Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 1974), 84.

<sup>45</sup> Steve Reich, “Clapping Music,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 84.

starts with the same pattern as Clap 1 on the first measure, with each subsequent measure shifting the pattern behind by an eight-note until it is phased all the way back to line up with the Clap 1 by the twelfth, and final measure. Measures can be repeated any number of times, but the number of repeats should remain constant throughout the piece. The rhythmic patterns themselves are not difficult, but since Clap 2 is shifting, the beat is staggered between the parts, making it difficult for either one to maintain the integrity of their line without much effort. A metronome can be used to help keep a steady pulse, and a slow tempo should be used at first. However students should challenge themselves to go faster and faster as they become more comfortable with the material.

The piece “Doodling”<sup>46</sup> (1967) by Tom Johnson is what he calls a “Private Piece”<sup>47</sup> for one pianist (even low-level keyboard skills are sufficient) and is a good piece for students to try on their own outside of the classroom. By “private”, Johnson means a piece for the performer’s own entertainment that does not necessitate an audience. This piece is unique as it asks the pianist to start “doodling” on the piano and then to continue reading the instructions simultaneously. The instructions then ask the pianist to play a low note, while still reading, and still doodling.

Throughout the piece, the challenge is to divide the attention equally between these three activities as the text gives the pianist various instructions. When attention is not divided equally, one of the three activities will falter, reminding the performer to attempt to achieve a balance between them. This practice dividing attention is especially important for opera singers, as they must balance following a conductor, listening to

---

<sup>46</sup> Tom Johnson, “Doodling,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 106.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

musical cues, being aware of what is going on onstage, interacting with other singing actors, and navigating around scenery, all while singing technically demanding music and trying to be expressive. This is on top of all the mundane distractions that may occur, like costume malfunctions, and dropped lines.

“Moon Cat Chant”<sup>48</sup> (1975) by Barbara Benary and “Becoming Chant”<sup>49</sup> (1975) by Kenneth Maue both use non-traditional notation that demands extra focus to read. “Moon Cat Chant” uses slashes after words to indicate length and change of pitch, and “Becoming Chant” underlines sections of text to indicate melodic motion that is notated on a different page (a similar challenge to singing a hymn-verse with text in prose form). In both pieces, repetition of words and phrases makes it hard to get back with the rest of the group if a concentration slip makes one lose his or her place. This feature is an extra incentive to stay focused, and insures that students become aware as soon as they become distracted. Often in activities we are unaware as to when our minds starts to wander. We can go on autopilot for a while, not noticing that we are not fully focused. The immediate feedback in these pieces as to the exact moment when students’ lose concentration is helpful in building self-awareness. Students should be reassured that losing focus is normal and does not mean they are failing at the pieces, since building awareness is an equally important goal as concentration for our purposes.

---

<sup>48</sup> Barbara Benary, “Moon Cat Chant,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 54.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth Maue, “Becoming Chant,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 52-53.

“Les Moutons de Panurge”<sup>50</sup> (1969) by Frederic Rzewski uses traditional notation, but with a twist. The melody is simple melodically and rhythmically, with each note numbered successively from 1-65. The instructions to performers are as follows.

Read from left to right, playing the notes as follows: 1, 1-2, 1-2-3, 1-2-3-4, etc. When you have reached note 65, play the whole melody once again and then begin subtracting notes from the beginning: 2 through 65, 3 through 65, 4 through 65...62-63-64-65, 63-64-65, 64-65-, 65. Hold the last note until everybody has reached it, then begin improvisation using any instruments.<sup>51</sup>

This may sound simple at first, but is in fact quite difficult. There are no words, or any other feature in the music to use as a reference. The entire time the music is being performed, the participants must keep track of what number they are on and keep this concentration non-stop for the duration of the piece, which is usually about ten minutes. This concentration can be tiring and difficult to maintain for that amount of time, but can also have a pleasant trance-like effect. Gallwey points out this lenitive quality of concentration: “As one achieves focus, the mind quiets. As the mind is kept in the present, it becomes calm. Focus means keeping the mind now and here.”<sup>52</sup> Remembering the calming effect of focus can encourage students to try and concentrate on something tangible during future performances if they become anxious. Gallwey’s quote also brings concentration together with the idea of being fully present in the moment, which is an idea that comes up more and more as the class progresses.

---

<sup>50</sup> Frederic Rzewski, “Les Moutons de Panurge,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 177.

<sup>51</sup> Rzewski, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Gallwey, 84.

## Readings to Correspond with Continuous Concentration Pieces

The chapter “Postlude: Was is a Good Performance and How do you Know?”<sup>53</sup> is the last selection assigned from Christopher Small’s book. In this section Small discusses the purpose of musicking, what makes a performance authentic and how musical performances should be judged.

Small’s idea is that every human is born with the gift of music. He explains that in many African societies, it is commonly accepted that not only does everyone have the ability to perform the music of others, but that they can

...make creative gestures of their own... Their social and conceptual world is not divided into the few ‘talented’ who play and sing and the many ‘untalented’ to whom they perform but resembles more a spectrum that ranges from little musical ability to much, but with every single individual capable of making some contribution to the communal activity of musicking.<sup>54</sup>

To Small, musicking is an aspect of language and communication and “is an activity by means of which we learn what are our ideal social relationships, and that it is as important for the growth of an individual to full social maturity as is talking and understanding speech”<sup>55</sup> This brings up an interesting discussion point in that class about the value of performance as judged for the benefit of the participants, not necessarily the audience. This is pertinent to the class as many of the pieces in the avant-garde blur the boundaries between performer and audience and demand active participation to understand the music.

In Small’s view of music and performance,

...we bring into existence, for the duration of the performance, a set of relationships, between the sounds and between participants, that model ideal

---

<sup>53</sup> Small, 207-221.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 210.

relationships as we imagine them to be and allow us to learn about them by experiencing them<sup>56</sup>

Therefore,

...the best performance must be one that empowers all the participants to do this most comprehensively, subtly and clearly, at whatever level of technical accomplishment the performers have attained. Such subtlety, comprehensiveness and clarity do not depend on virtuosity but reflect, rather, the participants' (that is, both performers and listeners) doing the best they can with what they have.<sup>57</sup>

This idea of judging music based on how well the performers work with what they have, with an emphasis on clarity as opposed to virtuosity is very positive one. This can help give students' a yardstick in order to judge their own success in pieces where virtuosity, or even conventional musical techniques are lacking.

The next reading is from Linda Sargent Wood's *A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture After World War II*, which maintains that the concept of holism was an influential force in shaping American society after the Second World War. The introduction to her book: "Holistic Worldviews in the Long 1960s"<sup>58</sup> gives a context in which this idea took hold, and helps explain why it became "...one of the most powerful perspectives to direct Americans in the postwar period."<sup>59</sup>

Wood begins by discussing the work of scientist Rachel Carson, who saw all of earth's plants and animals as interdependent. Wood explains that Carson's holism was much more than an ecological model, but a "world-view and particular sensibility."<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Small, 218.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>58</sup> Linda Sargent Wood, *A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-23.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 5.

Wood explains that after the horrors of WWII and the atomic bomb, people began to question the values and hierarchy of a society that led to such destruction. The holistic envisioned a restructuring of the world into a peaceful utopia.

In sum, postwar holists worked to unite what others separated and bring together what others treated separately: mind, body, and spirit; individuals and community; human beings and nature; nature and technology; science and religion; the material world and the sacred<sup>61</sup>

This reading will help students to understand the cultural climate that the postwar avant-garde pieces were composed in, and to better understand the movement of holism which is a prominent theme in many of the compositions assigned in the class. The better they understand the impetus behind the intellectual ideas of the period, the better they will perform the pieces.

This section's pieces are particularly suited to giving students a taste of continued focus in a musical setting. Finding focus and concentration will help them not only in music, but also in other areas of life, such as studying and staying present in rehearsals. It will also be pivotal in achieving success as the pieces in the course become more difficult and involved. Themes in the readings from this section include alternate ways of measuring success in performance when the focus is on process instead of result, and introducing the idea of holism. The reading assigned from Christopher Small's book offers the idea that performances be judged by how well performers use the materials at hand (the music, their individual talents etc.) instead of comparing it to results from other performers. This will help foster an open, non-competitive environment, and give students a yardstick to self-evaluate their success in the pieces as the course continues.

---

<sup>61</sup> Wood, 6.

## Listening Pieces

“to be open to what we see and hear, in our reading and writing, our receiving and giving: this is the aim of our pedagogy.”<sup>62</sup>

Listening Pieces focus on active listening and reacting creatively to what one hears in the moment. They also help to create both a performative mindset and a performance experience without having to have an audience present, which is a huge step towards desensitizing performers to the act of performance. What is meant here by a “performative” mindset can be better understood by Dianna Kenny’s descriptive of what happens mentally during a positive performance experience in her book *The Psychology of Music Performance Anxiety*.

During a state of flow, the person has a sense of spontaneous, effortless performance and total immersion and focus on the activity to the exclusion of other environmental or internal stimuli...Such states are paradoxically, the culmination of discipline, dedicated practice, concentration, and perseverance: they occur when the challenges are matched with the necessary underlying skills, and the honing of those skills to achieve mastery.<sup>63</sup>

Kenny credits this flow as being the product of discipline and dedicated practice, but some pieces in the avant-garde movement can facilitate this flow easily and with regularity. “Tuning Meditation”<sup>64</sup> (1980) by Pauline Oliveros is one example of this type of piece.

The score is a set of textual instructions, telling the participants to sit in a circle and begin by humming any pitch they want, all starting together. They then alternate between humming a pitch that they hear in the pitch cluster present, and humming whatever pitch they want too. Pitch duration is entirely up to the individual performer, as

---

<sup>62</sup> Richards, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Kenny, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces* (New York: Deep Listening Publications, 1990), 10.

is dynamic. Since the instructions are easy to grasp, students do not need to use any score in performance. This skips over the dedication and practice Kenny talks about in mastering a piece, and skips right into what it is like to perform a fully memorized piece. In a fully memorized piece, the majority of a performer's focus is free to be present in the moment and focus on reacting and expressing. This does not happen easily for young singers because it takes experience to learn exactly how to memorize to that deep level. Most students do not realize what it means to be "fully" memorized until they suffer memory slips in a piece they thought was prepared. It also takes a lot of time to memorize in this way, and "Tuning Meditations" is able to bypass this, giving students directions they can memorize in an instant, enabling them to jump right into a performing experience.

Just reading the instructions, it may be difficult to imagine how this piece would manifest, and what kind of benefit it might have. Having performed this piece several times with several different groups of people from differing backgrounds and varying degrees of musical skill, common themes have arisen between all of the performances.

One aspect that has been constant throughout all of the experiences has been an atmosphere of intense listening, cooperation, and attention, which is something that Pauline Oliveros refers to as "Sonic Awareness."<sup>65</sup> There is a focus on each individual moment, a focus on one's role and place in a greater texture, an awareness and sensitivity to the group as a whole, being tuned in to the mood and pacing of the piece, and surrendering oneself to the flow and texture of the music that seems alive. The performers seem to be creating a musical sculpture that takes on a life of its own—

---

<sup>65</sup> Heidi von Gunden, *The Music of Pauline Oliveros* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983), 105.

constantly melding, and evolving. There is always a nebulous tonal center, and whenever a new tone is introduced that doesn't fit into the existing texture, it quickly becomes incorporated with matching, blending seamlessly into the body of the piece without a conscious effort on the parts of the participants. Participants are equal in creating and inhabiting a shared sonic experience without the leadership of a conductor or even a shared notated score. This focus is necessary because with each breath, the musician must make a personal choice and listen carefully to the texture to choose what note to sing. Not a breath can go by with a performer unaware or unengaged.

One of the most obvious examples of how the group becomes extremely attuned to one another is how the piece always comes to an end in a clear and natural way. There always comes a moment in each performance where the energy in the activity naturally winds down and all the participants sense the end of the piece has come. It is a phenomenon that is yet to be adequately explained scientifically, but goes to show the depth of the shared and communal experience that occurs in this piece within an extremely short amount of time. This occurs regardless of whether or not the participants have known each other before the piece or have worked together before in any capacity, musically or otherwise. This happens because students are communicating non-verbally with each other in the intensity of this shared experience whether they know it or not. When everyone is focused together on a musical task, coordination and communication within a group can feel effortless. This is a phenomenon that occurs often with high-level chamber music groups, and this piece can give inexperienced students a taste of it.

This amount of concentration, connection, spontaneity, listening, and awareness leaves one with the feeling that they really did just give a successful performance. This is

an extremely valuable thing to be able to provide to students and can be an especially helpful exercise for ensembles to facilitate communication and trust in the cohesiveness of the group and its ability to function as a unit without the dependence on an external leader. This is good groundwork for the trust-building pieces of the next section.

This section's focus on listening and reacting to auditory stimuli in the moment, as they occur, is integral to compelling performances that have a sense of spontaneity and authenticity. In opera, listening to subtle changes in a fellow actor's delivery of lines from performance to performance allows singers to have nuance and variation in responses. In chamber music, noticing how a colleague chooses to bring out a certain phrase in the moment can allow you to respond to it musically as well. The Listening Pieces isolate this aspect of performance so that it can be completely concentrated on, as it is the driving force behind creating the music in this section and none of the pieces require a score in performance. In "Tuning Meditations" and "Bowl Gong"<sup>66</sup> (1974), the musical contribution of students is directly related to a response to what they are hearing, with "Bowl Gong" adding the element of keeping a pitch in one's memory for a prolonged time. After a gong is rung, students concentrate on the pitch as long as possible until someone in the group loses it in his or her mind's eye, signaling for the gong to be rung again. In "4'33" students experience the extreme listening of silence.

### **Readings to Correspond with Listening Pieces**

The first reading that corresponds with Listening Pieces is "Score and Parts,"<sup>67</sup> which continues Christopher Small's criticism of score dependence that he began in the previous two selections. He goes through the history of scores, explaining that the

---

<sup>66</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Small, 110-119.

emphasis on scores is unique to the western concert tradition, and that this emphasis demands perfection, which is something he does not think composers of the past expected. He explains that the score

...is a limiter, since it confines what can be played to what has been notated, so the player's power of self-directed performance is liable to atrophy, especially when, as in the modern Western concert tradition, nonliterate performance is judged to be in some way inferior to literate.<sup>68</sup>

Small also challenges the very concept of that the score is music to begin with.

A score, of course, is not a musical work. It is not even a representation of it. It is a set of coded instructions, that when properly carried out, will enable performers not only to make sounds in specific combinations called a musical work, but also to repeat that combination as many times as they desire...the fact that...[a] title appears on the cover of the score does not mean that the musical work resides in its pages. We find there only a set of instructions for performing.<sup>69</sup>

Small claims that none of the Great Composers were "totally dependent on notation"<sup>70</sup>

and that:

The moment the musicians feel the need to write down instructions for performance in order to preserve and hold it steady, a change begins to take place in the nature of the musicking and in the relationships between those taking part. A crack appears in the hitherto unified musical universe; the single process begins to split apart, separating composer from performers, composition from performance, and performers from listeners, centralizing power in the hands of the composer, the person who tells the performers what they are to do, and of the director, the person who tells they how they are to do it.<sup>71</sup>

Many times young performers feel immense pressure that they need to do everything exactly the way it is on a page perfectly. While it is true that they do need to be accurate, this pressure can prevent them from bringing any of their own interpretation into rehearsals. Note-perfect performances can fall flat and be extremely boring if

---

<sup>68</sup> Small, 110-111.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 115.

performers cannot find a way to make them their own in some way. This reverence for and dependence on the score can get in the way of students' artistic freedom and sense of spontaneity. Again, this reading is not meant to trash convention, but rather show students the fallacy of complete submission to the score and give them permission to try things out and give them agency to work more collaboratively with conductors. This will not only enrich their performances, but also most likely make them more appealing to conductors who will appreciate having something to work with (even if they end up changing much of it).

The second reading that corresponds with this section is "Listening for Silence: Notes on the Aural Life" by Mark Slouka from *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner.<sup>72</sup> As described by the editors, this piece: "offer[s] a compelling meditation on silence—and the loss of silence...and it helps to explicate the fascination with silence that runs throughout modern music."<sup>73</sup> This is a good companion to the piece "4'33'" which students will perform in this class and opens up a discussion about the multiple meanings and purposes of silence. Slouka's writing is colorful, entertaining, and philosophical—talking about many facets of silence and its meanings in music and culture.

Slouka begins by discussing a Debussy quote where music is described as being "the stuff between the notes,"<sup>74</sup> meaning that silence is an integral part of music. This is something opera singers tend to intuit, knowing the dramatic pauses that help give their

---

<sup>72</sup> Mark Slouka, "Listening for Silence: Notes on the Aural Life," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, eds. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 40-46.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

characters life. He goes to explain that "...the greatest works not only draw on silence for inspiration but use it, flirt with it, turn it, for a time, against itself."<sup>75</sup>

How sounds are pervasive in the industrialized west and how they affect us is also a topic Slouka explores, which foreshadows the pieces later in the semester that involve listening and reacted to the environment. Slouka's vibrant and graphic writing style can be very charming (he relies an anecdote of a partially deaf Thomas Edison biting into a piano leg to better feel the vibrations of the music through his teeth),<sup>76</sup> but also necessitates that the teacher take some care in assigning this piece. There are two words that the teacher may feel inappropriate for younger students and may choose to censor.

The themes of the reading section explore the meaning and purpose of silence in life and music that relate directly to listening in the manner students must in their performances in this section. Focusing on listening is an important aspect throughout the course, as in the importance of the present moment, both of which will come back more completely in later sections.

### **Trust-Building Pieces**

"I try in the first meeting to develop a sense of fellowship and mutual service. An assortment of strangers may learn to speak directly to one another, turning gradually into a sensitively attuned body of men, who have warmth of feeling and courageous discernment. They find how to learn and how to teach. In them grows a relish for the special qualities of individuals, so that any class may feel how it benefits by the presence of all."<sup>77</sup>

Trust-Building Pieces were selected for their ability to build trust and bonding within the group by fostering the development of non-verbal communication techniques that are dependent on openness between students. This bonding not only helps foster an environment where students will feel free to experiment and test their boundaries, but it

---

<sup>75</sup> Slouka, 44.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>77</sup> Richards, 108.

can also help the flow experience happen. Csíkszentmihály explains that “Apparently a warm feeling of closeness to others, or a loosening of ego boundaries, is important in at least some autotelic<sup>78</sup> activities.”<sup>79</sup>

“Evening Ritual”<sup>80</sup> (1975) by Kenneth Maue is a segue from the last classes as it incorporates many of the elements found in Bridge and Listening Pieces. Participants drone together, paying careful attention to others and ending when they feel a “sense of significance”<sup>81</sup> in doing so. They also sit in silence together, and play a gong when they feel compelled, drawing together elements found in “Bowl Gong,” “Tuning Meditations” and “Mindfulness of Breathing.”

“The Greeting”<sup>82</sup> (1974) by Pauline Oliveros begins before all the participants arrive. Every time a new person enters the room, students sing the same tone that they decide on individually, as a sort of sonic ‘hello’. They sing this tone as every one enters the room, holding the pitch in their mind while no one enters, having no point of reference to return to. This combines the pitch memory practiced in “Bowl Gong” while adding the communal element of greeting and inclusion of everyone who enters. It also fosters non-verbal communication, because although the individuals sing whatever pitch they decided on, they must begin and end the pitch with the rest of the group, with no conductor. The group must find some way to signal to each other when to start and end, evolving the communication they found in “Tuning Meditations.” Heidi von Gunden explains that the “stark simplicity of ‘The Greeting’ is hard to maintain because its sonic

---

<sup>78</sup> Csíkszentmihály defines this as activities with an intrinsic internal reward.

<sup>79</sup> Csíkszentmihály, 30.

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Maue, “Evening Ritual,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 22.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 15.

realization demands the utmost precision”<sup>83</sup> (in the tones the individuals continually come back to). She also brings up the difficulty of breath control as she considers the cutoff to be corresponding to the entered persons’ settling into the space, though the score is unclear on this point.<sup>84</sup> Trained singers will not have as much trouble with the breath management, but coordinating onsets and cutoffs communally will take concentration and awareness of others.

“ΔPiece”<sup>85</sup> (1975) by Bonnie Mara Barnett intensifies this concentration and awareness by writing a piece for only three participants. The students sit in the form of a triangle, and decide on a pitch that everyone can sing comfortably. Using their hands to reach out, they indicate the center point among them, sending their breath towards it. They then direct the pitches there, beginning on the same pitch. They may eventually move away from the unison if they so choose, staggering their breaths so that the sound is continuous. Barnett explains the process as “one of getting centered, finding your own resonance and listening.”<sup>86</sup> The idea of centering as an important process will be explored further in the pieces and readings connected to the “Deep Listening” and Meditative portion of the class.

This piece can be rather short (about five minutes) and is best done several times with different combinations of students. Students can discuss how the piece changed with different interpersonal dynamics, and how the non-verbal communication within each group was different, and what remained constant. Students should be encouraged to

---

<sup>83</sup> von Gunden, 116.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>85</sup> Bonnie Mara Barnett, “ΔPiece,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 10.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 10.

maintain eye contact with one another, even if they find it uncomfortable. One could start the classes with trios performing the piece simultaneously, and then switch to having groups perform with the rest of the class watching. This will change the energy and focus of the piece. The class can describe how the level of intensity changes (usually goes up with an audience), why that would happen, and how it changed their experience. This will introduce the topic of energy exchange between performers and performer and audience that is expanding with the reading “The human energy field and singing” from Meribeth A. Dayme’s *Dynamics of the Singing Voice* which is assigned in the next section.

“Stare exercises”<sup>87</sup> (1974) by Daniel Goode also works with non-verbal communication, but in a more subtle way. Pairs of students sit facing each other with their eyes closed. They begin to focus on their breath and at the point between exhalation and inhalation, they open their eyes for an instant before closing them again until the next breath. At first, students will open their eyes according to their own breathing rhythm, but as the piece continues, many students will find they begin to unconsciously coordinated their eye opening with their partner. Similar to adjusting their walking speed unintentionally while walking side-by-side with a friend, students will pick up on the breath pattern of their partner naturally if they are able to be in tune with them. Breath synchronization is a phenomenon scientists have found happens between romantic partners without any touch, but it is not something they observe amongst strangers.<sup>88</sup> The

---

<sup>87</sup> Daniel Goode, “Stare exercises,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 13.

<sup>88</sup> Claire Bates, “Two hearts really DO beat as one if you’re in love: Scientists find couples’ vital signs mimic each other,” *Dailymail.co.uk*, February 12, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.com/health/article227758-Two-hearts-really-DO-beat-youre-love-Scientists-couples-vitals-signs-micic-other.html> (Dec 13, 2014)

students in the class will not be strangers at this point, and being in a focused performance with an awareness of breath can help facilitate this synchronization. Hopefully this will happen for many students as matching breath patterns is an extremely effective way to build rapport<sup>89</sup> which is one of the main goals of this section. Not only does this piece reinforce a connection with the breath that was introduced in Bridge Pieces, but it also shows how communication can happen on a subconscious level.

### **Readings to correspond with Trust-Building Pieces**

The essay “Music as Fusion of Mind and Body”<sup>90</sup> by Daniel Goode is included as part of the introduction to Roger Johnson’s *Scores: An Anthology of New Music* that includes many of the pieces selected for the class. This essay is valuable at this point in the class because it gives his view of the purpose of music from the avant-garde, which is most likely a new concept to the students in the class. As the pieces explored from here on out demand more and more open-mindedness to be successful, Goode’s articulate description of the goals and difficulties of the music is good for students to keep in mind.

One of Goode’s major points is that “No matter how many times we are shown or have proved to us that mind and body are really a unity of some kind, there is a persistent intuition and experience of a separation...”<sup>91</sup> His view is that music is the place to look for unity between body and mind, “And by music here, I mean the aesthetically radical

---

<sup>89</sup> Tony Jeary, *Life is a Series of Presentations: Eight Ways to Inspire, Inform, and Influence Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 55.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel Goode, “Music as Fusion of Mind and Body,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, eds. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 2-3.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

music that deals exactly with mind and body at the same time because of involvement in basic life processes.”<sup>92</sup>

Goode explains how difficult it is to describe how we perceive things, and that experiential knowledge is paramount to refine the senses.

Harder to name are the things that get to the root of hearing, seeing, responding to inner and outer events. Hardest is describing the sensations or changes of consciousness that activities bring about under favorable circumstances. Finally, *describing* by itself will not get us very far. Doing these processes and the pieces dealing with them, then inventing and composing new ones, then personal and group observations to refine sensibility—this is the only path, and a difficult one.<sup>93</sup>

Goode also speaks specifically about *ΔPiece* by Bonnie Barnett, which is one of the pieces that corresponds with this reading in the class. He states:

One does not really know what to expect from it after one or two times through. It is partly that one’s perception must develop in order to notice the results of the performed processes. Responses must be sifted and savored, compared with other’s.<sup>94</sup>

He goes on to mention certain phenomena he encounters often in the pieces, and describes the effect of physical proximity of the performers on the experience. Goode’s discussion of Barnett’s piece is helpful since students will get a general idea of what they might expect in the performance and will be reassured if they do not ‘get it’ the first couple of times through.

The major contribution of this section as a whole is the focus on trust and non-verbal communication between participants, especially using eye contact, and students working with each other one-on-one for the first time. All the pieces up until now have been for larger groups, and the ones in this section go down to groups of two or three.

---

<sup>92</sup> Goode, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Working closer together and building trust between students will help facilitate the open and supportive environment necessary for later pieces in the course that require greater vulnerability from the performers. Themes in the reading are unification of mind and body and perception on the experiential level. These two themes become expanded throughout the coming weeks and set up the next section on altered perception, which has a physical, experiential component. Looking directly into the eyes of other students may be awkward for students at first, but learning to be comfortable with this kind of visual connection will help them tremendously in connecting with conductors, and colleagues in the future.

### **Perception Altering Pieces**

“Knowledge is like a product we consume and store. All we need are good closets. By consciousness I mean a state of being ‘awake’ to the world throughout our organism. This kind of consciousness requires not closets but an organism attuned to the finest perceptions and responses”<sup>95</sup>

The pedagogical purposes of Perception Altering Pieces are two fold. The first, more superficial purpose is to deconstruct or repeat words to alter the perception of them. “One Word”<sup>96</sup> explores varying speeds and repetitions of words, and “You Blew It”<sup>97</sup> deconstructs words into individual sounds, manipulating the duration of letter and vowel combinations within words to change whether or not the brain interprets them as words. In both pieces, the brain goes back and forth between hearing vowel and letter combinations as pure sound and words. This introduces the idea of small variations in sound altering the perception of known items (words) and sets up the more involved second purpose of this section.

---

<sup>95</sup> Richards, 16.

<sup>96</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Christian Wolff, “You Blew It,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 32.

This second, deeper pedagogical purpose is to have students observe how their perception of sound changes in relation to their changing emotional states, specifically with reactions of boredom and anxiety. In Pauline Oliveros' "Sonic Rorschach"<sup>98</sup> participants are seated in a comfortable position, or may lie down on the floor if they choose. The room is darkened, and white noise is played for thirty minutes or longer, with one single high intensity pulse of light halfway through piece. A possible variation is to substitute a high amplitude sound for the light. To help prompt an emotional response in participants, I suggest clocks be taken down and students instructed to put away all phones, watches, or any other timekeeping devices. I would also not tell the students how long the piece will continue. This will be a stressor and create an atmosphere Dick Higgins describes in his essay "Boredom and Danger" about a performance of one of George Brecht's pieces that had a visual cue ending the piece.

...[John] Cage suggested that we perform this piece in the darkness, so as to be unable to tell, visually, whether the piece had ended. This was done. The result was fascinating, both for its own sake and for the extraordinary intensity that appeared in waves, as we wondered whether the piece was over or not, what the next thing to happen would be, etc. Afterwards we were asked to guess how long we had been in the dark. The guesses ranged from four minutes to twenty-five. The actual duration was nine minutes. The boredom played a comparable role, in relation to intensity, that silence plays with sound, where each one heightens the other and frames it.<sup>99</sup>

Since students will be hearing a constant sound throughout the piece, they will be able to observe how their emotional state changes their experience of the sound. Does it become unbearable? Do they tune it out? How does it change throughout? Students will most likely experience boredom or anxiety at some point, or another reflection of their

---

<sup>98</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Dick Higgins, "Boredom and Danger," in *Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1966-1973*, eds. Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 179.

individual psychological make-ups. The title suggests that Oliveros had this in mind, as the Rorschach inkblot test is famous for uncovering individuals' subconscious thoughts and feelings through what they see in the pictures. This appears to be an apt aural equivalent, as whatever students hear in the sound will have a direct correlation to their psychological responses.

Since the sound is static throughout, students may spend much of their time waiting to hear if something will change and they may become frustrated at the static nature of the sound at times. The introduction of the light will also have an effect. It may startle participants, interest them, make them expectant, among a myriad of other possible reactions. Most likely, everyone will get bored at some point. Anecdotally, every person seems to experience boredom slightly differently, however one constant that seems to come up in boredom discussions is that it is an unpleasant experience. In my discussions with students on boredom it seems that instead of being directly related to particular activities, the most common answer for why they become bored was an unwillingness to engage in whatever task is at hand. This suggests that boredom is in some way under our control, if we can refocus concentration and learn to reengage in experiences. When asked about the experience of boredom, two major types are generally described. One is a highly anxious state where people describe experiencing nausea, restlessness, and physical discomfort. The other type is described as deflated, empty and lethargic.

It appears as most people are more aware of their bodies in a state of boredom, which brings mind and body together in response to the music. The unification of mind and body in experience of sound is a positive development for the purposes of this class, even if the means to it is at times an unpleasant experience. If students become overly

anxious, remind them of the calming effects of concentration explored in Continuous Concentration pieces, and suggest they focus intently on the sound if possible, or that they pay attention to their breath.

Another important aspect of this piece is the students' awareness that boredom is not static, as they will experience the waves of interest that Higgens explained. This tangible knowledge of the impermanent nature of emotion will be an important part in the last section of the class on Intuitive pieces.

Having students focus specifically on how emotions alter their perceptions has further implications in performance. Until students gain experience performing, they may not realize how adrenaline with effect their hearing and overall experience. Time may seem to go faster, or slower or stand still. Anxiety will have an effect, as will a myriad of other emotional states that come and go. The purpose of this exercise is to give students a visceral experience in how they are perceiving, and what emotion's effect on this perception can be. It will also increase their overall self-awareness, and help them be prepared for the effect of their changing emotions during performances.

### **Readings to Correspond with Perception Altering Pieces**

The essay "Boredom and Danger"<sup>100</sup> by Dick Higgens in *Source: Music of the Avant-garde* explores the intentional use of boredom in music from the avant-garde, which is a good companion reading to the piece "Sonic Rorschach" which students will participate in on this day. As "Sonic Rorschach" will likely prompt a response of boredom in the class, looking into the reasons why this may in fact be a calculated part of the pieces from this movement is important.

---

<sup>100</sup> Higgens, 178-182.

Higgins believes the deliberate use of boredom corresponds with the move from music being considered primarily form of entertainment, to being "...intended first and foremost as an experience...its function could be spiritual, psychological, and educational..."<sup>101</sup> He highlights the work of the Fluxus movement, which espoused

...a feeling that the best of performing arts should not be entertaining, nor should they inherently even be educational. It was felt they should serve as stimuli which made one's life and work and experience more meaningful and flexible.<sup>102</sup>

Higgins does not argue that invoking boredom was always a deliberate choice of the composer, but that boredom was not seen as an undesired side effect, but rather as part of a larger life experience. The process of becoming bored and transcending this state is an idea Higgins traces all the way back to Erik Satie. While hearing an eight-beat passage scored to repeat three hundred and eighty times in Satie's *Vieux Sequins et Vieilles Cuirasses*, Higgins notes,

The music first becomes so familiar that it seems extremely offensive and objectionable. But after that, the mind slowly becomes incapable of taking further offense, and a very strange euphoric acceptance and enjoyment begin to set in. Satie appears to have been fascinated by this effect, because he also wrote *Vexations*...<sup>103</sup>

Reading about how boredom can be used in music and the psychological effects it can have on performers is important in giving students a platform to understand their own experiences during the pieces they perform during this week of the class.

The chapter "The human energy field and singing" from *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*<sup>104</sup> by Meribeth A. Dayme is helpful in continuing conversations about the

---

<sup>101</sup> Higgins, 178.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>104</sup> Meribeth Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, (Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 2009), 8-16.

physicality of performing and gives another context (energy fields) for students to explore and express the feelings and experiences they may be having in performances.

Dayme opens the chapter by explaining that “Singers live with the feelings of the vibrations of their own voices on an everyday basis and it is easy for them to embrace the concept that energy or vibration is basic to everything that exists.”<sup>105</sup> She goes on to talk about how eastern and western cultures describe this differently, giving examples of using energy in both western medicine (ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging etc.) and eastern practices that have become widespread in the west (hands-on work, acupuncture etc.).

Dayme describes energies being divided into three categories of the physical (solar, gravity etc.), life force energies (Eastern concept of Chi, acupuncture meridians, the chakra system etc.) and the mind, or spiritual energy.<sup>106</sup> She then goes into detail further by breaking down the human energy field into various components: mental, emotional, psychological, psychic, spiritual, and physical.

She ends the section with a brief section on how singers can be “masters of their own energy fields”<sup>107</sup> by taking responsibility for learning and their thoughts and language, taking care to treat peers and teachers with respect, being centered and aware, and paying mindful attention to each practice and lesson.

This is a good reading assignment because it brings up several interesting ideas for discussion, such as how the audience picks up on negative or low energy of the performers, how emotions can help or hinder the singer, how to handle ego and self-

---

<sup>105</sup> Dayme, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 15.

esteem, and how to stay centered in competitive environments. Using the language of “energies” is not necessary to discuss these topics if the students do not wish to, but regardless of the language used, Dayme brings up many engaging points to explore. These points, as well as the theme of boredom for a purpose, support the pieces of this section which were picked to increase self-awareness on a deep level, and to begin to observe the reactions of the mind, as they occur.

### **Environmental Exploratory Pieces**

“Experience is education”<sup>108</sup>

4’33” from Listening Pieces already set up the idea of listening intently to the environment, which this group of pieces takes further by having students either interact directly with their environments musically, or use the environmental sounds they hear as inspiration for later musical material. Awareness of the environment is important not only for its own sake but also because Csíkszentmihályi’s description of flow maintained that there was little distinction between self and the environment in such a state.<sup>109</sup> Exploring the boundaries of self within the environment and interacting with it on a profound level are the major goals of this section.

“Wordless Walk”<sup>110</sup> (1974) by Daniel Goode has two parts. In the first part, students meet at a predetermined place outside of the classroom and wander around as they wish, “...now and then stopping, sitting, looking, listening, thinking, feeling, either in groups or alone, without uttering a word or a word-gesture...”<sup>111</sup> After an hour,

---

<sup>108</sup> Richards, 97.

<sup>109</sup> Csíkszentmihályi, 36.

<sup>110</sup> Daniel Goode, “Wordless Talk,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 12.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

students return to the classroom for the second part of the piece, musically improvising based on their experience on the wordless walk. Students may find themselves getting bored on this walk, but after the experience of “Sonic Rorschach” they may also find that concentrating on smaller realities can change their boredom or make it go away. If they can find something to interest them in the environment, they cannot become bored at all. After the “Sonic Rorschach” challenge of staying mentally engaged while lying on the floor and experiencing only static noise, students may find this dynamic walk engaging in new and unexpected ways.

“Environmental Dialogue”<sup>112</sup> (1974) by Pauline Oliveros has students interacting with sounds in the environment as they occur. This piece can be performed anywhere, but if possible, should be done outside of the classroom, in a natural setting. A park near a street is a good idea so that students can also hear manmade noise without it overwhelming the softer sounds of nature. After students find a comfortable place to sit, they begin observing their breathing. Then as they become aware of sounds around them, they reinforce the pitches they hear either vocally, or mentally. If they lose touch with a sound source, the instructions direct them to wait patiently for another. This piece sets up an interaction with the environment that will become more complicated and involved in Rzewski’s “Street Music” in the next section.

### **Readings to Correspond with Environmental Exploratory Pieces**

R. Murray Schafer’s essay “The Music of the Environment”<sup>113</sup> deals with the sonic “soundscape” of the world, and what responsibilities we have as a community for

---

<sup>112</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 12.

<sup>113</sup> R. Murray Schafer, “The Music of the Environment,” in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, eds. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 29-39.

the effect sound has on us and the environment. He explains that: “The soundscape of the world is changing. Modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustical environment radically different from any he has hitherto known.”<sup>114</sup> Schafer is extremely critical of the current world soundscape, saying that it “...has reached an apex of vulgarity in our time.”<sup>115</sup> In his view, we should treat the world as a “macrocosmic musical composition”<sup>116</sup> and that especially musicians should take responsibility in helping to achieve a “harmonized influence of sounds in the world around us.”<sup>117</sup>

Not only does Murray go into detail about different kinds of soundscapes, he includes a lot of descriptions of sounds in the past by recognizable figures like Goethe and Grove. This brings up an interesting discussion point of how sound was different in the past, and how it may have shaped and influences the lives and music of past generations. According to Murray, the industrial revolution changed sound dramatically, as did the development of recording. That created what he calls “schizophonia,” which “...refers to the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission...”<sup>118</sup>

On a daily basis, many of us are used to completely tuning out ambient noise. The corresponding performance pieces to this reading require that students deal intimately with the environmental sounds that they otherwise may not have noticed. This reading sets this up well, as it was ideas like Schafer’s that influenced composers in this

---

<sup>114</sup> Schafer, 29.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 34.

generation to use environmental sounds, both natural and man-made, as part of their musical compositions.

This reading's discussion of how environmental sound, both natural and manmade, impacts humanity, culture and music, is a good backdrop against which students can discuss their own experiences and interactions with the environment in these pieces. The pieces in this section continue what students have learned so far in the course by expanding the area of concentration to the students' entire surroundings, and focusing listening to even more subtle levels than found in Listening Pieces, as environmental sounds can be faint and irregular. It also further engages the body through the breath, an idea that was introduced in "Mindfulness of Breathing."

### **Improvisatory Pieces**

"If we surrender our consciousness to experience, our thoughts may then come directly from a living source, and our feelings also."<sup>119</sup>

Like last section's "Environmental Dialogue," Frederic Rzewski's "Street Music"<sup>120</sup> (1968) is based on interactions with one's surroundings. However Rzewski's piece adds the element of moving through the physical space, and students must concentrate on more sounds at once, interacting with them simultaneously by moving towards and away from sounds depending on their nature. "Street Music" is not improvisatory in a strict sense, and is more of a segue from the last section rather than a completely new idea. It continues the ideas from the last section but with more challenge to the performer, and introduces Rzewski, who is not only the composer of this section's pieces, but the author of this section's reading on improvisation as well.

---

<sup>119</sup> Richards, 39.

<sup>120</sup> Frederic Rzewski, "Street Music," in *Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1966-1973*, eds. Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 227.

Rzewski writes about the inevitability of unwanted things happening in performance and looking at this process as natural and nothing to be afraid of. Improvisation is a wonderful way to practice dealing with problems as they come up in performance, a process Rzewski takes pleasure in.

Improvisation is a game that the mind plays with itself, in which an idea is allowed to enter the playing field, in order to be kicked around in pleasing patterns for a moment before being substituted by another idea. The first idea is unintentional, an error, a wrong note, a fumble in which the ball is momentarily lost, a momentary surfacing of an unconscious impulse normally kept under cover. The play to which it is subjected is the graceful recovery of the fumbled ball, a second 'wrong' note that makes the first one seem right, the justification for allowing the idea to be expressed in the first place.<sup>121</sup>

Finding a way to work 'mistakes' into a larger texture and seeing this process as normal in performance is an extremely valuable thing for students to learn. Younger students tend to try and control every aspect of their performances and become fixated on mistakes that happen during performance, leading to more mistakes through their distraction. Rzewski talks about the art of accepting past mistakes that cannot be changed.

In improvised music, we can't edit out the unwanted things that happen, so we just have to accept them. We have to find a way to make use of them and, if possible, to make it seem as if we actually wanted them in the first place. And in a way, we actually *did* want them, because if we didn't want those unwanted things, we wouldn't improvise in the first place.<sup>122</sup>

This can also be said for live performance. We wouldn't perform live if we did not somehow enjoy the danger. Learning to embrace that anything can happen will help students tremendously in growing as performers.

---

<sup>121</sup> Frederic Rzewski, "Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, eds. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 267.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

In “Sound Pool”<sup>123</sup> (1968) improvisation is brought to an extreme, with everything—melodic material, timing, interaction with others, length of the piece etc. being up to the performers. This is an ultimate autonomy that the course has been leading up to by giving students more and more responsibility as pieces progress. Up until this point there has been some sort of structure for students to work within, but these pieces are completely free form. In the book *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, editors Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner talk about free-form jazz and improvisation as abandoning “...virtually every prop or anchor for improvisation in order to spur musicians to play genuinely in the moment, relying solely on their ingenuity and their instantaneous responses to the contributions of fellow performers.”<sup>124</sup>

The pieces throughout the semester have prepared students for the responsibility of the musical material being based solely on their creativity and ability to stay focused, present in the moment, and listening to and cooperating with other students. In addition to creative self-sufficiency “Sound Pool” encourages students to be caring, empathic colleagues. Parts of the instructions are:

If somebody is playing something you don't like, stop what you are doing and listen to him for a while, and then try playing with him...If you are a strong musician, mostly do accompanying work, that is, help weaker players sound better. Seek out areas where the music is flagging and organize groups. Be a timekeeper: provide a basic pulse, without drowning out the others. Let the stronger players circulate among the various groups, rather than congregating in one place...Most of the time accompany somebody else, in a way that will make him want to accompany you. Occasionally play for yourself alone, without regard for whatever else is happening.

---

<sup>123</sup> Frederic Rzewski, “Sound Pool,” in *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, comp. Roger Johnson (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 144.

<sup>124</sup> Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 251.

This instruction shows how students must split their attentions during performance. Not only must they come up with musical material on the spot, they must be profoundly aware of the other players, responding to the groups needs, all while reacting musically to whatever happens in a flexible way. This multi-tasking encourages action from a deep, intuitive level as too many things are going on too quickly to intellectualize every action.

### **Readings to Correspond with Improvisatory Pieces**

The essay “Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation” by Frederic Rzewski from *Audio Culture*<sup>125</sup> where the quotes in the above section are taken, is a wonderful musing on the process of improvisation, and the political as well as aesthetic implications of the “free music” movement.<sup>126</sup> This reading will help students understand the purpose and spirit behind improvisation as they perform Rzewski’s works.

Rzewski says: “Improvisation tells us: *Anything is possible—anything can be changed—now.*”<sup>127</sup> This is great attitude that is equally applicable to performance. Rzewski’s ideas of improvisation as a type of play, where ‘mistakes’ are fun opportunities for creativity is a joyful mentality that adds flexibility and spontaneity to performance. Things are going to go wrong, so one might as well enjoy it. Rzewski also brings up the point that we actually *do* want unwanted things to happen in improvisation, or else it wouldn’t be improvisation. This can be applied to performing anything live as well. It is important for students to discuss the inevitability of unwanted things happening in performance, and this essay can help them find ways to look at this process as natural and nothing to be afraid of.

---

<sup>125</sup> Rzewski, “Little Bangs,” 266-271.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 271.

Rzewski also becomes philosophical, exploring how improvisation can be a metaphor for life, and also work as a political model.

The difficulty of living in the present moment is somehow related to the difficulty of creating an egalitarian society. Both of these things are perceived as ideals, only partially attainable, if at all, in reality. Improvised music has something to do with both of them. Certainly it has to do with being present. It also has to do with democratic forms and equality, at least in a group situation. It can function as a kind of abstract laboratory in which experimental forms of communication can be tried without risk of damage to persons.<sup>128</sup>

The connection of political ideas and music was a prominent theme during the avant-garde and is also an interesting discussion for students to engage in. Rzewski also gives a detailed breakdown of the “basic propositions”<sup>129</sup> of free improvisation, which will help students to process and conceptualize the improvisatory pieces by Rzewski that they will be performing in this class period as well.

This section is designed to help students see improvisation as a process that is fun and freeing as students let go of preconceived notions about how the music with sound and begin to trust in their ability to handle whatever ‘problems’ arise during the performance. Like Rzewski, they may begin to enjoy the challenge of these ‘problems’ and not even name them as such anymore. Students learning from experience that no matter what happens, they can trust themselves to have a creative response will give them a confidence that will transfer to other areas of their lives as well as their performance of traditional repertoire. Also, an openness to a process unfolding that is not under your direct control is important for the next section on “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces.

---

<sup>128</sup> Rzewski, “Little Bangs,” 271.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 268.

## “Deep Listening” Pieces and Meditative Pieces

“In the stillness we listen. The more alive and quieter we are, the better we hear, the better we read. This is meditation. As we listen to each other, as we enter into dialogue, we find our personal reactions transformed into a sense of a larger reality which far transcends our previous likes and dislikes. Perception has altered the quality of our consciousness. As consciousness expands to the size of reality, character seems to strengthen.”<sup>130</sup>

In *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Gallwey discusses ways that performers are described when they find an ideal mental performance space and are playing their top game. He compares them, finding that

...the common factor in each of these descriptions is that some part of the mind is not so active. Athletes in most sports use similar phrases, and the best of them know that their peak performance never comes when they’re thinking about it<sup>131</sup>

He continues on to explain that this “hot streak” continues until the player “starts thinking about it, and tries to maintain it; as soon as he attempts to exercise control, he loses it.”<sup>132</sup>

Musicians refer to this state as well, calling it being ‘in the zone,’ being ‘on-point,’ or as Czikszenyihályi says, “flow.” In it, he says, we are “...more intensely aware of internal processes”<sup>133</sup> M.C. Richards uses the word “center” and “centering,” explaining that:

When on center, the self *feels* different: one feels warm, *on rayonne*, in touch, the power of life like a substance like an air in which one lives and has one’s being with all other things, drinking it in and giving it off at the same time quiet and at rest within it<sup>134</sup>

It seems clear that actions are not taking place primarily on an intellectual field, although the performer is extremely aware and concentrated. If performers are not thinking in a deliberate way, what are they thinking about? In this state, verbal thoughts seemed suspended and there is a hyper-awareness of the bodily self. In the ‘zone,’ the body’s

---

<sup>130</sup> Richards, 107.

<sup>131</sup> Gallwey, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Czikszenyihályi, 43.

<sup>134</sup> Richards, 56.

intelligence comes to the forefront, dominating the mental, intellectual, and critical side of the self.

Gallwey talks about there being two Selves: Self 1 and Self 2. Self 1 being the intellectual self, and Self 2 being the bodily self. For ultimate performance, Gallwey says one must let Self 2 lead.

*Letting* it happen is not *making* it happen. It is not *trying* hard. It is not controlling your shots. These are all the actions of Self 1, which takes things into its own hands because it mistrusts Self 2. This is what produces tight muscles, rigid swings, awkward movements, gritted teeth and tense cheek muscles. The results are mishit balls and a lot of frustration. Often when we are rallying we trust our bodies and let it happen because the ego-mind tells itself that it doesn't really count. But once the game begins, watch Self 1 take over; at the crucial point it starts to doubt whether Self 2 will perform well. The more important the point, the more Self 1 may try to control the shot, and this is exactly when tightening up occurs. The results are almost always frustrating.<sup>135</sup>

Instead of two Selves, it can also be seen as two levels of the mind, conscious and subconscious. The mental level of the mind being the conscious level and the body being the subconscious. Of course much of the body can be controlled consciously, but many things are happening beyond our control or awareness (our heart-beats, for example). When the mind conscious mind is in deep sleep, some part of the body is still awake and reacting—swatting away a mosquito for example, or shifting in the bed while asleep. Muscle memory can also be seen as a primarily subconscious mechanism, as are reflexes. This is how athletes and other performers like singers can use sophisticated coordinated actions while not consciously trying to. When they attempt to intellectualize what they are doing, they are no longer able to do it with the same ease and grace.

Since thinking is the anti-thesis to the best mental performance zone, one cannot think one's way into it. Instead one must learn how to better connect the mind and the

---

<sup>135</sup> Gallwey, 36.

body, so that there is fluidity and ease between both levels of the mind. A powerful gateway to starting to connect the body and mind is to focus on the breath, since breath is a bridge between conscious and unconscious. It will continue to happen naturally when we do not think about, but if we do think about, we can change its depth and pattern, unlike any other subconscious process in the body. That is why students have been encouraged to develop an awareness of respiration in various pieces since the very first Section of the class.

All of the pieces in this section are by Pauline Oliveros and are from either the *Deep Listening Pieces* or the *Sonic Meditations*. Oliveros explains in the Preface to *Deep Listening Pieces* that the collection was composed alongside her *Sonic Meditations* and both are quite similar, having the same aesthetics and purpose. For our purposes they were selected to help facilitate connecting the body and mind on a deep level. As Ben Johnston says, “Oliveros deliberately frustrates the effort of the intellect to dominate art.”<sup>136</sup> Which is exactly our point here. Oliveros refers to this process as “tuning.”

With continuous work some of the following becomes possible with *Sonic Meditations*: Heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body. The group may develop positive energy which can influence others who are less experienced. Members of the Group may achieve greater awareness and sensitivity to each other.<sup>137</sup>

We were already introduced to *Deep Listening Pieces* with “Tuning Meditation” and *Sonic Meditations* with “Bowl Gong,” “The Greeting,” “Sonic Rorschach,” and “Environmental Dialogue.” I consider the pieces in this section to be more advanced than

---

<sup>136</sup> Ben Johnston, foreword to *The Music of Pauline Oliveros*, by Heidi von Gunden (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983), v.

<sup>137</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 4.

the ones studied previously, and more specifically suited to connecting the body and mind.

The first two pieces are introductory and help ease students into a more introspective level after the oftentimes rowdy and extroverted moments in Rzewski's free improvisation. In "Exchanges"<sup>138</sup> (1979), students follow a leader (musically and physically if they choose), then accompany them, then blending with them, and then becoming a leader themselves. This piece is followed in the collection and in this class with "Follow Yourself"<sup>139</sup> (1979), where participants are instructed to "Listen to everything. Notice everything. Get a body sense of everything. Play a tone or make a sound and/or movement. Repeat this cycle indefinitely." This introduces the idea of a "body sense" but in a very general and superficial way.

The next piece, "X"<sup>140</sup> (1974) makes the body awareness more concrete with the introduction of breath awareness. However the participants' energy is still primarily focused externally, as students directly connect with other musically. The instructions are:

Sit in a circle with your eyes closed. Begin by observing your own breathing. Gradually form a mental image of one person who is sitting in the circle. Sing a long tone to that person. Then sing the pitch that person is singing. Change your mental image to another person and repeat until you have contacted every person in the circle one or more times

This piece having a body connection through breath and an external focus, prepares for the next piece that is similar, but with a less direct connection to others.

---

<sup>138</sup> Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces*, 11.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

In “Breathe in/Breathe out”<sup>141</sup> (1982) participants listen to their own breathing, using their hands over the ears to amplify the sound. Students then manipulate their breath, making it audible and joining it with the sound of others. Students continue working with breath, still having an external focus and interacting with others, but more indirectly than in “X.”

The next piece splits the focus externally and internally. In “The New Sounds Meditation”<sup>142</sup> (1988) students cycle through listening during a breath, making a sound, breathing, matching a sound someone else made, listening inwardly, and making a sound no one else made, with the instruction “Breathe” between each new part. The piece continues until there “are no more new sounds.”<sup>143</sup> Here the connection with the breath is more profound since timing of activities directly correlates to breathing length, and a breath sandwiches each section. Students must also alternate between listening “inwardly” and interacting with the outside sound area—both matching the pitches of others, and creating ones they have not yet heard.

In “Teach yourself to fly”<sup>144</sup> (1974) the focus of the performer is now entirely internal. The instructions are as follows:

Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the center. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.

---

<sup>141</sup> Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces*, 8.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>143</sup> Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces*, 8.

<sup>144</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 4.

In this piece, connection to the breath is an anchor, and participants try to allow a more subconscious mechanism to take over in the vocal production, “allowing” the cords to vibrate in a natural way instead of consciously manipulating them to produce a preconceived sound. This is a different process than one of improvisation, as the intellect is not involved. Von Gunden explains it as follows:

The performer is relaxed and without such thoughts as ‘I wonder if I can do this?’ ‘I can’t sing.’ ‘What will I sound like?’ ‘Who is going to make the first sound?’ Breathing will have slowed down and become deeper, the vocal cords will involuntarily begin to vibrate. The kinds of sounds that naturally emerge are long drones that come and go like waves. These are the only sounds that can occur if the directions are followed. As soon as the involuntary aspect of just allowing and observing the vocal cords vibrating is abandoned, then the sounds will abruptly change. If one person consciously begins to manipulate the sound, such as imitating the sounds that someone else is making, then the *Meditation* is destroyed and becomes improvisation.<sup>145</sup>

This will be a challenge for students because the desire for conscious control is strong. Oliveros’ instructions to constantly observe the breath can help keep the conscious mind occupied, allowing an “involuntary” or subconscious mechanism take over. This is one of the more challenging pieces of the class because as von Gunden says, “Being in and prolonging the states of observing one’s own involuntary action is often an unfamiliar mode...”<sup>146</sup> However even experiencing this for a short time will have a profound effect on students’ self-awareness and knowledge of and connection to their bodies. Becoming acquainted with and hopefully comfortable with this will help tremendously in accessing “the zone” in performance.

---

<sup>145</sup> von Gunden, 113.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 114.

So far, breath has been the only anchor to the physical body. In “XIX”<sup>147</sup> (1974) students are instructed to bring their attention to various other physical parts, and to observe them moving in different ways. After lying down or sitting comfortably, students open and close the eyes “extremely slowly.” After moving the eyes all around in various ways, they then try to become aware of the muscles behind the eyes and the distance from them to the back of the head. Though students listen externally for part of the piece, they do not interact with the outside environment and the primary energy focus is internal. The internal focus becomes even more extreme as students eventually cover their ears, to “Listen carefully to the internal sounds of your own body working. After a long time gradually open your ears and include the sounds of the external environment.” The expansion of the body focus from breath to moving areas of the body is good because it is easy for students to *feel* something on an area when it is moving. This awareness of a physical feeling is paramount in connecting to a deeper bodily level because it is the physical sensations on the body that the subconscious is attuned to. In the example of squatting a mosquito in ones sleep, the body *feels* the bite and hits the insect, or *feels* an itch and scratches it, all while the conscious mind is unaware.

Though it is easy to feel on a moving part, there are subtler sensations happening all over the body in unmoving parts. “XIX” does include a focus behind the eyes, but for many the feelings there will not be very concrete. This next piece helps students feel something tangible on an unmoving part of the body with the help of sound vibrations conducted through the bones. Before this piece, one can introduce the experience of sound conduction through the body by instructing students to plug their ear with their

---

<sup>147</sup> Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 28.

finger, strike a tuning fork on their knee, and hold the bottom of the vibrating fork on the elbow of the side plugging the ear. The sound will travel through the arm and students will hear a clear tone through the finger blocking the ear.

In “Back to Back”<sup>148</sup> (1973) students pair up and sit back to back, and “After sensing breathing together each partner begins to sing tones intended to resonate the spine. Different tones or sounds may be more or less effective for different parts of the spine.” This exploration will help students feel connect to the body through vibrations, but with the help of being back to back which will make the vibrations easier to feel, and with a limited focus on the spinal area. After this piece, they will be ready to try and feel more subtle vibrations as they work alone and with the whole body.

“Body Tune Up”<sup>149</sup> (1973) brings the awareness of sensations completely internally, and expands the focus to the entire physical structure. Students lie down and begin “sensing the body thoroughly from head to toes.” After they feel completely relaxed and in tune with their bodies, students “allow an imaginary sound to come to mind.” After the sound becomes clear, they made the sound either inwardly or out loud, sending the sound “to benefit the part of the part of your body that needs it most. Focusing on your own sensations, continue until that part of your body feels satisfied or eased.”

Participants then relax, sensing the body as a whole again, listening for another imaginary sound to come again. The students attempt to “Register how it feels to vibrate and tune different parts of your body with the sounds you make.” Von Gunden describes Oliveros’ music as “reflect[ing] a quiet Zen Buddhist holistic approach to art, nature, and

---

<sup>148</sup> Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces*, 6.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

life...”<sup>150</sup> This makes sense in her focus not only on physical sensations, but her choice to include the entire body in this piece. In the Buddhist tradition of Vipassana meditation, one must experience all the sensations on every part of the body to fully explore the subconscious mind.

### **Readings to Correspond with “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces**

The first reading assigned to “Deep Listening” Pieces is the selection on “The Sonic Meditations”<sup>151</sup> from Heidi von Gunden’s book *The Music of Pauline Oliveros*. It is helpful for them to understand what Oliveros’ goal was in composing her pieces, and how they can best achieve success in them, which is the topic of von Gunden’s chapter.

In this section, von Gunden explains Oliveros’ musical theory of “sonic awareness,” which

...is a perceptual theory about how we hear and make sounds. It is based upon two modes of human processing—focal attention and global attention. For Oliveros global attention is nonlinear and registers sensory, imaged, and remembered information. Focal attention is occupied with single or sequential and linear material.<sup>152</sup>

Gunden explains Oliveros’ theory in detail, which involves breaking down a procedure of hearing sound. She also explains how the meditations differ from improvisation in that there is no communication between performers to “signal a chain of cause and effect”<sup>153</sup> and warns that any imitation of gestures leads the piece away from an authentic performance. Most importantly, she describes the particular challenges educated musicians have.

---

<sup>150</sup> von Gunden, vii.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 102-119.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 105-106.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 111.

These compositions are easily sabotaged. I have noticed that inexperienced musicians and nonmusicians perform the *Meditation* beautifully. They follow directions. The more sophisticated musicians find this difficult and frequently begin to manipulate. This is because musicians are taught to control sound, a tendency that is especially noticeable when trained singers are part of the group.<sup>154</sup>

These warnings will help students avoid the pitfalls of expanding on gestures they hear in an improvisatory fashion, and encourage them to submit to the involuntary nature of the sounds they emit. Von Gunden's explanation of the theory behind the music is dense at times, but will give the students compelling enough reasons to give a fair attempt at this very unusual set of pieces.

The reading "Centering as Dialogue"<sup>155</sup> from *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person* by M.C. Richards is one of the most important readings of the class. M.C. Richards, poet, philosopher and artist has a beautiful way of expressing deep ideas about art and humanity with a inspiring tone that is at times serious and other times humorously irreverent. One theme in Richards' writings that clearly articulates an idea that is important in later classes, is that part of intuition is the physical connection of perceiving.

...with listening too, it seems to me, it is not the ear that hears, it is not the physical organ that performs that act of inner receptivity. It is the total person who hears. Sometimes the skin seems to be the best listener, as it prickles and thrills, say to a sound or a silence...<sup>156</sup>

Throughout her book and this chapter, Richard focuses on the art of perceiving as being paramount to the life and work of an artist.

Richards touches on many different ideas in this chapter, but one central theme is how an artist must handle the paradoxical nature of "questions of technique and the

---

<sup>154</sup> von Gunden, 113.

<sup>155</sup> Richards, 9-32.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 9.

questions of meaning.”<sup>157</sup> This paradox is salient to acting singers who must juggle countless physical and practical concerns while simultaneously allowing deeper levels of meaning to come through in their performances.

Richards does not give any hard and fast answers, but tells charming stories and anecdotes, and puts forth poetic descriptions of how she sees artists’ connection with their inner selves and the worlds. On the topic of passion she says:

But of course we have to be passionate. That is to say, when we are, we must be able to be. We must be able to let the intensity—the Dionysian rapture and disorder and the celebration of chaos, of potentiality, the experience of surrender—we must be able to let it live in our bodies, in our hands, through our hands into the materials we work with.<sup>158</sup>

Richard also explores the difference between knowledge and consciousness, the nature of education and teaching, and how the creative spirit is creative at all times, with whatever materials are at hand. This reading brings up many serious and important questions about what it means to be an artist and a human being.

Another chapter from M.C. Richard’s seminal work also corresponds this section. “Deep Listening” is one of Pauline Oliveros’ major goals in all of her music, not just the pieces by that name, and involves listening with not just the ears, but with the whole physical body. “Centering as Transformation”<sup>159</sup> does not use the term, but describes it perfectly.

Use your senses. Open your eyes, your ears, your smeller, your taste buds, your skin, your throat, your lungs, your heart, your blood, you interstices. Listen. If we listen, we will not have to ask<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>157</sup> Richards, 10.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 33-56.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 55.

In this chapter, Richards goes in depth into how the process she calls centering has transformative power for the artist, and is integral in spontaneous and uncontrived creative action, and in our case, performance. Richards ties together several important themes brought up in other class readings into a poetic conclusion. Holism, perception, awareness of the present and attention of the body come together in “centering.”

When we act out of our inner unity, when all of our selves is present in what we do, then we can be said to be ‘on center...Our wholeness as persons is expressed in using all of our selves in any given act. In this way the self integrates its capacities into a personal potency, as a being who serves life from his center at every instant. In this way, knowledge can become a quality of consciousness and illumine our behavior spontaneously and truthfully<sup>161</sup>

This section of Richards’ book not only discusses her philosophy of art, but also contains deep musings on the human condition, as she connects and relates them to creative expression. She explains the transformation process described in Buddhist meditation without any mention of religion, which sets up the performances of Stockhausen in the next class. Richards’ inspirational tone will encourage students to give their all in the upcoming intuitive pieces, and help them understand the desired process without confusing it with anything religious or dogmatic.

This section is comprised entirely of Pauline Oliveros’ work. Not only did Oliveros see her pieces as a way “... to awaken the creative individual in each student...”<sup>162</sup>, she “thought that her compositions could produce a calming effect and heightened states of awareness...”<sup>163</sup> The potential therapeutic effect of a deep awareness of the physical self is discussed in the next part of the course: Intuitive Pieces. Themes in the reading support these pieces by discussing intuition as related to physicality of

---

<sup>161</sup> Richards, 36.

<sup>162</sup> Johnston, foreword, vi.

<sup>163</sup> von Gunden, 105.

perceiving, listening with the whole body, holism, and “centering” as transformation.

This centering through a profound connection to the body through physical sensations has been the focal point of this section.

### **Intuitive Pieces**

“Very little stress is placed on developing powers of observation or on intuition [in formal education]. Thus, with primary experience held so at a distance, sensory life in particular, I find that my principal task in teaching adults is to win their trust. They tend to be overwhelming oriented in manipulation and to effect. It rarely occurs to them to work in a direct way with what they know and are.”<sup>164</sup>

Everything in the class has been building up to this section, as these pieces are the most advanced in terms of listening, openness, concentration, self-awareness, and using the mind and body as one, which have been goals throughout the course. They are similar to the “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces in their aesthetic and purpose, but they are more advanced, as students must focus on more abstract feelings and images. In Oliveros’ works, students had specific instructions connected to concrete things, such as breath and sounds. In this last section of ‘Intuitive Pieces,’ performers must access deep, primal, and abstract feelings to motivate the sounds produced, which requires a more subtle and sophisticated physical awareness.

This section consists of “Richtige Dauern,” “Verbindung,” and Abwärts” from *Aus den sieben Tagen*<sup>165</sup> by Karlheinz Stockhausen. Stockhausen refers to these pieces as “intuitive.” The intense physical self-awareness fostered in the “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces is crucial in being successful in these pieces, as intuition is perceiving on the physical level. That is why people say “Follow your gut,” as our bodies pick up on information we do not process on the mental level. If we are in tune with our bodies, we get very clear messages from them. To tap into intuition requires an intense physical self-

---

<sup>164</sup> Richards, 17.

<sup>165</sup> Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Aus den sieben Tagen* (Vienna: Universal Edition in Vienna, 1968).

awareness fostered in the “Deep Listening” and Meditative pieces, but on a more subtle level.

Stockhausen makes his view of himself as composer explicit in “Litanei,” a text in the middle of *Aus den sieben Tagen*, that is introduced simply with “to the performer:” In “Litanei,” Stockhausen refers to his function as a “radio” and “translator” and says that if he composes in the right mindset, that he himself ceases to exist. He clarifies that he isn’t trying to make the performer the composer in a conventional way, but is trying to facilitate the performer’s gaining of trust in his or her own abilities, so he or she can (through him) can access the unceasing well of musical vibrations that is pouring through them.

“Litanei” (1968) continues with a warning against trying to understand this process with the intellect. He warns that this will ruin everything and make it impossible. This fundamental perspective shift from using intellect to instinct was introduced in Oliveros’ pieces in the last section:

Litanei<sup>166</sup>

Ich habe es seit vielen Jahren unzählige Male gesagt und manchmal geschrieben: Dass Ich nicht MEINE Musik mache, sondern die Schwingungen übertrage, die ich auffange; dass ich wie ein Übersetzer funktioniere, ein Radioapparat bin. Wenn ich richtig, in der richtigen Verfassung komponierte, existierte ich SELBST nicht mehr.

Nun versuche ich, die nächste Stufe zu erreichen. Ich versuche, Dich, den Spieler, an die Ströme anzuschließen, die durch mich fließen, an die ich angeschlossen bin.

Litanei

In the last years, I’ve said, and sometimes written, countless number of times: that I don’t make MY music, but bring forward vibrations that I encounter; that I function like a translator, that I am a radio. Whenever I’m right, composing in the right state of being. I, myself, cease to exist.

Now I’m only trying to reach the next level. I try to connect you, the player, to the current that flows through me—that I am connected to.

---

<sup>166</sup> Stockhausen, 12.

Ich versuche nicht, Dich zum Komponisten im alten Sinne zu machen, sondern ein ganz neues Vertrauen in Deine Fähigkeiten zu gewinnen: dass Du durch mich angeschlossen wirst, an die unerschöpfliche Quelle, die sich in musikalischen Schwingungen durch uns ergießt.

Versuche nicht, es mit dem Verstand zu begreifen, Du wirst alles nur stören und unmöglich machen. Du musst das Vertrauen gewinnen, dass Du es können wirst.

Ich habe es von Beginn an gehabt.

Nur deshalb bin ich einen kleinen Schritt voraus. Aber Du musst es auch gewinnen, sonst wird alles falsch und verdreht, was ich empfangen habe und durch Dich übertragen wollte.

Du hast vielleicht weder Zeit noch Geduld, Dich dauernd und immer besser darauf zu konzentrieren, möglichst unverzerrt zum Klingen zu bringen, was durch uns hindurch muss.

Deshalb tue ich es für Dich, solange Du es nicht von alleine kannst. Ich stelle Dich ein wie ein Empfänger. Ob Du aber rein klingst oder nicht, dazu musst du selbst helfen.

Meine letzte Erfahrung waren die KURZWELLEN;

ich bin so nah wie möglich Dir gekommen und dem, was an Musik in der Luft ist.

Nun kommt der schwere Sprung, nicht von Menschen gemachte Signale, Musik, Getön zu übertragen, sondern die Schwingungen, die aus einem höheren, unmittelbar wirkenden Bereich kommen; nicht höher über uns, sondern höher IN UNS UND AUSSERHALB.

I'm not trying to make you the composer in the old sense, but rather to win you a new trust in your own capabilities: that you, through me will be acquainted with the bottomless well of musical vibrations that flows through us.

Don't try to understand this with your intellect, you will disturb everything and make it impossible.

You must win the trust that you can do it.

I've had that from the beginning

and therefore am a little step further.

But you must also win it, or everything that I have received and am trying to convey to you will become false and turned around.

Maybe you don't have the time or the patience to constantly concentrate well to be unbiased as possible, to bring to sound the vibrations that must come through us.

Therefore I do it for you, only as long as you cannot do it by yourself. I supply you like a receiver. Whether it rings pure or not, must come from yourself.

My last experience was with SHORT WAVES;

I came as near as possible to you and to which that music in the air is on.

Now comes the hard jump, not to convey man-made signals, music, tones but (to convey) the vibrations, that come from a direct<sup>167</sup> and active area not higher than us and outside of us, but higher IN US AND OUTSIDE.

In the first piece in the collection: "Richtige Dauern" (1968), the performer is instructed to play until they sense that he or she should stop.

---

<sup>167</sup> 'Intuitive' could be used here as well.

Richtige Dauern<sup>168</sup>

Spiele einen Ton  
Spiele ihn so lange  
bis Du spürst  
dass Du aufhören sollst

Spiele wieder einen Ton  
Spiele ihn so lange  
bis Du spürst  
dass Du aufhören sollst  
Und so weiter  
Höre auf  
Wenn Du spürst  
dass Du aufhören sollst

Ob Du aber spielst oder aufhörst  
Höre immer den anderen zu

Spiele am bester  
wenn Menschen zuhören  
Probe nicht

Right Duration

Play a tone  
Play it  
until you sense<sup>169</sup>  
that you should stop

Again play a tone  
Play it  
until you sense  
that you should stop  
And so on  
Stop  
when you sense  
that you should stop

Whether you are playing or stopping:  
Always be listening to others

It's best to play  
when people are listening  
Don't rehearse

The German word selected for sense implies a physical awareness. These pieces take what we found in Oliveros' pieces a step further because they must start and stop based on abstract internal information. There is also a new awareness of impermanence implicit in the directions. Since they refer to repeating playing a tone in association with a feeling, the tone's lifespan connects to the impermanent characteristic of the feelings. As one hears notes start and stop, and they feel compelled to start and stop them, they will have an awareness of the changing nature of their sensations. This will be an important aspect of their potential therapeutic affect of the music.

---

<sup>168</sup> Stockhausen, 1.

<sup>169</sup> "Sense" as in to physically feel or detect. To sense as in a feeling, like: "I feel an ant on my arm." Feelings like sadness and happiness are expressed differently. The phrase: "I feel badly" would use a different verb.

The piece “Verbindung” (1968) has similarities to “Richtige Dauern” as the performer is asked to systematically focus on the vibrations in his or her body, heart, breathing, thoughts, intuition, enlightenment, and the universe. This continues an emphasis on physicality in an abstract sense. “Abwärts” (1968) also follows a similar progression with focusing on specific parts of the body that become progressively smaller. All of these exercises emphasize focused concentration and intuitive feeling, experience and expression. The goal is to express an untranslated, pure, feeling or thought, not an approximate, cerebral representation of it.

It’s important to note that all of these compositions were written for ensemble and that Stockhausen emphasized the importance for the performers to listen to one another. One shouldn’t be so focused on his or her internal process as to forget to communicate with the others. Stockhausen remarked that musicians exposed their “physical and spiritual state” by their ability to maintain awareness and avoid become “totalitarian.”<sup>170</sup>

Intuitive music is not improvisation, nor is it a mere spiritual exercise. Stockhausen was adamant about this at the International New Music Summer Course in Darmstadt in 1968, where he gave everyone in his class one of the texts to meditate on:

I do not want a spiritualist séance – I want music! I do not mean anything mystical, but everything absolutely direct, from concert experience. What I have in mind is not indeterminacy, but intuitive determinacy.<sup>171</sup>

I take intuitive determinacy to mean operating on a deep, sensual, intuitive level, where the intellect is not involved, but the creative impulse is still coming from the performer. Of the three pieces, only “Richtige Dauern” specifies a number of performers (four) while the others are just labeled as “for ensemble.” However, keeping the

---

<sup>170</sup> Marion Boyars, *Stockhausen on Music*, (London and New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1989), 122.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Kurtz, *Stockhausen: A Biography* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), 164.

performing groups small is ideal at this stage. At this point in the semester, students should be feeling for comfortable, and the fact of having an audience, even just a small class of colleagues, will most likely still trigger some stress for students since the material and method of performing is so unfamiliar. Intentionally allowing the stress to come up when one would have the opportunity to observe and work through it in a safe classroom environment would be beneficial, and these pieces could be especially therapeutic (in the sense that they can help students manage their anxiety about performing in a better way).

Varying degrees of performance anxiety and stress are common experiences for many musicians at one point or another in their performing lives, and the effects can be extreme and devastating. It is rare that a musician escapes this issue altogether in the course of his or her performing life, and even the most successful and well-known performers are not exempt.<sup>172</sup> The causes for this anxiety are not entirely known or agreed upon. As Kenny states in her book *The Psychology of Music Performance Anxiety*: “No one theory appears able to account for all the observed phenomena and the field is too young to attempt a synthesis.”<sup>173</sup> In addition, what might go under the general term of “stage fright” to the layperson could be a variety or combination of psychological issues ranging from phobia<sup>174</sup> to occupational stress,<sup>175</sup> and as Kenny states is almost always “...multidimensional and multi-causal...”<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Kenny, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 13.

It is helpful to have an understanding of what anxiety is and how it functions from an Eastern perspective as the healing process seen in meditation corresponds with how the intuitive pieces in this section should operate in regards to performance anxiety. It is also important to have at least a superficial understanding of the East, since Eastern philosophies were so influential on the movement and music of the avant-garde. John Cage and M.C. Richards talk about Buddhism specifically as a major influence on them, and many, if not all of the included composers chosen for this class have strong Eastern leanings. To better understand the East, we will look at the mind as described by meditation teachers associated with Vipassana meditation, which was taught by the historical Buddha.

The mind is seen to be made out of four parts, or aggregates that will be named in the language Pāli.<sup>177</sup> The first segment is viññāna, which can be translated as consciousness.<sup>178</sup> The next part is sañña, which is perception. The third part is vedanā, which is sensation, and the fourth part is sankhāra, which is reaction. Let us suppose there is a sound, and one hears it. In a split second the viññāna is aware: “there is a sound.” Sañña makes sense of it: “there is a sound of words of praise.” The sañña also makes a judgment of whether this is good or bad: “sounds of praise for me! Yes!” or “sounds of abuse for me! No!” The value judgment causes either a pleasant or unpleasant sensation on the body, and the sankhāra, part of the mind reacts: “yes, I like it!” or “no, I don’t like

---

<sup>177</sup> This is an ancient language that Buddha spoke and is used in Theravada Buddhist texts.

<sup>178</sup> William Hart, *The Art of Living: Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1987), 164.

it!” All of these processes happen in a miniscule amount of time, and we are not aware of them.<sup>179</sup>

This process is happening every second of every day, over and over. Sankhāra is not just a name for a part of the mind; it is also a name for a reaction that one makes over and over. The Western equivalent of the use of sankhāra in this sense, would be a habit pattern, or learned behavior. The idea is that every reaction reinforces a mental habit pattern, and that habit will continue to manifest itself over and over again as the same reaction until the process is stopped. If a person has a tendency to panic, this is a sankhāra, and it gets reinforced every single time this person reacts the same way.

A predilection towards anger, anxiety, or other negative emotion is not seen as intrinsic to a person’s character (though everyone has their own inclinations that are innate), but rather a habit pattern that can be changed. Performance anxiety is seen as just another unconsciously learned mental habit, and would be combated as such.

One technique used to combat these learned habits is called Vipassana. Vipassana means “insight” in Pāli and was first developed by Gautama, the historical Buddha.<sup>180</sup> Burmese Vipassana teacher S.N. Goenka has been monumental in the spread of Vipassana to the West.<sup>181</sup> In his tradition the technique is taught in completely secular, non-sectarian meditation courses, and is renowned for its pragmatic approach and practical applications.<sup>182</sup> The technique is taught over a ten-day period, and is too involved to explain well without the time needed to take a course. However, some of the

---

<sup>179</sup> Renowned meditation teacher S.N. Goenka explains this in discourses during ten-day meditation courses. Summaries are available: S.N. Goenka, *The Discourse Summaries: Talks from a ten-day course in Vipassana Meditation*, condensed by William Hart (Onalaska, WA: Vipassana Research Publications, 2000).

<sup>180</sup> Hart, 6.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 1.

specifics of the theory can be superficially extrapolated to give a basic overview, especially of its purification processes, and how anxiety could be treated as a byproduct of this process.

Before Vipassana is introduced, students learn a preliminary concentration technique called ānāpāna. In ānāpāna, students are asked to keep their attention focused on their natural breath. As discussed in the “Deep Listening” and Meditative section, one unique quality of breathing is that it is an unconscious function, but can also be manipulated consciously. Most other unconscious functions, such as the heartbeat, are beyond our control, but one can choose to breathe harder or slower for a time, or hold the breath entirely. Due to this, the breath is seen as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind, and reflects quickly the mental state of a person. If one becomes agitated or fearful, it is impossible for the breath to maintain its regularity. If one is to explore the mind in its entirety, which is the goal of this technique, the whole mind must be observed and the breath is the first connection to the unconscious that is explored.

The awareness of the physical sensations manifesting themselves on the body is seen as the deepest connection to the unconscious, and is the cornerstone of this technique.<sup>183</sup> William Hart explains

...physical sensations are closely related to the mind, and like the breath they offer a reflection of the present mental state...every thought, every emotion, every mental action is accompanied by a corresponding sensation within the body. Therefore by observing the physical sensations, we also observe the mind.<sup>184</sup>

The major goal of this technique is to be aware of the physical sensations on the body and to remain equanimous with them. It is through this process practitioners of

---

<sup>183</sup> In this tradition, there is no differentiation made between the unconscious, and subconscious as the West makes. The use of unconscious here is meant to encompass both western concepts.

<sup>184</sup> Hart, 91.

Vipassana can eradicate old sankhāras (habit patterns), through equanimous self-observation, as the sankhāras will manifest themselves as physical sensations on the surface of the body.

How exactly that process happens is a topic for a much longer paper, but one simple way to think about this process works is in terms of how habits are broken. If a person is addicted to cigarettes and is attempting to quit, once the stimulus is denied, intense cravings arise, and are extremely unpleasant. If the smoker manages not to smoke, cravings will continue to arise periodically but will get weaker and weaker, until eventually the desire for cigarettes ceases. Perhaps cravings may arise afterwards once in a while, but the person will not be overwhelmed and will be able to resist. This period of craving the stimulus is extremely difficult and in many ways painful, but the person has to suffer through this part until the habit is broken.

When a person practices a mental state of equanimity and does not react to sensations happening on the body, it is as if the mind is being denied cigarettes (in this case, reinforcing reactions). Old reactions will then arise as sensations, and if equanimity is maintained, the reaction and accompanying sensations will run their course and eventually pass away. Without the equanimity, the mind would continue to react negatively and the pattern would be further reinforced. Equanimity is hard to maintain, but if one is successful, this process of observation and equanimity slowly but surely changes all kinds of negative mental habit patterns. One way of thinking about how these old reactions rise to the surface during meditation is to look at the process of fasting.<sup>185</sup> When one stops eating, the body begins to go within itself for sustenance, using stored fat

---

<sup>185</sup> This is an analogy S. N. Goenka makes in discourses during 10-day courses.

and muscle. The same thing happens when the mind is denied stimulus through sitting with eyes closed and meditating. The mind goes into itself for “sustenance,” as the mind needs to have material every single moment, not just three times a day as the body does. The very act of meditation brings these old habit patterns to the surface, and, like fasting, the experience can be unpleasant.

It is not that one can magically become completely equanimous with what occurs, but every single moment of simple pure observation helps tremendously, even if one spends most of the time struggling. It is as if someone is driving a car down the highway at one hundred miles an hour. Every moment of equanimity is equivalent to tapping the break. Eventually the car slows down, moment after moment.<sup>186</sup> The last important element for the practitioner to keep in mind is that every sensation has the nature of impermanence, and every experience will eventually pass.

The technique not only facilitates this purging process, but is also a grounder, or coping mechanism to “riding out” the discomfort of letting things run their course. If one becomes overwhelmed, he or she can always come back to observing the breath, which has a calming effect. Using this technique, the habit pattern associated with anxiety would periodically arise, become weaker and weaker, becoming more and more manageable, and eventually passing away entirely.

### **A Bridge from East and West**

Though Western and Eastern traditions use different terminology and may have differing ideas in terms of exact processes, they tend to overlap and be extremely compatible and complementary to each other.

---

<sup>186</sup> This is an analogy S.N. Goenka makes in discourses during 10-day courses.

The work of psychiatrist Paul R. Fleischman is especially illuminating in terms of making a bridge between the worlds of East and West from a psychological perspective. Not only is Dr. Fleischman an award-winning scientist, he is also a teacher of Vipassana meditation in the tradition of S.N. Goenka.<sup>187</sup>

In his collection of essays *Karma and Chaos*, Fleischman breaks down a “Psychological Systems Definition of Vipassana” as affecting six levels of personality, of which five are particularly relevant for our purposes.<sup>188</sup> The first such level is molecular: “Systematic, increasingly refined and subtle self-observation, without reaction, alters the flow of stress-related chemicals.”<sup>189</sup> The second level is biological:

As reaction patterns change, as neurochemical composition changes, and as a self-aware and compassionate lifestyle increases, sleep, diet and expressions of distress as well as patterns of pleasure may be affected. Psychosomatic diseases, as well as basic functions like weight, heart rate, or alertness may be altered.<sup>190</sup>

The third affected level is psychological:

Old complexes are relinquished, new attitudes and virtues are cultivated, memories resurface, relationships are seen and developed in new ways...event and event in one’s life is re-experienced and reexamined in a new perspective.<sup>191</sup>

The next level incorporated is cognitive-behavioral: “... [It] encourages active practice of ideal ways of solving problems, of interacting with others, or of participating in society.”<sup>192</sup> The next level affected is environmental: “... [It] stresses the feedback loop of harmony.”<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> Paul R. Fleischman, *Karma and Chaos* (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Press, 1986), 146.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

Fleischman explains that this process has goals that are similar to the goals of psychotherapies in the West:

Modern Western psychotherapies are built upon the delineation, analysis, and elimination of...complexes. The psychotherapies are very similar to Vipassana in some of their methods and goals. Both enable healing through systematic self-awareness, self-knowledge, and freedom from past conditioning.<sup>194</sup>

Dr. Fleischman describes several other healing aspects of this technique in his essay:

“The Therapeutic Action of Vipassana:”

Another therapeutic effect of meditation is to decrease our need to plan, control, and organize the future, because it activates our determination right now to observe, identify, and consciously participate in the thousands of decisions that determine us each day.<sup>195</sup>

This decrease in the need to plan is especially helpful for people with a predisposition to perfectionism, especially as they are apt to suffer from performance anxiety. Dianna Kenny paraphrases the results of 1995 study of musicians by S. Mor, H.I. Day, G. Flett and P.L. Hewitt as follows:

They found that performers with higher personal standards (‘I must work to my full potential at all times’), and social standards of perfection (‘The people around me expect me to succeed at everything I do’) and low personal control experienced more debilitating performance anxiety, somatic anxiety, and less goal satisfaction than those performers who did not score highly on these items.<sup>196</sup>

As von Gunden says, “Musicians are good candidates for meditation study because musical training is similar to that of meditation”<sup>197</sup> and meditation has a clear potential for positive effects on the underlying causes of performance anxiety. Learning Vipassana may be helpful to some music students suffering from anxiety, but it is not a

---

<sup>194</sup> Fleischman, 49.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>196</sup> Kenny, 76.

<sup>197</sup> von Gunden, 103.

solution for everyone. The people that have successful courses are self-motivated and have a genuine interest in Vipassana that extends beyond hoping for a therapeutic effect. People hoping for effects generally become frustrated as the nature of wanting the positive effect interferes with the accepting equanimous attitude necessary for the technique to work.

In addition, although Vipassana is secular, it comes from a particular tradition and may not be palatable to everyone. Fleischman explains that “Vipassana meditation courses are not of interest to everyone. Some people may be too agitated or preoccupied to benefit—many kinds of help exist for many reasons.”<sup>198</sup>

However, elements of the theory and practice of this technique are extractable, and lend themselves to Stockhausen’s pieces. The three necessary elements for this Vipassanic process to occur are equanimity, an awareness of physical sensations, and an awareness of impermanence. Although the awareness will not be as acute as when one is meditating, if those three things are present in any situation, the purification process will happen. Stockhausen’s pieces intrinsically have these elements, and they are introduced in a much milder and palatable way than having students learn to meditate. However, though a calm frame of mind is implied in Stockhausen’s pieces, it may be beneficial for a teacher to make an explicit instruction to students to try and remain equanimous to gain the full effect of processing through emotions successfully.

These pieces also relate to the goal of the class that students access deep levels of themselves in order to produce more authentic performances. It doesn’t really matter if the students are in fact feeling the vibrations of the universe as Stockhausen instructs.

---

<sup>198</sup> Fleischman, 55.

The act of attempting to do so is what yields the benefit. It is similar to the practice of Koans in Zen, which are paradoxical questions that students are instructed to think about. Teachers aren't looking for students to actually answer the question "What is the sound of one hand clapping?", they want the students to gain insight through the process of thinking about it. Kyle Gann discusses this in relation to John Cage's music, saying that "The purpose of the koan is to defeat the intellect and egotism of the student, to break down rational thinking and release intuition and direct observation of experience."<sup>199</sup> This is an important principal underlying these, the most abstract pieces of the class.

---

<sup>199</sup> Gann, 139.

## Chapter 4: CONCLUSION

This class uses a variety of different composers, pieces, and tactics to engage students in new musical processes and experiences. Many pieces are quite concrete and others incredibly abstract. They all take away a reliance on linear narratives, encouraging students to use non-intellectual processes, emphasizing spontaneous creative responses, and opening up an expressive potential based on the body, and intuition. Not every piece will cause a meaningful reaction in every student, but at the very least it was challenge students' preconceived notions about the nature of music, increase their concentration and focus, and hone listening and non-verbal communication skills

Although the class ends with Stockhausen, it is the work of Pauline Oliveros that is the major pedagogical force. Stockhausen's pieces have a real value due to how abstract they are. However, without applying the body focused principals underlying the preceding Oliveros unit, students would most likely find them impossible to navigate. Most all avant-garde composers had non-intellectual processes in mind, but since they are describing these non-intellectual processes in the intellectual field (linear writing), they aren't always able to give a tangible, viable alternative to thinking processes. Many of them are quite clear at describing their desired outcomes (especially Rzewski), but they are difficult to use as a pedagogical model since there is no tangible focus for students if they aren't able to automatically discover the correct mental space for the piece. This is why Oliveros is key because her focus on the body and its sensations.

Oliveros' valuing of the body and intuition had feminist implications at the time. Historically people have made connections between the body and the female, and the mind with the male. In her essay "The Contribution of Women Composers," Oliveros

explains that “oppression of women has also meant devaluation of intuition, which is culturally assigned to women’s roles.”<sup>200</sup> Oliveros is clear that this is only a cultural assignment and that women do not have a monopoly on intuition, saying that “neither mode is exclusively the province of one sex or the other.”<sup>201</sup> In a later interview, she says

...the fact that one process is associated with one gender is too bad, because I think that all processes should be available, and encouraged, in order to come out with balanced human beings who are able to access any resource they have, rather than being cut off from it.<sup>202</sup>

Oliveros never argues that one mode of thinking is better than another, but strived for “the recognition and re-evaluation of the intuitive mode as being equal to and as essential as the analytical mode for the expression of wholeness in creative work.”<sup>203</sup>

This statement could be taken as the overarching goal that I have for myself as a performer and the one I have for my students. This course focuses primarily on the intuitive mode as it is often underdeveloped in our academic curricula, but it will need to be incorporated with intellectual processes for students to reach their full creative potential. This balance between intellectual and intuitive modes is a subject for further research, and would be the next logical pedagogical step after a class like this.

---

<sup>200</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Software for People: Collected Writings 1963-1980*, (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications, 1984), 135.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>202</sup> Pauline Oliveros and Fred Maus, “A Conversation about Feminism and Music” *Perspectives of New Music* 32.1 (1994), 174-193.

<sup>203</sup> Oliveros, *Software for People*, 136.

## Appendix: Course Calendar

### Week 1: Introduction and Bridge Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings (Discussed)
Day 1	N/A—Introduction to the class	Syllabus
Day 2	Solkattu (Benary)	“Prelude: Music and Musicking” (pages 1-18) from <i>Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening</i> by Christopher Small

### Week 2: Bridge Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 3	What is a Kiss (D. Riley)	
Day 4	Mindfulness of Breathing (Parsons)	“Summing up the Dead Composer” (pages 87-93), Small

### Week 3: Bridge Pieces cont. and Continuous Concentration Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 5	Olson III (T. Riley)	
Day 6	Clapping Music (Reich) Doodling (Johnson)	“Postlude: Was is a Good Performance and How do you Know?” (pages 207-221), Small

### Week 4: Continuous Concentration Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 7	Moon Cat Chant (Benary)	
Day 8	Becoming Chant (Maue)	“Introduction: Holistic Worldviews in the Long 1960s” from <i>A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture After World War II</i> by Linda Sargent Wood (pages 3-23)

### Week 5: Continuous Concentration Pieces cont. and Listening Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 9	Les Moutons de Panurge (Rzewski)	
Day 10	Tuning Meditations (Oliveros)	“Score and Parts” (pages 110-119). Small.

Week 6: Listening Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 11	Bowl Gong (Oliveros)	
Day 12	4'33'' (Cage)	“Listening for Silence: Notes on the Aural Life” by Mark Slouka from <i>Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music</i> edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner

Week 7: Trust-Building Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 13	Evening Ritual (Maue)	
Day 14	The Greeting from <i>Sonic Meditations</i> (Oliveros) ΔPiece (Barnett)	“Music as Fusion of Body and Mind” by Daniel Goode in <i>Scores: A Musical Anthology</i> , edited by Roger Johnson

Week 8: Trust-Building Pieces cont. and Perception Altering Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 15	Stare Exercise Part I (Goode)	
Day 16	Sonic Rorschach (Oliveros)	“Boredom and Danger” by Dick Higgins in <i>Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1966-1973</i> , edited by Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn

Week 9: Perception Altering Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 17	One Word (Oliveros)	
Day 18	You Blew It (Wolff)	“The human energy field and singing” from <i>Dynamics of the Singing Voice</i> by Meribeth A. Dayme

Week 10: Environmental Exploratory Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 19	Wordless Talk (Goode)	
Day 20	Environmental Dialogue (Oliveros)	“The Music of the Environment” by R. Murray Schafer from <i>Audio Culture</i>

Week 11: Improvisatory Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 21	Street Music (Rzewski)	
Day 22	Sound Pool (Rzewski)	“Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation” by Frederic Rzewski from <i>Audio Culture</i>

Week 12: “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 23	Exchanges (Oliveros) Follow Yourself (Oliveros)	
Day 24	X (Oliveros) Breathe in/Breathe Out (Oliveros)	<i>The Music of Pauline Oliveros</i> by Heidi von Gunden, “The Sonic Meditations” (pages 103-119)

Week 13: “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 25	The New Sounds Meditation (Oliveros)	
Day 26	Teach Yourself to Fly (Oliveros)	“Centering as Dialogue” from <i>Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person</i> by M. C. Richards

Week 14: “Deep Listening” and Meditative Pieces cont.

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 27	Sonic Meditations: XIX (Oliveros)	
Day 28	Back to Back (Oliveros) Body Tune Up (Oliveros)	“Centering as Transformation” by M.C. Richards from <i>Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person</i> (pages 33-56)

Week 15: Intuitive Pieces

Day	Pieces	Readings
Day 29	Richtige Dauern (Stockhausen)	“Litanei” from <i>Aus den Sieben Tagen</i> (Stockhausen)
Day 30	Verbindung (Stockhausen) Abwärts (Stockhausen)	

## Bibliography

- Agar, Jon. "What Happened in the Sixties?" *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41, no. 4 (December 2008): 567-600.
- Barnett, Bonnie Mara. "ΔPiece." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Bates, Claire. "Two hearts really DO beat as one if you're in love: Scientists find couples' vital signs mimic each other." *Dailymail.co.uk*, February 12, 2013. Accessed December 13, 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2277586/Two-hearts-really-DO-beat-youre-love-Scientists-couples-vital-signs-mimic-other.html>
- Belluck, Pam. "To Tug Hearts, Music First Music Tickle the Neurons." *New York Times*, April 18, 2011. Accessed December 20, 2014. Accessed December 20, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/19/science/19brain.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/19/science/19brain.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- Benary, Barbara. "Moon Cat Chant." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Benary, Barbara. "Solkattu." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Borenstein, Audrey. *Chimes of Change and Hours: Views of Older Women in Twentieth-century America*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983.
- Boyars, Marion. *Stockhausen on Music*. London and New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1989.
- Cox Christoph and Daniel Warner. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.
- Csikszentmihályi, Mihály. *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975.
- Dayme Meribeth. *Dynamics of the Singing Voice, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 2009.
- Fleischman, Paul R. *Karma and Chaos*. Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Publishing, 1986.
- Gallwey, W. Timothy. *The Inner Game of Tennis: The Classic Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 1974.

- Goenka, S.N. *The Discourse Summaries: Talks from a ten-day course in Vipassana Meditation*. Condensed by William Hart. Onalaska, WA: Vipassana Research Publications, 2000.
- Goode, Daniel. "Music as Fusion of Mind and Body." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Edited by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Goode, Daniel. "Stare exercises." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Goode, Daniel. "Wordless Talk." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Hart, William. *The Art of Living: Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1987.
- Higgins, Dick. "Boredom and Danger." In *Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1966-1973*. Edited by Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.
- Jeary, Tony. *Life is a Series of Presentations: Eight Ways to Inspire, Inform, and Influence Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005.
- Johnson, Roger. *Scores: an anthology of new music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Johnson, Tom. "Doodling." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Johnston, Ben. Foreword to *The Music of Pauline Oliveros*, by Heidi von Gunden, v-vi. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983.
- Kenny, Dianna T. *The Psychology of Music Performance Anxiety*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kurtz, Michael. *Stockhausen: A Biography*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988.
- Lockwood, Annea. "Humming." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Maue, Kenneth. "Becoming Chant." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Maue, Kenneth. "Evening Ritual." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Nyman, Michael. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Oliveros, Pauline, and Fred Maus. "A Conversation about Feminism and Music." *Perspectives of New Music* 32.1 (1994), 174-193.
- Oliveros, Pauline. *Deep Listening Pieces*. New York: Deep Listening Publications, 1990.
- Oliveros, Pauline. *Software for People: Collected Writings 1963-1980*. Sharon, VT: Smith Publications, 1984.
- Oliveros, Pauline. *Sonic Meditations*. Sharon, VT: Smith Publications, 1971.
- Parsons, Michael. "Mindfulness of Breathing." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Reich, Steve. "Clapping Music." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Richards, Mary Caroline. *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry and the Person, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989.
- Riley, Dennis. "What is a Kiss." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Riley, Terry. "Olson III." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Rzewski, Frederic. "Les Moutons de Panurge." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Rzewski, Frederic. "Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation." In *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, 266-271. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.
- Rzewski, Frederic. "Sound Pool." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Rzewski, Frederic. "Street Music." In *Source: Music of the Avant-garde, 1966-1973*, Edited by Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.
- Schafer, R. Murray. "The Music of the Environment." In *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, 29-39. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.
- Slouka, Mark. "Listening for Silence: Notes on the Aural Life." In *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, 40-46. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.

- Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performance and Listening*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Stockhausen, Karlheinz. *Aus den sieben Tagen*. Vienna: Universal Edition in Vienna, 1968.
- Unger, Irwin and Debi Unger. *The Times were a changin': The Sixties Reader*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.
- von Gunden, Heidi. *The Music of Pauline Oliveros*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983.
- Weschler, Lawrence. *Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin*. Expanded Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Wolff, Christian. "You Blew It." In *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*. Compiled by Roger Johnson. New York: Schirmer Books, 1981.
- Wood, Linda Sargent. *A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture after World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.