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Contemporary Percussion in the Age of Information Overload: Three Pieces for Percussion and Tape

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Contemporary Percussion in the Age of Information Overload:
Three Pieces for Percussion and Tape

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Music Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

Eric John Derr

Committee in charge:

Professor Steven Schick, Chair
Professor Anthony Burr
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2014
The Dissertation of Eric John Derr is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful wife, Frankie Martin. Your love, support, perspective and joy are a constant source of growth and inspiration. I couldn't have done this without you.
When I was invited to speak in January 1961 at the Evening School of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, I was told that the burning questions among the students there were: Where are we going? and What are we doing?

*John Cage*
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Recordings on file at Mandeville Special Collections Library:

- Percussion – Eric Derr (1, 2, 3)
- Piano – Kyle Blair (2)
- Recording Engineer – Clint Davis (1, 2, 3)
- Mixing – Clint Davis (1), Tom Erbe (2), Patrick Hart (3)

1.) windowed 1 Version 1 – Johannes Kreidler

2.) Kontakte – Karlheinz Stockhausen

3.) 700 Club – Patrick Hart
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I would like to acknowledge Professor Steven Schick for his support, guidance, trust, and encouragement as my advisor, my teacher, and the chair of this committee. You have taught me so much.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in red fish blue fish (Leah Bowden, Dustin Donahue, Jon Hepfer, Ryan Nestor, Steven Solook, Bonnie Whiting) for their incredible support throughout my time at UCSD.
VITA

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    Studies in Solo Music
    Professors Aiyun Huang and Fabrice Marandola

    Studies in Percussion Performance
    Mike Green, Ted Atkatz, Eric Millstein, Al Payson, Fred Selvaggio
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Contemporary Percussion in the Age of Information Overload:
Three Pieces for Percussion and Tape

by

Eric John Derr
Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance
University of California, San Diego, 2014
Professor Steven Schick, Chair

This document explores the process of learning, performing and recording
three pieces for percussion and tape:  *Kontakte* by Karlheinz Stockhausen, *windowed
1 Version 1* by Johannes Kreidler, and *700 Club* by Patrick Hart.  Topics covered will
be the challenges posed by these pieces, their philosophical implications, the
differences between the stage and the recording studio, and meditations on
information overload. The recordings are included and should be listened to as texts.
INTRODUCTION

My first performance of contemporary classical music took place in 2005 while studying percussion performance at DePaul University in Chicago. My teacher, Mike Green, approached me about a performance opportunity that had been passed along to him by his fellow faculty member, Juan Campoverde. The piece was *Rimbarimba* by Rodrigo Sigal (2002), a composition for marimba and tape. My engagement with this piece sparked a nearly decade-long relationship with new music performance and an interest in electronic music.

In this document, I will discuss three pieces for percussion and tape that I have learned, performed and recorded as a part of my doctoral studies: Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kontakte*, Johannes Kreidler's *windowed 1 Version 1*, and Patrick Hart's *700 Club*. I will discuss the challenges posed by these pieces, their philosophical implications, and the process of learning and performing them. I have also included studio recordings that I have produced of each work and will discuss the process of recording them in comparison to performing them live.

KONTAKTE

One of the joys and challenges of learning Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kontakte* (and similarly, Sigal's *Rimbarimba*) was getting to know the tape part. The performers need to know the tape intimately enough to follow it, align with it, balance and blend with its sound world, but also flexibly enough to be able to respond to it and each
other musically. It is a sonic sculpture that is perceived through time. Regardless of how you play, the tape is always going to act the same way, yet the sum of the tape part plus the musicians is what will vary from performance to performance.

*Kontakte* is a highly sectional composition made up of moments, or “self-contained sections that do not relate to each other in any functionally implicative manner” (Kramer, 179). The pianist Kyle Blair and I learned the piece in a way that aligned with this moment-form to help us achieve the level of precision found in the score. We separated the piece into its moments (and often into smaller sub-moments) and learned them one-by-one over the course of a year. Initially, we were concerned with great attention to detail in the electronic part, how those sounds related to the sounds that we were making, how our notation aligned with the tape notation, and how we were going to execute each passage.

Since the piece is mainly written in proportional notation, we were faced with the decision about whether or not to quantize our notes. While we discovered a small number of instances where quantization was helpful to us, we mainly decided not to think about playing in relationship to a pulse. What we ended up doing instead was learning how to play together through the repetition of short phrases.

I would load the given section into an audio editing software and connect my laptop to the PA system. This allowed me to highlight the section of tape that we wanted to work with and define our starting and ending points. We would generally start with a very short section, talk about all of the musical parameters, try to play it with the tape, talk about any alignment issues, play it with the tape again, talk about any musical issues, play it without the tape if necessary, and then finally, play it with
the tape again. This process was very tedious, but it also allowed each little bit of the tape and our collective musical responses to get imprinted into our aural and muscle memories. As we moved forward in our process, this rigid initial approach allowed us the opportunity to interact with the tape with more expressivity and musicality.

**WINDOWED 1 VERSION 1**

I grew up listening to at least as much of what is commonly called “popular” music as I did “classical” music. As I get older, although my tastes change as do my relationships to these terms and my perspectives on these industries, this trend continues. Between 2007 and 2012, I composed a series of pieces that took preexisting pop songs and re-imagined, prolonged and distorted them to create new pieces of music. These pieces were an attempt to reconcile my interest in these two different strands of music. While these pieces were executed with varying levels of conceptual success, they helped me understand that this was an area that I wanted to explore further.

Johannes Kreidler's *windowed 1 Version 1* is a part of his “Music with Music” compositions which juxtapose modified fragments from preexisting sound files with live instrumental sounds. The fragments come from pop, classical and jazz recordings that have been treated with a “windowing” effect. To describe this effect, let's imagine that we're sitting in a house with many windows. Each one represents a separate sound file that we only hear when the window is open. The windows are opened and shut in different combinations and for different lengths of time. Some are only open
for such a short period of time that the sound that comes through is nearly unrecognizable. Other times there are many windows open at one time creating a very full and cacophonous result.

The percussion part is similarly “windowed”. The windows of sound are opened by the sharp attack of a struck instrument and closed by muting that same instrument. This creates a shared musical language between the live material and the fragmented tape. Within this shared language, however, there is a friction between the “pure” musical sounds of the percussion part and the sounds of the recordings that come loaded with cultural associations (Kreidler).

windowed 1 Version 1 comes with a click track and the whole piece is precisely notated against a constant tempo. The process of studying the tape in this piece was to understand its fragmented feeling and how to best replicate that through my instrumental sounds. Most of the percussion parts were extremely dense and required a high level of technical facility before I could start to understand how they would blend with the language of the tape. Once I did start to incorporate the tape into my practice sessions, the act of the playing the piece felt like setting two separate but related streams in motion and letting them run their courses concurrently.

The muting of the percussion instruments poses a technical challenge in certain sections. There is such a density of notes to be played and muted and they sometimes overlap with each other or with a sustained tremolo. Another challenge is posed by the number of events happening in certain sections sections and the large distances needed to be covered between instruments. The final large challenge is posed by the differences in materials of the instruments to be played. An ideal mallet on one
instrument might be much too hard or soft for another instrument that needs to be played immediately afterwards. Given these challenges, it was necessary in some sections to make prioritized decisions about which details to keep in and which to leave out of my live interpretation.

700 CLUB

I started playing percussion when I was a kid mainly because I wanted to learn how to play the drum set. My parents graciously bought me a drum set when I was 12 and for the next 6 years, that was the instrument that I played and practiced the most. Since I enrolled in music school in 2004, I have left the drum set behind in my practice little by little. At the same time, my admiration for great drummers and great drum set playing has deepened. 700 Club was partially born out of a desire to reconnect with the drum set, incorporating everything I had learned as a musician in the last decade.

Patrick Hart wrote the tape piece 700 Club as a stand-alone work in 2010. To create it, Patrick took all of the MIDI data that he had on his computer at the time, imported it into a sequencing software, mapped it onto a template of an early general MIDI sound-font, and increased the tempo to 700 bpm. The result of this compression of time is an extremely dense texture.

While listening to 700 Club one day, I had the vision of a drum set part riding along side of this frenetic piece, trying to keep up. I'm inspired by the drumming of Greg Saunier from Deerhoof, Zach Hill from Hella, and Dave King from The Bad
Plus. All of these drummers can “shred”, but they are also sensitive, nimble, flexible, and humorous. I approached Patrick with the idea of adding a drum part to 700 Club that contained these elements. He accepted and our work began.

The drum set version of 700 Club is a highly structured composed improvisation. There is a score but it is very open. The instrumentation is also relatively open and flexible. Patrick decided on some drum sounds that he thought would blend well with the tape and then added some optional suggestions. The score divides the piece into sections along a linear timeline and gives four separate parameters for each section: rhythm (how much of a rhythmic pulse the section has), shred (how much I should be shredding in the section), noise (how loud the section would be), and cues (whether or not I would be aligned with certain specific cues in the tape part during that section). In addition to these parameters, there are also descriptive words written in most sections.

Learning this piece was actually surprisingly similar to how I learned Kontakte. I decided early in the process that I would be memorizing this piece and spent a lot of time getting familiar with the tape before I started playing along with it. From my early talks with Patrick, I knew that this piece was going to require speed and a nimble touch. As I was developing these skills abstractly, I was also trying to figure out a way to apply them to the piece. The tape is explosive, abrasive, overloaded, but at the same time it has rhythms that can be tracked by a listener. I tried to figure out these rhythms and play along with them in a one-to-one relationship, but this proved to be very challenging to execute and the result was often unsatisfying. It took a long time to figure out how to play along with a machine who doesn't have
my limitations or have to follow my rules.

I sent Patrick an early version of the first few minutes and his brief response helped me shift my focus; “the shreddy parts could be shreddier but I think no matter what that's going to be the case”. I embraced then that even at my maximum speed, the tape would always be faster than me. This opened me up to the structure of each section on a more macro-level and allowed me to re-imagine what my end-goals might look like and what my cohabitation with the tape might sound like. I stopped trying to “become the tape”, and started trying to approach the energy that is given off by the tape as much as possible.

The final challenge of the piece, and possibly the biggest one, is that of endurance. The performer and audience are asked to keep up with a sonic barrage for 14 minutes with few moments of respite. The music is relentless. Sectional changes are frequent and abrupt. Less than halfway through the performance, I could feel my muscles starting to become tense. My speed decreased and I lost the finer control of my wrists and fingers. Throughout the piece, the listener also becomes fatigued by the information overload being presented to them.
700 Club presents an environment that is overloaded, fragmented, and over-saturated, but it forces me to come to terms with these conditions throughout its duration in an almost meditative way. Meditative like a 14-minute-long slap in the face could be meditative.

My attention is very fragmented these days. Distractions are everywhere. Between writing sentence 1 and 2 of this paragraph, I received a text message from my sister. I remembered to turn off my internet connection (I'm writing on my laptop) but I forgot to turn off my phone. She's asking about whether or not I'm staying with her this weekend. I've forgotten to respond to her for a few weeks now! I'd better write her back immediately. Oh, but can I get public transportation to her place? Better turn the internet connection back on to check google maps....oh wait! I should write about this in my dissertation! I still haven't replied to her message or looked up the directions. All information is everywhere. I can be reached at anytime. I can reach any information at any time. Busy, connected, fragmented. Information loses its preciousness as it loses its scarcity. I want to turn my phone off, but maybe she'll write me back one more time. I don't remember the last time I actually turned my phone off. It took me a couple of seconds to actually remember which of the multi-purpose buttons turns the phone off. I just got a smartphone this past summer. I now live with a tiny computer in my pocket at all times. It is the last thing I look at before I go to sleep, and the first thing I look at when I wake up. I'm listening to music right now too. In the library, on headphones. The same two Tim Hecker albums on repeat that I
I listened to the whole time I was writing my quals. After getting to the library and before turning off my internet the first time, I spent about 25 minutes reading articles and comments that friends had posted on Facebook. I read an article once where singer-songwriter John Mayer talked about how his intense drive to publish 144-character-or-less “Tweets” on Twitter was keeping him from being able to write his songs. Social media posts ARE publishing. I heard someone use the term “micro-blogging” to discuss what people decide to publish through social media. I’d look it up, but I’ve got to keep that internet OFFFFFF! Posting pictures of the food they’ve made or ordered, describing a reaction to anything, a single thought, an observation, a frustration, a nothing, a something.

I’ve recently downloaded the Vine app on my phone. Vine is a video app owned by Twitter. Users are given a platform to make videos of 6 seconds or less that then loop infinitely until the user decides to scroll down to another video. I’ve lost myself for hours at a time scrolling through scores of 6-second videos. Time disappears. There is only so much to be gained from watching a 6-second video clip. The content creator or the viewer can only invest so much in 6 seconds worth of information. The usual feeling I have after checking out Vines is one of emptiness. Why am I drawn to it? Why do I keep watching? Why can’t I stop scrolling? Maybe the next video is going to be the one that makes it all worth while. Maybe it all adds up to something? Are we all turning into advertisers for ourselves? How is this connectedness and drive to micro-publish affecting the way that I see the world, act in the world? The way that I think about myself as a part of the world? The way that I function on a day to day basis? What affect does this have on art? Music? What is
the future of music performance going to look like? Is this just about focus, dedication and drive? Is it about desire for simplicity, clarity, positive routine? Freedom from distraction? Fear of loss of self-agency?

Back to listening to music for slight mind-space change and hope of inspiration. How can I not be sick of these albums after listening to them so many times? I'm remembering a story a friend told me about how he would almost miss the bus because he would obsessively listen to the same passage of a certain piece over and over again in the mornings before school. This music gives me focus, gives me clarity, I can track time as I'm listening. I enter a state of simultaneous timelessness and timefulness. I have to distract myself from my distractions. Plight of the modern era? How do I balance building a career doing the work that I want to be doing while effectively battling overload, distractions, the desire to over-share, to over-publish? How to create healthy life and work habits that reinforce each other? How to create a sustainable career, a sustainable relationship with music, and a sustainable relationship with modern technology?

* * * * * * *

While I don't have the answers to these questions, they have preoccupied me throughout my DMA, and these questions are reflected in my relationships with the three pieces I'm discussing in this paper. The intensity of 700 Club is shocking at first, but as the piece goes on, I gradually become desensitized to it. This becomes the new norm. For me this is similar to experiences I have had on airplanes during take-off.
The noise of the engines seems very loud initially, but then I gradually adjust to the new sound level, and the overload of constant noise usually lulls me to sleep. Once we've adjusted to the engine noise of 700 Club, the shock then comes when the piece drops below this new elevated noise floor or during one of the piece's many abrupt jump cuts between sections.

The sections of 700 Club are clearly defined, dense, and often very short. In these ways, they remind me of the 6-second Vine videos or 144-character Twitter posts. However, instead of looping back on itself like in Vine, or being broadcast as a single packet of information like a Tweet, each section is stitched directly to another clearly defined, dense, and probably short section. 700 Club presents this long stream of short building blocks that demand my whole attention, but can also be so overwhelming that I start to ignore it. It creates for me a similar state of simultaneous timelessness and acute awareness of the passing of time to the one I mentioned earlier.

windowed 1 Version 1 has about 5 clearly defined sections. Each section is quite short as the piece is only 5 minutes long, but they feel more spacious than those in 700 Club. The overload here comes in part from speed, but not the speed of individual drum strokes or switches between sections. It comes from the speed of changes between the instruments the percussionist is playing and the rapid switching between sound files in the tape.

Layering and volume play a role in the overloading as well. Ten seconds of the tape might contain applause, a saxophone multiphonic off of a jazz album, the scherzo from Bruckner's 9th symphony, a growl from a heavy metal track, and a possibly forgotten hit by the rock band Oasis. In addition to that there could be a sustained
tremolo on one percussion instrument and pointed attacks on all the others. A listener is also faced with the added layer of associations they might have with the sound files. How much attention can we pay to any of these fragments of sound and our associations with them before they're erased by those that come after?

*Kontakte* is the longest of these three pieces at 34.5 minutes. It is highly sectional as well and has both the longest and shortest sections of any of the pieces. There are abrupt changes between sections in addition to smoother ones. There are both sections that are quite sparse as well incredibly dense. There are moments when the coordination between percussion, piano and tape are quite taxing on my mental capacities as a performer, but also moments that are very relaxed. Information overload occurs at specific moments and in relation to other non-overloaded parts of the piece.

Would this been received as an overload of information to an audience member at its premiere in 1960? In a review of an early performance, Peter Stadlen mentions the “tedium of [Stockhausen’s] *Kontakte*, a seemingly endless electronic piece” (484). In another, Reginald Smith Brindle asks whether the audience listening to works by Stockhausen, Cage and others had “witnessed an enormous artistic evolution, or the corruption of all musical values” before stating that *Kontakte* “seems determined on the disorganization of all conventional musical factors” and that the piece had exceeded his 20-minute attention limit (712). A third review calls it “intolerably tiresome” and chides Stockhausen for excessive unpredictability which the writers believe “creates an effect of repetitiousness and thus cancels itself out” (Wörner et. al, 518).
LEARNING AND PERFORMING

With Kontakte and 700 Club, the initial learning phase was spent immersed with the tape part, trying to understand its sound-world on its own terms and figuring out how to fit into that. In Kontakte, even though the percussion and piano parts rarely have a rhythm or tempo, all of the other parameters are prescribed. This allowed me to use a standard approach to learning the notes, dynamics, and shapings. Once the notes were learned, I then had to use a new method to figure out how to time them with the tape and Kyle's piano part. Kyle and I developed our own language and methods for figuring out how to play together with the tape. As our familiarity with the sections grew, we would then stitch the sections together to play increasingly larger sections until we were able to run the piece.

When learning 700 Club, I started by memorizing the tape like I did with Kontakte. However, due to the improvisatory nature of the drum set part, each day felt like starting from scratch. I had a strong idea of what I wanted the drum set part to sound like, but I didn't know how I was going to execute it. I would practice drum set in isolation, trying to increase my control, speed, and agility, and solidify the type of feel I was trying to create. I would then listen to a section of the tape and try to play along, incorporating the work I had been doing, simultaneously rethinking my relationship to the drum set as I was learning the piece.

Eventually, a sonic vision for each section began to coalesce through a combination of my reaction to the tape and the parameters, text instructions and humor contained in the score. Patrick's score was full of subtle (or sometimes obvious) jokes
that helped stimulate and generate ideas for the drum part as well as a positive way of working with the tape.

Learning the percussion part in *windowed 1 Version 1* was a very slow and methodic process. I learned about one page at a time and had to begin at almost quarter-speed. Since the tape has a click track, I decided to first learn my part strictly with a metronome. My priorities were learning the rhythms and dynamics and figuring out in slow-motion the choreography necessary to attack and mute the appropriate instruments. Once all of this was comfortable, I would gradually increase the tempo by three beats per minute. I started at quarter-tempo so that I could realize all of the details in the score. After speeding up a few times, I would reach a tempo where I could no longer realize the section like I had practiced. Then I would have to reevaluate my actions and adjust the choreography slightly to fit the new compressed timeframe. I reached several plateaus like this along the way, and the further the tempo moved towards the metronome marking of the tape part, the more extreme my adjustments needed to become.

There were times along my tempo-journey when I would add in the tape at a reduced speed. This helped me make sure I knew how the sound file interjections related to my live part. I found, however, that this wasn't very helpful in shaping my percussion interpretation. Mostly, I would listen to the tape alone at full speed and use my relationship with that sound-world to help shape my slow detail work. It was as I got closer to tempo that it started making sense to me to add the tape into my rehearsals. Then I was able to start thinking about how I was going to make my playing mix with the fixed element.
There was a conflict between the density of information in the score, my personal limits, and the aesthetic vision I had for what my full-tempo part would sound like. As I worked to move through the final 25% towards the tempo of the tape, I was consistently moving back and forth between my slow detail-oriented work and my fast action-oriented work, trying to reconcile the two. Even though not every detail made its way into my live performance, my careful work at the slow tempos allowed for a detail-dense performance at full-speed.
RECORDING

Studio recording is a different medium than live performance. It is a moldable, shapeable medium. There is no longer any visual stimulus in the finished product (except for the album art or if it is being released as a video). When the listener plays a recording, the sounds are disembodied from the performers who made them and the recording is displaced from the studio in which it was created. It is still experienced through time, but can be paused, rewound, resumed, abandoned. A studio recording can be a documentation of the way a piece would sound in a live performance setting. It can also be a chance to imagine a way the piece might sound if it didn't have to have the limitations of the live performance setting. The latter is the route I chose to follow, to differing degrees and in different ways, for these recordings.

*Kontakte* was recorded in approximately 40 separate sections, very similarly to how we learned it, rehearsed it and performed it. I also added in some clicks for certain unison moments or difficult-to-track cues. These decisions were made to help increase our detail accuracy for every section. We were trying to get as close as possible to what was written in the score, and to the work that we had done on each section in our practice sessions. While tracking, we listened to the tape and the added clicks in headphones so that the microphones were only picking up our instrument sounds. This gave us more flexibility in the later stages of mixing and editing.

I recorded *windowed 1 Version 1* very differently than how I performed it. I recorded the entire piece from beginning to end, but in six separate passes. This allowed me to preserve as much of my preliminary detail work as possible, especially
with the muting. I was also able to use the optimal beater for each instrument. This creates an ideal version of the piece based on the information in the score and ignoring the limitations I have to follow in a live setting. For example, I was able to play a 20-note vibraphone cluster at the end of the piece that I was not able to do in the concert.

The tape part to *windowed I Version 1* has a very dry, pointillistic texture with sharp attacks and releases. When the tape is played back in a hall, the resonance of the room will be added to it, as well as to the percussion instruments. When recording this piece, I decided that I wanted instead to try to bring the recorded percussion sounds into the dry world of the tape. The instruments were all close-miked to remove the resonance of the studio as much as possible. The attacks were all already sharp due to the nature of the percussion instruments. To sharpen the decays, the recording engineer, Clint Davis, had the idea to add a noise gate to each percussion channel. This would mute the sound once it fell below a certain volume in response to my muting action. We also added a fair amount of compression to match the highly compressed tape part. These effects are not obtainable in such an extreme way in a concert hall performance context and it brings the piece to life in a very different way.

*700 Club* was recorded in five sections, each about two minutes and thirty seconds long. There was no multi-tracking of drums, only splicing between different takes which were all separated by silence. The tape was played back over headphones and I played three takes of each section. Recording it in this way allowed me to re-familiarize myself with each shorter section before tracking it and to adequately rest between takes. I didn't have these luxuries in concert, which has its own aesthetic byproducts, but being able to record this way in the studio allowed me to once again
get more of the practice room detail into the recording as well as allowing me to keep my speed and dexterity up throughout all 14 minutes of the piece. Compression was applied to the drums, allowing the drum set sound to become more dynamically even and full. This helped it to mirror and blend with the tape world more closely. A bit of compression is used in Kontakte at the mastering stage to bring up the dynamic of the softer sections, but in the recordings of windowed 1 Version 1 and 700 Club, compression played a larger part in the shaping of the aesthetic, more closely related to its use in pop music recordings.
CLOSING THOUGHTS

The bottom line is that these pieces speak to me. They are interesting, vital, relevant, engaging. This is what draws me to projects. Something blows me away. Grabs me and won't let go. Opens my mind to new ways of thinking, seeing, or understanding. I also understand the importance of thinking about these things academically, scientifically, culturally, divorced from my tastes. But I also think it's important for me to have these strong, intuitive connections to art and to seek out working conditions where I can follow them, explore, experiment, grow.

I've also thought a lot about sustainability. What does it mean? What am I wanting to sustain? Patrick's piece is sustainable to me from the point of view of material resources. I own or can purchase in the next two years all of the equipment that I would need to continue to practice and locally present his piece. It is also sustainable from the point of view of the content. I want to continue to deepen my relationship to the drum set and due to the open nature of the score my interpretation of the piece can continue to grow with me. It is also sustainable from the point of view of personal relationships. Patrick is a person I know and like and find interesting and want to have a continued creative relationship with. It seems essential, to me at this moment in my life to find more projects like this. It strikes me, though, that while it's important to have sustainability and working conditions in mind when choosing projects, I also shouldn't have my creativity stunted by the limitations that are immediately in front of me. It is uncertain how long those conditions will last. For example, how long will my preoccupation with information overload draw me to make
music that is intense, saturated, and abrasive? I have already noticed a shift in my
preoccupations. A desire for simplicity, elegance, calm. Perhaps the through-line is
studying attention. This is surely a topic that I could study for years on many different
fronts. Perhaps it is something else.


