

### III. Cage's Freeman Etudes: *Sounding Out*

MIEKO KANNO

#### GENESIS

Cage's *Freeman Etudes* for violin comprises 32 studies divided into four books of eight. Books 1 and 2 were composed between 1977 and 1980 for the violinist Paul Zukofsky, and Books 3 and 4 were written in 1989–1990 for Irvine Arditti. The work was initiated by Zukofsky who, encouraged by Cage's use of non-graphic, relatively conventional notation in *Etudes Australes* for piano (1974–75), asked Cage whether he would consider making a similar work for violin (Cage 1977: [iii]). In 1977 Cage began composing the *Etudes*, with a commission from Betty Freeman.

♩=60  
practice mute (If necessary, insert paper between bridge  
and mute to prevent rattle)  
III sul tasto  
p

ord.  
IV

III IV

III IV III

Example 1: excerpt from *Cheap Imitation, II*. Copyright 1977 by Peters Edition.  
Reproduced by permission.

Cage worked closely with Zukofsky to assess the potential of the violin for the *Etudes*. During the initial period of composition the Cage-Zukofsky collaboration produced two smaller works for violin, *Cheap Imitation* (1977) and *Chorals* (1978), both of which are “re-transcriptions” of transcriptions made previously by Cage of music by Erik Satie. However, these “re-transcriptions” are not straightforward, in that some characteristic features have been added to the original transcriptions. *Cheap Imitation* for violin is essentially the same as Cage’s piano piece of the same title (1969), except transposed up a major third to fit the register of the violin; but Cage adapts his original work to incorporate idioms idiosyncratic to the violin. The violin transcription contains two such idioms (example 1): one is the multitude of bowing instructions, including different manners of articulation and string selection, and the other is the use of Pythagorean microtones (whereby double-sharps and double-flats are interpreted as distinct pitches).

A similarly quirky adaptation can be found in *Chorals*. The original microtonal melodies of *Song Books* (1970) become violin melodies with an additional layer of notes continuously shadowing the original just above or below, or sometimes in unison (example 2). The added layer is always within the interval of a quarter-tone. The two simultaneously played pitches, when not in unison, produce beats because of their close proximity. The “buzzing” sound of these melodic notes contrasts with the “clean” sound of the unison pitches and with the simple character of the single pitches that appear occasionally. Thus the closely-voiced, two-part writing produces a rich variety of timbre that characterises the violin transcription.

*Très sonore*

The image shows a musical score for a violin piece. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with the instruction "Très sonore" and a dynamic marking "f". Above the notes, there are various bowing instructions: "II", "III", and "IV". The notes themselves include double-sharps and double-flats, indicating microtonal pitches. The second and third staves continue this pattern, with more complex bowing instructions and microtonal notations. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff.

Mieko Kanno

TRES SOUSOPE  
f

AND QUERE IN WOULD BY LATE HAVE, THAT

OR BY OTH BELL\$, CATE OF LESS PLEASE, DIES TANT

AN BE A , CUSE E ED WITH IN THOUGHT.

Example 2b: Song Books, Solo 85. Copyright 1970 and 1978 by Peters Edition. Reproduced by permission.

By 1980 the first two books of *Freeman Etudes* had been completed. Although Zukofsky performed them, he found some etudes unplayable due to the constraints imposed by the score's profusion of details. Cage acknowledged the problem, but the two men could not reach a mutually agreeable solution. Cage moved on to other projects and abandoned work on the *Freeman Etudes*. The first two books were published and attracted some performances despite Zukofsky's claim. But a solution to the problem and the continuation of the project had to wait until Irvine Arditti's performances of the work in the late 1980s. Arditti's approach was to play the etudes as fast as possible whenever there was an opportunity to speed up. Cage saw that this kind of open-ended approach could become a general principle in performing the *Freeman Etudes*. Thus inspired and encouraged, Cage resumed work on the *Etudes* in 1989, completing the entire project in 1990 (Pritchett 1994a: 265).

Despite the fact that the *Freeman Etudes* were composed in two periods separated by a hiatus of nine years, the compositional technique remains virtually unchanged, and the work shows a remarkable consistency. All thirty-two *Etudes*

are primarily based on star charts which Cage traced onto paper. The traced dots became notes. All the other aspects of the notes were determined by chance operations. James Pritchett describes the process:

It began as a point traced onto paper from a star atlas: this tracing determined the positions in pitch and time of the note. Cage then made separate chance determinations to compose every other aspect of the note: Will it be detached or *legato*? Will it possess any unusual characteristics? If so, what kind? Unusual timbre or bowing? A pitch slide? A chord? An overlapping of another note? Each answer generated more questions to be asked. If this is to be a *pizzicato* note, will it be normal, done with the fingernail, “snapped”, or damped? If damped, will it be damped with the finger or fingernail? For chords, Cage used the star tracings to determine the first pitch, but subsequent pitches were the result of questions asked of the violinist Paul Zukofsky. Cage would ask him: “If this particular note is played on this particular string, what are all the possible pitches that can be played on this other string?” Zukofsky’s answer would then be subjected to chance operations to determine the second note, and the process would be repeated to determine the third and fourth notes, as necessary. Each note of each etude is thus the product of hundreds of different chance operations. (Pritchett 1994b)

Zukofsky advised Cage in particular with the “chordal combinatoriality” for each note on which Cage was working. However, none of the earlier collaborations prepared Zukofsky for the levels of specificity and of material density with which Cage was composing the *Freeman Etudes*.

The level of specificity is manifest in the profusion of details in the score. This is certainly one of the most striking features of the work. There is very little left for the performer—or anybody else—to add to it. This is perhaps surprising when one considers the extent to which Cage explored indeterminacy in his career. The level of material density is visible in the score’s crowded appearance. The *Freeman Etudes* are known to be among the most difficult pieces Cage ever wrote, and of them he said that the challenge was in response to a more global issue:

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

(Fletcher and Moore 1983: 19)

In this context virtuosity may not be the most appropriate term to describe the performer's task. As it is often the case with "difficult" works of music, the difficulty is multi-dimensional. The *Freeman Etudes* are difficult to make sense of, difficult to play and, most significantly, difficult to listen to. Furthermore, the perception of the work's difficulty is made more complex by its apparent lack of memorable details. There appears to be *nothing* which will allow or help either performer or listener to navigate herself through time or to retrace the passing of time, in spite of, and in strong contrast to, the multitude of details which govern every aspect of every note.

The *Freeman Etudes* pose a number of questions to anyone engaged in experiencing them. This article is a preliminary exploration, based on some of the most readily available materials relating to the work. In the remainder of this article, I examine certain aspects of the work's compositional process. In each domain there arise different issues; thus, at any given point in the discussion my aims include one or more of the following: to elucidate the intricate process of distinct compositional ideas; to examine how the compositional process may interact with the performance process in arriving at aesthetic expression; and to consider the aesthetic outcome of the overall "music-making" involved in the work.

## **COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS**

It is widely acknowledged that one of the consistencies underlying Cage's entire oeuvre is his inclination to partition the act of composing into discrete processes. Much of his composing was informed by his aesthetics, which initially divided composition into four conceptual domains: materials, method, structure and form.

Cage's first full account of his four-fold aesthetic was presented in the lecture 'Defence of Satie' [1948]. There he sets *structure* and *form* in dialectical opposition: *structure* defines a class of entities having common properties; *form* distinguishes each member of that class from all the others. 'We all have in common the fact of our structure as human beings,' he wrote, 'but the way in which we live, that is, the form of our life, is individual.' *Method*, a systematic way of generating continuity, and *materials*, the sounds and silences of a work, mediate between these opposites: each is capable of defining a class of works (twelve-tone pieces, music for prepared piano) but each can also be newly invented to make pieces individual without violating a class's structural consistency.<sup>1</sup> (Brooks 2002: 128)

The *Freeman Etudes* belong to a group of instrumental works that Cage composed in the 1970s (the others being the *Etudes Australes* for piano and the *Etudes Boreales* for cello and piano), and they share many characteristics with them. These works are also related to many others composed around the same time (such as the *Song Books*), as well as to even earlier works (such as *Atlas Eclipticalis*, 1961). However, the *Freeman Etudes* are particularly distinct in the rigour by which composition is partitioned into clear-cut domains that correspond roughly to those in Cage's four-fold aesthetic. I will now discuss the *Freeman Etudes* from the perspective of each of the four aesthetic domains.

### **Materials**

The materials of the *Freeman Etudes* are derived from star charts, a source of which Cage was fond and which he used in many other works. The star-chart works often have an identifiable character. *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1961), for example, combines star charts with an experimental notation; but despite the differences in the way in which star charts were used to construct the works, performances of *Atlas Eclipticalis* and the *Freeman Etudes* display two similarities: 1) spaciousness, and 2) the disposition of varying lengths of notes as a prominent feature in

1 In this chapter Brooks analyses Cage's late works using these domains as parameters and reveals the different relationships that lie beneath the diversity in the late works.

the articulation of the music. The expansive spread of discrete sound-materials seems to be in some way analogous to a visual image of star constellations as observed from a particular position.

The same characteristics may be observed in *Etudes Australes*. This work shares many features with the *Freeman Etudes*, including the use of a star chart to determine the basic distribution of notes and rhythms for the entirety of each *Etude*, rather than for fragments within each structural unit. Expressing it more metaphorically, the star charts are represented as “scenes” in these etudes (examples 3 and 4).

In *Etudes Australes* Cage instructs the performer that the correspondence between space and time should be such that the music “sounds” as it “looks” (Cage 1975: [1]). This interesting suggestion both links and distinguishes visual and aural representations. The visual representation of the stars has an implicit limitation: the sizes and positions of the stars can be measured from a certain viewpoint, but their actual relationships to each other (which are three-dimensional) are not visible. What we see is a two-dimensional distribution of the stars, which inevitably results from having to view them from a particular perspective. An aural realisation of such a visual “snap-shot” is first of all a representation in sound of the measured quantities that represent the same sky. But because the aural representation occurs in a temporal dimension, the visual-to-aural translation does not have to stop at measured sizes and positions: a performance can also *suggest* the dynamic relationships between the stars which gave rise to the distribution of these dots on the page. The sizes and positions may not be precisely replicated in a performance, but a successful representation in sound of the dynamic relationship between the note-events may express the measured quantities more truthfully than the star chart itself. The application of such a poetic imagination offers a plausible explanation of why Cage’s star-chart compositions give an impression of their material origin: there is a willingness on the part of the performer and listener to perceive the music as a re-translation of the charts into three-dimensional, aural space. Cage made it known that these works were written using star charts, and it seems that he wanted this public understanding to influence the aesthetic experience of listening to these works. In such ways the visual origin of Cage’s musical materials can play a significant role in determining a work’s reception. In other words, Cage’s compositional process in determining materials may suggest to the performer ways in which to interpret the dots and lines on the page.

XXVII

The image displays a musical score for 'Example 3: Freeman Etudes, No. 27'. The score is organized into two columns and six rows. Each row contains a single musical staff. The notation is highly detailed, featuring a variety of note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *mp*, and *f*. The piece is identified as 'XXVII' at the top left of the first staff. The score includes numerous accidentals and articulation marks, indicating a complex and technically demanding composition.



XXIII

The musical score consists of two columns and four rows of music. Each row contains a pair of staves, one with a treble clef and one with a bass clef. The notation is complex, featuring many accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and dynamic markings such as 's', 'f', and 'mf'. The music appears to be a single melodic line with a rich harmonic accompaniment. There are some markings like 's' and 'f' above notes, and 'mf' below notes. The score is for a single instrument, likely a piano.

## Method

In the case of the *Freeman Etudes*, the “method” (described earlier) consists of using chance operations to generate chords and expressive details within the limits of what is available on the violin. The expressive details are organised into a set of parameters defined mostly by technique: pitch inflections (eleven different types); indications for the choice of string(s); points of contact between the bow and string; ways of playing chords (spread, direction); types of bowing articulation (four); types of *pizzicato* (five); ricochet (the number of bounces also being specified, between two and fifteen). Chance operations were carried out as required for each parameter of each note; thus a single note-event can result from several decisions that are manifested in several different instructions. By the time Cage composed the *Freeman Etudes*, these chance operations were computer-assisted, a fact which may have influenced the quantity of instructions in this work. Each chord is drawn from a limited number of pitches due to the limited number of possible configurations of the left hand, but the sequence of note-events is unconstrained. As a result, the sequence is utterly unpredictable; the non-intentionality that resulted from the use of star charts is reinforced by the accumulated chance operations.

A comparison with standard notational practice may highlight the resulting peculiarity of Cage’s notation. Standard Western notation presents a network of instructions at different levels, a network which articulates an organised whole. For example, notes, motives, phrases and sections may each be organised by expressions and instructions specific to that level. In strong contrast to this practice, the notation of the *Freeman Etudes* operates on a single level: the instructions are for individual note-events only, and there are no instructions for any group of notes, section or etude as a whole. Relationships between adjacent note-events are never indicated, and so the given notation does not lend itself to be read as an organic sequence of events. The single-level organisation is a significant feature of the work, and its effect on the performance merits our attention.<sup>2</sup> Two further notational features also influence the performance of the *Freeman Etudes*: 1) with the exception of pitch and dynamics, many of the instructions determined by chance operations are purely technical and do not specify a sound-result—that is, the instructions don’t tell us what the note should sound like;

2 Works which embrace the techniques of total serialism, such as Boulez’ *Structure I* and Stockhausen’s *Klavierstücke I-IV* have similar characteristics, although the reasons for this are very different.

2) although the notation of pitch and dynamics is conventional, even these tend to function like technical indications because the sequential angularity and the extreme ranges of these parameters make it hard for the performer to *auralise* the outcome. When these features are combined (the single-level organisation, the technical indications and the implied transformation of other notation into technical indications), it emerges that the work obliges the performer to read the score prescriptively, rather than descriptively.

The prescriptive notational practice of the *Freeman Etudes* is similar to that of Cage's earlier works, including those from his indeterminacy period. The attention of the performer is focused on the process of making sound, so that the sounding result is of secondary importance or is left to chance.<sup>3</sup> However, the degree of specificity in the *Freeman Etudes* leaves very little to chance: the multitude of instructions specifies the resulting sound within a very narrow band of possibilities that are hardly indeterminate. One may also speculate whether the score's emphasis on prescription is due to Cage's concern with many timbral features of sound that would have been difficult to specify by means of conventional result-orientated notation,<sup>4</sup> or whether it was part of the compositional design to preserve the randomness of chance operations by making individual note-events as distinct, and packed with determinate specificity, as possible. Either way, the fact that Cage's notation is prescriptive rather than descriptive has two important consequences.

First, prescriptive notation extends the compositional method (chance operations) beyond the boundary of composition and obliges the performer to partake in the transformation of the pitch/rhythm materials. The boundary between composition and performance is blurred, and the performer takes an active role in the compositional process.<sup>5</sup> Second, prescriptive notation allows the composer to specify sounds or characteristics which standard notation cannot capture, particularly a variety of timbral characteristics. The realisation of such characteristics varies from one performer to another; but although the resulting sound cannot be specified in notation, its production method can. In other words, prescriptive notation provides an opportunity for the compositional method to articulate something that is realisable only through its absence in conventional notation.

---

3 Another violin work by Cage from this period, *Eight Whiskus* (1985), also demonstrates this clearly. The vertical positions of the bow and its pressure are indicated above the staves, and these actions "distort" the given melody to such an extent that the melody is only faintly recognisable.

4 *Eight Whiskus* is an extreme example of this.

5 This is a marked difference from *Cheap Imitation*, the score of which leaves nothing further to be transformed.

In the *Freeman Etudes* the tranquil spaciousness of the dots in the star atlas experiences a thicket of transformations, and the resulting note-events are visible but unpredictable. Cage's prepared piano produces a similar result. However, there is a significant difference between the two: on a prepared piano the resulting sound is prepared in advance, but on the violin it is prepared *as it happens*. The sounds which result when playing the *Freeman Etudes* are not pre-determined by nuts and bolts. They have a strong element of unpredictability, since the violinist moves the nuts and bolts, as it were, as she performs.

There is thus a similarity between Cage's notation and that of many of his contemporaries, who make simultaneous use of known and conventional musical gestures on the one hand and unknown and spontaneous sound on the other, so that both the tensions and the strange unities between these contrasting forces acquire an expressive function. But Cage does not use conventional musical gestures. He replaces them with what one might call "powers of contingency": his musical materials are laid out in such a way that the more impossible the notation begins to appear the more powers of contingency it gains. These powers are distinct from both the materials and the resulting sounds, because they are *functional*: they make in performance an expressive link between the visible configuration and its unpredictable sonic equivalent, and they only come to surface while the materials are being put together in performance. In derogatory words they might be called powers of faking. But powers of contingency are constructive. Like conventional musical gestures, they serve to create a musical expression from the material produced by compositional processes.

### **Structure**

The *Freeman Etudes* exhibit a rigorously controlled structure: each etude occupies two facing pages and lasts 84 "bars" (each "bar" represents a predetermined duration).<sup>6</sup> Cage instructs that "a violinist should establish a time-length for the measure and then maintain that tempo from system to system and from etude to etude. It should be short rather than long, as short a time-length as his virtuosity

---

6 There are six staves on each page and each staff has seven "bars". This layout is maintained throughout except in etudes 17 and 18. In my copy of the first two books the spacial distance between adjacent staves on each page is always the same; thus the two pages of each etude have a mirror format, giving a more direct sense of the superimposed, rigid quality of the staff-structure.

permits (circa three seconds).” (Cage 1981: [iii]). This would imply that all the etudes are of the same length: circa 4’12”. However, the ensuing difficulty in performing the first two books led Cage to add: “In Etudes XVII and XVIII, particularly, more ictuses [note-events] appear than can be performed [Cage’s underline]. Instead of finding a push button solution of this problem, a violinist, omitting what he must, should play as many ictuses as possible in the time-length which he has established, minimizing as much as possible the number of gaps in the continuity which results.” (Cage 1992: [iii]). This statement is included in the score of Books 3 and 4, and it is understood that the statement applies to the entire piece including Books 1 and 2.

Cage’s alternative instruction is characteristic of his willingness to be flexible without forsaking his original plan, and it reveals his constructive sensibility. His comment emphasises the structural intention—each of the thirty-two *Etudes* is to retain its initial intended duration of just over four minutes—and makes it clear that the structural scheme has priority over the notes. This differs significantly from the *Etudes Australes* (the *Freeman Etudes*’ sister piece, which preceded it compositionally), in which Cage does not specify the speed or time duration except by saying that “time proportions are given just as maps give proportional distances.” Additionally, he specifies in *Etudes Australes* that

in a performance the correspondence between space and time should be such that the music “sounds” as it “looks”. However, as in travelling through space, circumstances sometimes arise when it is necessary to “shift gears” and go, as the case may be, faster or slower. (Cage 1975: [1])

The flexibility of speed and time-duration in *Etudes Australes* confers the highest degree of importance in the hierarchy of performance considerations to the articulation of notes. Cage alters this hierarchy in a fundamental way in the *Freeman Etudes*, in which he assigns the highest priority in performance to the structural scheme. The consequences of this re-ordering may be summarized as follows.

The structural rigidity produces a speed that is the same throughout the whole of the thirty-two etudes, and a uniform duration that is repeated thirty-two times. Both the nature of the materials and the process to which Cage’s method subjected them seem to run contrary to the steadiness of the maintained speed. The uniform duration, in contrast, confers on the etudes collectively a sense of equal-

ity and similitude. Omitting certain notes, as permitted by Cage in his alternative instructions, risks causing the etudes to further resemble each other; the omission of notes restricts variety, because what the listener hears depends on the capability of the performer. If the performer decides to omit half of the notes in difficult passages to make them more comfortable to play, the etudes will become more alike. Thus, to insist on structural uniformity may cause individual etudes to be scarcely differentiated, leading to quasi-uniformity. Cage accepts this risk, insisting that structural uniformity takes precedence over note-events. Furthermore, that the etudes may begin to sound similar has a direct effect on matters relating to the work's "form".

### **Form**

Etudes 3, 12, 15, 22 and 26 are relatively sparse (in both notes and instructions) while etudes 17, 18, 23 and 29 are so dense that they do not fit onto the page format. The work's overall shape is such that contrasts between the sparse and crowded increase in Books 3 and 4. As stated earlier, the profusion of details in the *Freeman Etudes* leaves very little for the performer to add; but the structure does allow the performer to *omit* some note-events if necessary. This is one of the two interventions Cage allows the performer. The other is the tempo: the two published recordings of the work take 2 hours 13 minutes (János Négyesy) and 1 hour 41 minutes (Irvine Arditti). The average speed per etude is 4'09" (Négyesy) and 3'09" (Arditti). My own performance results in a duration of nearly 5 minutes per etude. Négyesy's speed is approximately that at which Cage envisaged the performance (3 seconds per "bar"); Arditti's performance is at a speed of 2¼ seconds per "bar". Some interesting observations arise. First, differences in speed affect the perceived degrees of intensity, lightness and spaciousness. Second, speed influences the expressive features to which our attention is drawn: a slower performance brings out aspects such as timbral variety and microtonal inflections, and a faster one brings out lightness and the angular shapes.

The biggest difference between the two existing recordings is, however, the sound-quality of the violins. This is not a matter of judging which recording or violinist has a more pleasant or appropriate sound-quality for the work. Rather, the predominant impression is that, because the "randomness" of the materials directs the listener's attention to the sound itself (just as, on hearing a language one

doesn't understand, one begins to listen to the speaking voice), the work magnifies the listener's awareness of minute differences and nuances of violin sound—to a greater extent, perhaps, than in any previous work for this instrument. The “form”—the shape of the piece—may not vary significantly from one performance to another; but the variation is infinite if “form” is understood to embrace forms of *sound*, a fundamental component of any musical performance. In this way, Cage's compositional method as a whole highlights this essential feature of performance, notwithstanding all the constraints that appear to work to the contrary.<sup>7</sup>

This leads to another question—whether the performer should intervene to appropriate the “forms of sound” in Cage's music. Chance operations deny the composer control over the end product. Must they also deny the performer? On one hand, the meticulousness of Cage's compositional method discourages the application of a conventionally “beautiful” sound. On the other, this same meticulousness obliges a performer to assume a degree of appropriation, because Cage's method directs her to mould her sound as the most significant carrier of musical expression in the context. In either case, what is clear is that to appropriate the forms of sound is not to require the application of a conventional instrumental sound. Rather, it suggests an effort to capture the state which brought about this concentration on sound—that is to say, the coming-together of the materials, method and structure.

Discussing construction and contingency in Cage's music, Alastair Williams compares *Music of Changes* for piano (1951), the first work Cage composed entirely by chance operations, with the *Freeman Etudes* and observes that both works demonstrate Cage's willingness to place controlled systems and unpredictable processes side by side:

We have seen this intersection of control and chance at work in *Music of Changes*, which might be described as a determinate score produced by indeterminate means because the result is precise even though chance was used to make decisions. At the same time, however, the compositional procedures produce notational configurations that are sometimes unplayable and which frequently require much

---

7 A similar concentration on sound may be observed in Morton Feldman's work, although the means through which that concentration is achieved are very different.

interpretation. Consequently, a pianist performing *Music of Changes* may well intervene, contra Cage, in a manner that is richly informed by memory and taste. In this respect, Cage's much later *Freeman Etudes* for solo violin echo the structures of *Music of Changes* ... these thirty-two studies used star charts to determine pitches and rhythms thereby producing music so difficult that the violinist is forced to make decisions in order to render the music playable. In both cases the performer assumes at once some authorial responsibility and intervenes as an active human agent. (Williams 2002: 231)

The "authorial responsibility" of the performer does not stop at the decisions that make the unplayable playable. Controlled systems and unpredictable processes are set in a way that enables them to interact to produce a dynamic whole, enacted in a performance. As the materials and structure become more stringently controlled, the variety of the resulting forms is made richer through the human intervention of the performer trying to realise the work. The compositional process *forces* the performer to become engaged in the production of a sounding form, and that engagement constitutes a creative sphere of its own. Thus the objectivity of Cage's compositional process brings about a freedom that arises only through the strength of its objectivity. The musical consequence is that there is much expressive power contained in this dynamism.

The freedom that his compositional process engenders may also be observed in the characterisation of individual etudes. I have mentioned that it can be hard to establish a distinct identity for each etude, depending on how the performer resolves issues of playability. In 1978 Cage was invited to give a twelve-hour live radio broadcast in Amsterdam, with only three announcements—at the beginning, at the end and in the middle. Among the recordings Cage chose for this broadcast were *Etudes Australes*, *Branches* (1976) for amplified plant materials, the *Freeman Etudes*, and *Inlets* (1977) for 3 performers with conch shells, conch trumpet and the sound of fire:

... the morning consisted of *Branches* mostly, and every now and then the *Branches* would stop and you'd hear a piano etude. The image I had in mind was that of going into one of those entertainment parks through those dark tunnels in a



boat, and every now and then you'd see something lit up, some image. And then in the afternoon the tunnel changed from being *Branches* to *Inlets*, the gurgling of the conch shells filled with water, and things that were heard changed from the piano etude to the *Freeman Etudes* played by Paul Zukofsky, and then toward the end they changed to the voice of Demetrios Stratos singing the *Mesostics re and not re Merce Cunningham*.

(Kostelanetz 1988: 165)

Cage's programme suggests that the etudes do not have to be performed in sequence; they may be played separately, or in separate books. Regarding the aesthetic character of the etudes, both Cage's programming for the Amsterdam event and his metaphor seem to imply that each etude can constitute a concrete, closed event. In this context the uniformity of structure, the first principle in the *Freeman Etudes*, acts as the identifier. Earlier I discussed the dangerous possibility that the etudes become increasingly similar when the note-events are reduced by the performer to what is playable. Cage's solution to this problem may be seen in this broadcast example: even if the etudes resemble each other, the changing context in which they are presented renders them aesthetically individual.

### **MORE QUESTIONS**

This article has approached the *Freeman Etudes* from a modernist perspective. The driving force behind my analysis is that the constructive insight gained from it helps *me* as a performer; but I have no intention of claiming that the *Freeman Etudes* embody a modernist aesthetic. Arnold Whittall points out that Cage's penchant for organisation "might seem to claim Cage for mainstream modernism, were it not for the sense created by Cage's purposeless purposes that modernism's inherent tension between aspiration to organicism and resistance to it, played out in a world of intensely human feelings and actions, is not a prime concern." (Whittall 1999: 281). Whittall describes precisely how the idea that the *Freeman Etudes* are a virtuosic work may mislead the listener: virtuosity's association with speed, power, and the overcoming of conflict parallels modernist aesthetics at large, but this does not assist either in the appreciation of the *Freeman Etudes* or in the task of performing them.

Pritchett suggests that Cage saw in musical virtuosity an opportunity for optimism (Pritchett 1993: 198). This may arise in part because performance is necessarily an open-ended act, and virtuosity typifies it. How can the *Freeman Etudes* be performed with an inevitable ease and expression, with an imaginative use of contingency perhaps, in order to celebrate the pleasure of music-making? Composition and performance need not be conceived in a teleological order, particularly when both the composer and performer share in the task of music-making. Rather, composition comes to share in the open-ended nature of performance, an idea that is clearly implied in Cage's compositions.

But sharing in the task of music-making is one thing, sharing in the *act* of music-making is another. This article has concentrated on the former. Its conclusion is therefore necessarily a question: how do composition and performance share in the act of music-making? Collaborative work of this kind takes place when composer and performer participate equally in the task of music-making and the collaboration also has a stake in the act of music-making. In its emphasis on the formation of a musical event, this question is of relevance to performance not only of the *Freeman Etudes* but also of contemporary music in general.