

## The Day the Music Died: Searching for New Practices of Sharing in the Aftermath of the Death of a Composer in Western Art Music

Mieko Kanno

In January 2016 news reported the death of Pierre Boulez. He was a major figure in contemporary Western art music from the 1950s onwards in varied roles as conductor, writer, and influential cultural figure in addition to being a composer. There was a shared sentiment amongst friends and colleagues working in Western art music that the twentieth century was truly over with his death.<sup>1</sup> Boulez was ninety and had been ill for some time, and his death was inevitable; but the most striking fact was that it took more than fifteen years for many of us to gain a sense with certainty that twentieth-century music had gone. Six years on from his death, we may ask: what does the death of a composer signify as a concrete event within a span of time, for a cultural practice such as the performance of contemporary Western art music? This question provides the starting point for looking closely into the subtly changing ways in which musicians and audience share the music in the aftermath of the death of a composer.

Boulez's death reminds us of another prominent composer of the twentieth century, John Cage. Cage died in 1992. It can be said that the passing of time has been kind to Cage, and his music thrives today. Has the practice of his music changed, before and after his death? What can we learn from his case that may apply to Boulez's and other recently deceased composers? The assumption made in the discussion is that the death of a composer does not bring a closure to its musical practice. The 1972 song *American Pie* by singer-songwriter Don McLean has a repeated phrase 'the day the music died', referring to the airplane crash which killed Buddy Holly and two of his band members in 1959; in this context the death of the musicians marked the end

1 The obituaries reveal the prominence of his influence. See for examples from the *Guardian* by Roger Nichols (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jan/06/pierre-boulez>) and the *New York Times* by Paul Griffiths, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/07/arts/music/pierre-boulez-french-composer-dies-90.html>.

of a music-making community, bringing with it an inevitable end to its own cultural values and lifestyle. The death of musicians who perform their own music – rather than that of the producer – evokes the end of that music in the minds of the audience because the identification of the performing musicians with the music is the strongest or the most publicly recognizable. But the context is different when we look at Western art music for two reasons. First, the composer in Western art music has authority as the author of the score which gives the strongest identity to the music that is performed. Despite the fact that not all Western art music is written down on paper with the advance in and availability of electronic music technology, the composer continues to retain considerable authority over the produced musical content in society (including copyright in most countries).<sup>2</sup> Second, the composer is usually dead in the majority of works performed in this genre of music, and the death of a composer is the point from which the standard practice of ‘musicians performing music from the past’ begins to apply. As I have discussed previously, the idea of a living composer is more of an exception than the norm in this music.<sup>3</sup> The creativity of deceased humans literally abounds in Western art music: whether we hear it on the radio, as a podcast, or in a live concert, living and deceased humans are seamlessly mingled together. This view holds true in the concert halls of contemporary Western art music too (where the composers are still alive), because of the presence of ‘tradition’ that this music values as part of its identity. Ideas such as craft and excellence are part and parcel of this tradition.

I use the concept of sharing in discussing creativity and culture surrounding the death of a composer in Western art music today. The topic of human communication about death has been explored by several authors in a 2012 issue on music and death in the journal *Mortality* in particular, where Wolfgang Marx, for example, examines the changing purposes of the Requiem genre in the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Music research has shown that the combination of music and death reveals complex practices of sharing facts and feelings in humans. Observations made by Philip Tagg and Simon Mills on non-Western practices of funeral music emphasise that there are many culturally different ‘behaviours’ towards sharing of emotions.<sup>5</sup> Sharing suggests an egalitarian system where

- 2 Ananay Aguilar discusses legal rights of musicians in the UK and implied division between ‘creativity’ and ‘service provision’ in Western art music. Ananay Aguilar, ‘Distributed Ownership in Music: Between Authorship and Performance’, *Social & Legal Studies*, 27/6 (2017), 776–98.
- 3 I have discussed this in Mieko Kanno, ‘As If the Composer Is Dead’, in Simon Mills (ed), *Mortality*, special issue on music and death, 17/2 (2012), 170–81.
- 4 Wolfgang Marx, ‘“Requiem Sempiternam”? Death and the Musical Requiem in the Twentieth Century’, in Simon Mills (ed), special issue on music and death, *Mortality*, 17/2 (2012), 119–29.
- 5 Philip Tagg, ‘“Universal” Music and the Case of Death’, *Critical Quarterly* 35/2 (1993), 54–98; Simon Mills, ‘Sounds to Soothe the Soul: Music and Bereavement in a Traditional South Korean Death Ritual’, in Simon Mills (ed), special issue on music and

everyone has access to the content. Sharing is also a more practical descriptor than communication and seems suited in raising questions regarding a practice. Who is sharing with whom? Is the sharing reciprocal? What are the stakes in the sharing process? What else changes in the experience of sharing when the composer dies? And what kind of community are we creating through a new type of sharing?

I use theoretical premises from theatre and anthropology yet limit my scope wherever possible to music as the object being shared. I examine two kinds of sharing creativity in the spatial and temporal domains, how the death of a composer may trigger a shift from the spatial to temporal, and what contribution these kinds of sharing may make to the culture across a longer timeframe.

### Spatially Distributed Sharing of Creativity

Richard Sawyer and Stacy DeZutter use the term 'distributed creativity' to refer to 'situations where collaborating groups of individuals collectively generate a shared creative product.'<sup>6</sup> They employ the term 'collaborative emergence' to refer to group processes where unexpected creativity could result:

Because collaborative emergence results from interactions among participants, it must be analyzed not as a product but as a discursive, distributed process. Researchers who study distributed cognition argue that knowledge and intelligence reside not only in people's heads, but are distributed across situated social practices that involve multiple participants in complex social systems.<sup>7</sup>

Sawyer and DeZutter focus on the outcome of a play among the participants, in which playfulness gains an important role. Sawyer's discussions often take jazz improvisation as a topic, emphasising both the egalitarian ethics of musical interaction in it and the social structures that frame it as the necessary conditions for such creativity.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of distributed creativity has in recent years helped the recognition of creative contribution made by performing musicians in Western art music, where the predominant assumption had previously been that musicians would skilfully follow the composer's instructions in the score and that their creativity was secondary in the process. The idea of distributed creativity is

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death, *Mortality*, 17/2 (2012), 145–57.

6 Richard Sawyer and Stacy DeZutter, 'Distributed Creativity: How Collective Creations Emerge from Collaboration', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 3/2 (2009), 81–92.

7 Sawyer and DeZutter, *Ibid.*, p. 83.

8 Richard Sawyer, 'Improvisational Cultures: Collaborative Emergence and Creativity in Improvisation', *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 7/3 (2000), 180–5.

particularly suited when discussing performers' creativity in contemporary music, where the composers are still alive alongside the musicians and audience.<sup>9</sup> Performance studies in Western art music have shown that collaborative processes of composition and performance attest to the presence of distributed creativity, introducing alongside ethics of democratic, shared ownership with its new social structures such as co-authorship.<sup>10</sup> Frequently, collaborative processes between composers and performers in Western art music emphasise distribution of distinct tasks as the starting point, from which negotiation or exploration identifies overlapping areas for potential co-creativity. In this way, collaborative emergence may appear more limited in contemporary Western art music, where the professional territories are frequently marked in advance.

The collaborative mode of creativity has a strong currency in contemporary theatre, including dance. Divergent new forms and aesthetics that have evolved in recent theatre share a common characteristic in that they focus on the processes of theatre rather than on the dramatic text, where indeterminacy, improvisation, and playfulness have structural functions. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in discussing the concept of 'performance as event', provides insight to the powerful 'here and now' using concepts of signifier/signified:

It is no longer a question of their possible combinations ... but a question of the metamorphosis that happens when the signs can no longer be separated from their 'pragmatic' embeddedness in the *event* and the *situation* of theatre ... In this postdramatic theatre of events it is a matter of the execution of acts that are real in the here and now and find their fulfilment in the very moment they happen, without necessarily leaving any traces of meaning or a cultural monument.<sup>11</sup>

The expressive intensification of the 'here and now' revises the signifier-signified relations. Such intensification overwhelms the predetermined signified (if it was predetermined) and turns the relations into a metamorphosis, which is similar to what Sawyer and DeZutter call 'collaborative emergence'. Lehmann's analysis has a potential to be developed into a very different hypothesis: the 'pragmatic embeddedness' does not always have to be a given and it

9 One definition of contemporary music is that it is the music of the composers who are alive. While there are other definitions, limiting the scope to the living status of the composer has been used as a standard criterion.

10 Many excellent studies have been carried out as doctoral theses or projects in the last two decades, such as Barbara Lüneburg's 'A Holistic View of the Creative Potential of Performance Practice in Contemporary Music' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brunel University, 2013); Phoebe Green's 'Inside the Performer's Process: Exploring Four Australian Works for the Viola through Recordings, Analysis, and Reflection' (unpublished DMA dissertation, Queensland University, 2018); and Jennifer Torrence's 'Percussion Theatre: A Body in between' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Norwegian Academy of Music, 2019).

11 Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London, 2006), p. 104.

can be *created*. The concept of ‘performance as event’, as theorised by Erika Fischer-Lichte and developed by Lehmann,<sup>12</sup> suggests the potential that a collaborative distribution of creativity may go beyond the spatial domain. It points towards a direction where a creative transformation may take place in real life as well as in virtual or other domains. While the aforementioned authors are interested primarily in the here-and-now spatial distribution of creativity while the temporal domain is synchronised, the fact that such performance as event can achieve an aesthetic integrity and authenticity as works of art leads to two propositions. First, a new kind of distribution of creativity may take place and find fulfilment *at any stage* in the history of a given art-making process, without giving rise to a single authentic moment.<sup>13</sup> Second, creative processes at different stages may be shared and become collaborative across multiple domains, being freed from the established, teleological production norms.

### Temporally Distributed Sharing of Creativity: Conceptual Framework

The concept of distributed creativity as studied so far in Western art music assumes that the collaborative creativity is synchronic, that is to say it is a spatially distributed, lateral sharing. However, the timespan of a typical piece of Western art music is longer: the composer is usually dead, and the historical context of the musical work may be distinctly different from ours today. This circumstance may be specific to Western art music, and it offers an opportunity to rethink collaborative emergence beyond the spatial domain. How do we conceptualise collaborative creativity across the temporal domain, where collaborative emergence may take place beyond the participatory ‘space sharing’ domain?

Another motivation to consider temporally distributed collaborative creativity is ecological. As Marx, Mills, and Tagg have shown, death is an event to which humans respond with very complex behaviours. *A death changes something* in us, yet it is hard to understand the change beyond factual differences. My hypothesis is that music and music-making practice capture an aspect of the shifting sensibility that we experience through someone’s death. The sociologist Jean-Paul Thibaud describes that ecological crisis is a sensibility crisis when discussing the limitedness of our understanding about urban ambiances.

12 Fischer-Lichte’s work gives aesthetic perspectives to the development of performance art and other new types of theatre. Her theoretical rigour provides opportunities for the theory to be applied to other arts. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (New York, 2008).

13 The writings of Richard Taruskin have consistently questioned the singularity of authentic moment and influenced the debate in dismantling this singularity. Richard Taruskin, *Text & Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York, 1995).

He points out the need for alternative modes of gaining knowledge and suggests that we explore our sensitivity/sensibility to comprehend the complex relation between subject and ambience better.<sup>14</sup> He promotes sensing over perceiving as an effective method for this. When compared to spatially distributed collaborative creativity, temporally distributed collaborative creativity is indeed a harder concept to understand, though it is an extension of the spatialization concept in that it involves a spatialization of temporality. Hence, we attempt at understanding it a new way.

As the discussion so far suggests, distributed creativity usually takes place in the spatial domain. Western art music is no exception to this phenomenon: the most notable example is ensemble playing, where the essence of collaboration is for all to see in it. Composer-performer collaboration is another example, and it works effectively when the two parties come out of their respective creativity niche and become 'musicians' to share the creative purpose. They may not share the stage, yet they share the purpose, and their distributed creativity has both synchronous and asynchronous parts – because many of the compositional tasks take place independently of the performance tasks in this music. The possibility of collaborative emergence despite this asynchrony is where the concept of distributed creativity in the temporal domain begins to suggest theoretical underpinnings for the non-spatial interaction to be considered as collaboration. It also evokes the contrasting observation I have made in the article 'As if the Composer Is Dead' about the musicians preferring non-collaboration (in the spatial domain) with the composer despite the composer's physical presence in the same space.<sup>15</sup> The performers prefer to follow their own established practice of learning the music amongst themselves, even when there is the composer in the same space in front of them, as if this person does not exist, because the established practice of score interpretation provides a sufficient level of creativity without involving the composer as a living individual in the process. While this is an extreme case, though still encountered frequently, it shows that even an artificial asynchrony is sometimes consciously selected to better enable creativity in musical performance. This observation leads to the hypothesis that in Western art music collaboration with a deceased composer is real to the extent that musicians may turn a living one into 'as if' dead in order to gain creativity. What kind of creativity is it that emerges from this type of asynchronous, non-spatial interaction?

An important tenet for distributed creativity in the temporal domain is that a cultural tradition has the power to renew itself. Structural anthropology has outlined this concept as follows: a structure structures itself through practice, without having a conscious mind attempting at structuring it. The main contention of the anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu in his *Outline of a Theory of*

14 Jean-Paul Thibaud, 'A Sonic Paradigm of Urban Ambiances', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 1 (2011), 1–14.

15 Kanno, 'As if the Composer Is Dead'.

*Practice* is that the power of language does not reside in its structural properties but rests on the functional properties derived from the use.<sup>16</sup> In terms of language, he points out that speech does not simply mean spoken words. ‘I’m going home tomorrow’, in twenty-four hours’ time, becomes ‘I go home today’. After another twenty-four hour period, it becomes ‘I came home yesterday’: while the language expressing the fact of my ‘going home’ remains constant, the relevance of this travel as an event that is about to happen, is happening, or has happened, changes over the three days; the fact remains unaltered, but its significance is being updated according to the time and situation; what is said or spoken may not change in its message, but its meaning is renewed according to when it is said, under which situation it is said and how it is said. Bourdieu extends this argument to cultural practices. Every practice requires two relevant concepts in order to formulate a discourse about it: on one hand we encounter the created product, *opus operatum*, by observing its constituent structural features; on the other hand, we learn the mode of creation, *modus operandi*, which consists of a set of strategies to create the product. He argues that understanding the structural features observed in the created product does not always allow you to recreate the product because features do not translate directly into strategies – there are real-life features that have to be considered, such as the function of time. The essence of the product lies not in its objective self but in the (subjective) way in which it is used and practiced in each culture (*habitus*). The structuring disposition – creativity – is determined by the culture itself.

Bourdieu’s theory suggests a model in which temporally distributed creativity may take place. There may be resistance to adapting his notion of practice to the practice of Western art music, because of the higher degree to which individual shares of ownership are recognised in the art music tradition. Yet, Bourdieu’s theory is powerful when we consider that, over a long period of time, the culture itself – not the creative individuals – determines the creativity.

### John Cage and His Sharing of Creativity

What distinguishes American composer John Cage (1912–92) from his fellow composers worldwide is the breadth of his profile. He was known as a quasi-philosopher who applied ideas from Zen Buddhism to his work and redrew conceptual lines between sound and silence; a visual artist and poet, in addition to being a composer; and a theoretician who introduced chance and indeter-

16 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977), 18–9. While Bourdieu’s subject is anthropology, his analyses in ‘The Objective Limits of Objectivism’ (section 1, chapter 1) outline a range of concepts from rules, strategies, to the irreversibility and significance of sequence/durations, which are useful for the present analysis of a musical practice.

minacy as fundamental tools in creative arts through *Fluxus* and other experimental movements. He had a public personality and built a myth around his creativity. The core of the myth was his attempt at abandoning his ego and control in his creative product. His effort was in direct opposition to the ideas of excellence in Western art music, where self and control were considered indispensable; it also disagreed with the Modernism aesthetics of contemporary music at the time, with its ever-increasing levels of expertise and specificity. It can be seen that the myth of John Cage is at the origin of his enduring popularity and appeal for a wider range of art practitioners and audience. His centenary celebrations took place in 2012 more in art museums than in music performance venues.<sup>17</sup> Interest in Cage continues to grow on YouTube, social media, as well as in scholarly and art publications.<sup>18</sup> Cage provides an interesting case study in assessing changes in the practice of his artistic legacy, with his death in 1992 as a marker that separates before and after.<sup>19</sup> We examine the shift the death of Cage prompted in our attitude towards the composer's creative role.

It is well known that Cage was an avid collaborator with fellow musicians, dancers, and artists.<sup>20</sup> He was a pioneer in exercising distributed creativity in the spatial domain. Despite his reputation as someone embracing new values such as chance and non-intention, he concurrently had a hallmark of a traditional Western art music composer in that, while he was open and collaborative, he had very clear values, aesthetics, and methodologies of his own as a composer. He was a disciplined professional composer: as William Brooks points out, Cage is consistent throughout his career in his inclination to par-

17 Report from the John Cage Centennial Festival, Washington DC, 4–10 September 2012. <http://www.johncage2012.com/map.html>.

18 The background and history of research on Cage is recorded, up to 2012, in Deborah Campana, 'Happy New Ears! In Celebration of 100 Years: The State of Research on John Cage', *Notes*, 69/1 (2012), 9–22.

19 It should be noted that the availability and accessibility of Cage's reference materials is also key to his popularity. Cage's archival materials are housed mainly in four places in the USA: the archive of the John Cage Trust at Bart College in New York State; the John Cage Music Manuscript Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; the John Cage Papers at Wesleyan University, Connecticut; and the John Cage Collection at Northwestern University, Illinois. Cage held exclusive contract with publisher C. F. Peters (the New York branch of Edition Peters) from the early 1960s. His compositions have been published by Peters since then and remain commercially available still today.

20 Literature on Cage's collaborations with fellow musicians, dancers, and artists is voluminous and still growing. In addition to the publications which specifically names Cage's collaboration as the topic (such as Iddon), I should mention the work by James Pritchett, whose writings record most explicitly the essential part the collaboration played in Cage's oeuvre. James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge, UK, 1993); Martin Iddon, *John Cage and David Tudor: Correspondence on Interpretation and Performance* (Cambridge, UK, 2013).



tition the act of composing into discrete processes, even in the late works that demonstrate greater diversity in composition.<sup>21</sup> In stark contrast to the seeming surrender of control resulting from the use of chance and indeterminacy, Cage had a clear sense of intention as well as ownership over his composition: he complained that his music had been misinterpreted and was indignant at descriptions claiming that his music had been characterised by non-intention. Even *4'33"* was, according to Cage, most often misunderstood.<sup>22</sup> He could be said to be a typical Western art music composer who respected the distribution of distinct tasks in any collaboration, worked diligently to find overlapping areas for potential co-creativity, and went on to make most of this potential. It is interesting to observe that scholarship continues to explore Cage's philosophy, ethos, and practice in collaborating with his contemporary fellows; we are keen to gain lessons from his collaborations. These studied collaborations continued up to 1992, the year of his death. As mentioned above, nearly thirty years after his death a very different kind of practice about Cage's work seems to flourish alongside rigorous scholarship on Cage's own practice. These represent two types of sharing: one that Cage shared in his time with his fellows, the other that Cage shares out-of-his-space and out-of-his-time, mostly post-1992. The new practice about Cage's work belongs to this out-of-his-time collaboration, that is to say, temporally distributed sharing of creativity.

My hypothesis is that there is a specific element in Cage's work which not only enables but also encourages and promotes collaborative emergence of creativity in the temporal domain. And this specific element is found in the way he provides musical information for the performers, and not in his behaviour.

The amount of information Cage provides – both in words and in musical notes – varies from composition to composition. Some works appear to have very little information, to the extent that it is almost possible to put on a performance at sight, while others contain so much information that it takes months of preparation. In either of the extremes, he often offers pragmatic solutions to the performers. The sparsely notated *Violin Solos I and II*, which is part of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, has the following performance notes:

Notes are of three sizes: small, medium and large. A small note is either ppp, pp, p in the dynamic range or short in duration or both. A medium note is either mp, mf in the dynamic range or medium in duration or both. A large note is either f, ff, fff in the dynamic range or medium in duration or both. The possible interpretations are many: thus, a large note may be long

- 21 William Brooks identifies four conceptual domains of materials, method, structure, and form. William Brooks, 'Music II: From the Late 1960s', in David Nicholls (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage* (Cambridge, UK, 2002), p. 128.
- 22 John Cage, 'Letter to Zurich', in Richard Kostelanetz (ed), *John Cage: Writer* (New York, [1991] 1993), pp. 255–6. Also cited in Magnus Andersson, 'John Cage as Meta-Composer' in William Brooks (ed), *metaCage: Essays on and around Freeman Etudes, Fontana Mix, Aria* (Ghent, 2009), p. 17.

in length but of any amplitude; or, it may be loud, but of any duration in time. Also, a small note may be short in length but of any amplitude, or it may be soft, but of any duration in time.<sup>23</sup>

These lines are from the performance notes for *Freeman Etudes* for violin, which have an abundance of information in the notation:

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 permits (circa three seconds). In Etudes XVII and XVIII, particularly, more incuses [notated events] appear than can be performed. 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.<sup>24</sup>

Both performance notes provide helpful suggestions. But are they necessary? The performance notes for the *Solos* spell out the implications of the rules Cage sets out. The notes for *Freeman Etudes* suggest a contingency plan as the composer suspects that a realisation of the notated details is highly improbable. In both cases, the composer is offering options: the piece can be presented in a variety of forms, with a differing amount and quality of material. The fact that these options are offered is remarkable in three ways. Firstly, any contingency solution for performance (in case of the *Freeman Etudes* in particular) is normally at the performer's discretion to the extent that it is not for the composer to suggest it. There are composers who provide performance alternatives – due to technical difficulty or limited availability of the required instruments – but that is rare in late twentieth century music due to the high level of professionalism in performance. Secondly, contingency solutions are normally discussed between the composer and performer as solutions specific to the given occasion or performance circumstance. The solutions therefore do not become generalised, certainly not written down; but Cage explicitly provides them as part of the score for publication. And thirdly, the suggested solutions may be interpreted in ways that may undermine a close correspondence between the sounding result and the given details in the score.

Similar pragmatic solutions are suggested in other compositions by Cage. There is tension within Cage himself. On one hand his music demonstrates a desire to abandon his ego. On the other, contrary to his attempted self-abnegation, he constantly poses questions and produces firm views on what should happen in his music, even at the risk of being misunderstood or misused. Magnus Andersson proposes the term 'meta-composition' to describe the practice inherent in Cage's music that structures movement from intention

23 John Cage, performance notes for *Violin Solos I and II* (New York, 1960).

24 John Cage, performance notes to *Freeman Etudes* (New York, 1990).

to non-intention. According to Andersson, the three most important features of Cage's meta-composition are:

- 1) ... Cage most often composed an overall 'structure'... The structure resulted from a subjective choice. 2) ... Cage submitted these [structural] decisions to chance. This does not mean that chance worked freely. Even though Cage was asking questions and applying chance procedures, he always knew something about the outcome of *his* chance operations. 3) ... Cage *intentionally* struggled to write *non-intentional* music.<sup>25</sup>

Andersson does not claim that Cage has been the only composer to meta-compose, yet claims that few, if any, other composers meta-composed to the extent that Cage did. Observations about this tension are not new. But identifying this practice of meta-composition as distinct and separate from the standard practice of music composition is new; and it leads us to a new insight in the context of temporally distributed sharing of creativity.

Meta-composition is part of music composition as far as the composer is concerned, but it is also a tool that can be used for composing performance as event. As I have pointed out, Cage's performance notes often provide information that is discretionary or helpful but unnecessary. Likewise, his musical notation – Cage's main creative product – can also be seen to provide information that is discretionary or helpful but unnecessary. The performance outcome of the music by Cage can sometimes be unrecognizable when compared to the notation, a point which is often considered problematic in the performance practice of Western art music. The concept of meta-composition lends not only a helpful argument to this criticism but also a persuasive support to the question of why performing Cage today is not just a performance of his musical output but instead a collaboration with his thoughts in the temporal domain. The practice of meta-composition offers opportunities for musicians to develop a performance separately from the notation, from the words said in the performance notes, and from the reported and recorded collaborative practices of Cage himself.

Let us look at *Freeman Etudes* to examine how such collaborative emergence of creativity can take place in the temporal domain. *Freeman Etudes* is frequently seen as representing one of the most complex notations Cage has produced, and also a work that demonstrates his strong ego as a composer. Though it is noteworthy that he once described *Freeman Etudes* and *4'33"* as follows: "The common denominator between those two pieces is central to my work: namely, to find ways of writing music where the sounds are free of my intentions."<sup>26</sup> In *Freeman Etudes* Cage superimposes staves onto a star atlas,

25 Magnus Andersson, 'John Cage as Meta-Composer', 19.

26 Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (New York, 1988), p. 231. I should add that these two works may be very different as compositions, but the performances of these works have a common feature, namely that the sounding content is curiously unmemorable. This is a point outside the scope of this chapter, except to suggest that a sensory

then determines musical material following chance operations. There is a strict rigidity to the method he uses for the generation of musical material. The produced material is sometimes sparse, sometimes over-abundant, though it never undermines the strong presence of the generational principles. The optional nature of the material, due to the chance operation producing somewhat impractical configurations on the page, gives the performer not only a discretion but also a creative uncertainty. The performer then has a choice: to focus more on the composer's instructions (words and notes), or rather on the generational principles that have brought about the composition. The two do not necessarily overlap. The performer can focus more on the implications of the generational principles, and this process sometimes revises the score substantially to the extent that the score may not be recognisable from the performance. But this process is not towards non-intentional music; the intentionality is handed over to the performer, who takes over the task of meta-composition as meta-performance. This is where collaborative emergence takes place, as Cage's meta-composition gains life of its own while his composition stays fixed. While Cage was alive, there was no separation between his composition and meta-composition; but the passing of time since his death allows this separation like in the case of liquids, where both elements, and their potential, can be distinguished.

It is a critical feature of meta-composition that it has the power to renew composition as a musical work through performance. This is precisely the reason why I contend that this performance practice is a *creative* collaboration with Cage in the temporal domain, rather than merely a performance of the work from the past. Meta-composition can renew the music, while composition cannot. When meta-composition and composition separate out, the former gains its own generative power in the present moment of performance as event.<sup>27</sup> The meta-composition is therefore a structuring element that structures its practice, in Bourdieu's sense. It is a tool that supports the renewal operation for a practice, which Cage has set up in his composition and started with his collaborators. But while this temporally distributed sharing has no non-intentionality, it is Cage's desire towards non-intentionality that triggers the shift in the focus of collaboration, because, as in Zen Buddhism, *chance leads to change*. This desire also allows disruption in the linear development of the structuring process, because the tension between intention and non-intention accelerates renewal in the practice. Meta-composition provides opportunities for an imaginative culture to find its own solutions.

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experience may also be considered in evaluating such a statement.

27 This may be part of the reason (in addition to the fact that Cage showed interest in live electronics in 1950s and 60s) why electronically mediated live performance of Cage is popular today. The number of online performances of Cage's oeuvre in 2020 alone, under the social distancing guidelines due to the pandemic, attests to this.

However, at this point we reach the question whether such a meta-compositional approach towards Cage's music is what he wanted. The debate continues.<sup>28</sup> If we follow entirely what Cage wanted, that day in September 1992 might have been the day the music died. But the culture itself finds ways to renew creativity, and in doing so it reorganises ways in which music can be shared through collaborative creativity.

### Sharing in the Future for the Practice of Western Art Music

Like Andersson, it is not my claim that meta-composition is unique to Cage. But no composer has expressed himself in such contrasting personalities while sustaining such contrasting ideologies as strongly as Cage did. We still collaborate with him, facilitated by his meta-composition, in the temporal domain. When we reflect the fact that Western art music has renewed itself and continues to be a living culture, it becomes evident that we have always found new ways of sharing creativity with dead composers and any other agents across the temporal domain. We may see the historically informed performance practice as an example of this. The changes in the mode of collaborative creativity are perhaps the most perceptible – though not necessarily the most comprehensible – at the threshold of the death of a composer.

This death threshold shifts the collaborative creativity from synchronic to temporal. The temporal type of collaborative creativity is the most prevalent in Western art music, and it suggests that the seemingly limited range for collaborative creativity in this music should perhaps be appraised differently. Seen from this perspective, Western art music affords significant room for creativity, and its creative potential also explains the longevity of this culture.

It should be apparent by this point that there are two conditions that need to be accepted in order to enable temporarily distributed sharing of creativity in music: first, that nobody owns the music exclusively; second, that no outcome has ultimately any permanent or concrete existence as music, all despite the notation, performance, knowledge, and all the other material or conscious traces that point to the music's prior and imagined presence. In other words, the stakeholders (composers, performers, audience, producers, and others involved in the sharing of music) need to accept that there is collective creativity across a long period of the life of the music, from its conception to performance to the establishment and further transformations, that continues till today.

28 The latest discussion by a new-generation performer can be seen for example in this blog by Lucy Abrams: *Lucy Abrams-Husso* (blog), "Reflections on SAAR – Part 3," 3 September 2019, <https://www.lucyabrams.net/news/2019/9/10/reflections-on-saar-part-3>.

What about Boulez, whose death had triggered my thoughts about the sense of time passing and about varied kinds of sharing creativity across the time domain? Besides being a composer, Boulez had a strong presence in his other capacities and abundantly shared and exercised collaborative creativity even if you had never met him. His legacies continue institutionally and culturally. Boulez was the person who represented all these aspects in one figure. His death signalled not only the death of a composer but the end of a particular type of sharing creativity in contemporary music – hence the feeling of the twentieth century having truly gone with his death. His death has triggered a splintering of the diverse elements into discrete parts. We are yet to see what effect such splintering may have on our practices of collaborative creativity with his music. While it still seems too early to observe which kinds of sharing may emerge from his death, I hope I have presented a sufficient argument in this chapter to support the view that a culture such as Western art music will find its own generative power to renew itself beyond the individual incident of human death.