

**The Realization of Extended Performance Practices
in Selected Works for Piano by Frederic Rzewski:
A Portfolio of Recordings and Exegesis**

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Abstract

This project explores through performance those aspects of Frederic Rzewski's piano music that require 'specific' (that is, notated), 'non-specific' (left unspecified), and 'in-between' (implied) extended performance practices. In so doing, the project focuses on seldom-performed works that variously incorporate speech, improvisation and other unconventional practices. The study investigates the vast spectrum of interpretative challenges embedded in Rzewski's notational style. These challenges were resolved by providing a methodology that, while specific to the works in question, also serves as a model for pianists interested in applying to other repertoire employing extended performance practices. The additional works *Etude For the Beginning of Time* (2013) by Snezana Nestic and *'Ash' Fantasie* (2012), *Thrashley meets Audrey* (2014) and *Journey to Damascus* (2016) by the author, have been included to compare and understand the ambivalent aspects found in Rzewski's piano works. The outcome comprises five CD/DVD recordings and an exegesis that incorporates input from Rzewski himself, which details and documents the interpretative possibilities of the selected works.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I acknowledge that copyright of published works contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time. I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signed:

Date:

25 / 07 / 2017

Declaration for Submission with CD/DVDs

The recordings submitted in Volume Two are partly studio recordings and live performances for non-commercial distribution. They have been professionally produced and edited according to industry standards. The studio sessions were recorded at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen Academy (Denmark), *Bleekhaus Studios* in Hanover (Germany) and the ABC Studio 520 Collinswood, Adelaide (South Australia) with a number of takes and mastered and produced by India Hooi, Ashley Hribar and Catherine Connelly. The live performances were given at the 2014 Koper Biennale Contemporary Music Festival (Slovenia) and at ABC Studio 520 Collinswood, Adelaide (South Australia) for Recitals Australia and recorded and mastered by Kat McGuffie and Andrea Hensing. The scores are provided on a separate CD for reference during the examination process.

Signed:

Date:

25 / 7 / 17

Verification of Recordings

The principal supervisor is required to verify that the recordings have emerged during the course of the program of study.

Signed:

Date:

25/07/2017

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Introduction

Frederic Anthony Rzewski (b. 1938) enjoys a reputation for calling on performers to utilize unconventional extended performance practices. Hugh Davies defines such practices as ‘unconventional instrumental or vocal performance techniques used to expand the way music is communicated’.¹ With regard to Rzewski’s works, the definition can be expanded further to include the deployment of objects such as a whoopee cushion, and the execution of theatrical gestures that include smoking a cigarette or drinking from a water glass. This expansion not only creates vast interpretative possibilities, but also challenges directly the traditional role we ascribe to performers. Through a precise, and yet deliberately ambiguous style of notation, Rzewski compels the performer to find his/her own way to interpret these demands of the score. For the purposes of this study, Rzewski’s notation is categorised variously as ‘specific’ (meaning that it is prescriptive in the conventional notational sense), ‘non-specific’ (left deliberately vague), and ‘implicit’ (those instructions that sit in between the two). The works selected for this study highlight the virtuosity and interpretative flexibility called for in Rzewski’s notation, and chronicle the resolution of these challenges through performance.

The research undertaken provides a model for pianists interested in applying to similar works by other composers. The research is underpinned by interviews, in-depth discussions with Rzewski, performing various selected works to him, as well as witnessing at first hand the performances of his own works.² No less invaluable has been the input provided by his colleagues, friends, and family. The recordings in Volume Two are the result of these processes of inquiry, and are in accordance with Rzewski’s suggestions.

There are many factors that have shaped Rzewski’s music, not the least being his

¹ Hugh Davies, “Instrumental modifications and extended performance techniques.” Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online database. 2007. www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 3 August 2015).

² This project was conducted with the approval of the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval No: HP-2013-139). See Appendix B.

exposure and involvement with various political and social movements of the 1960s. Rzewski leftist political stance is clear in his statement that ‘Music should be free, if not, you should steal it’, and by adopting what he calls the ‘copyleft’ principle, which calls for avoiding publishers altogether and giving free access to compositions.³ While Rzewski is well known for his political works, for example *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* (1975), what is of interest in this study is not how his general worldview shapes both the music performed, but rather the expectations he places on the interpreter/performer and ultimately, the listener.

To that end, there are five aims and objectives of this research:

1. To explore Rzewski’s background and to find out what led him to incorporate extended performance practices.
2. To categorise Rzewski’s ‘specific, ‘non-specific’ and ‘implicit’ notational practices.
3. To explore options and provide solutions to the interpretative problems found in Rzewski’s style of notation.
4. To analyse and document the paradox that lies at the heart of the improvisations called for in Rzewski’s works – namely, the need to equip oneself for an improvisational act that by its very nature, calls for no preparation.
5. To demonstrate how an understanding of Rzewski’s aesthetic values can aid and enhance the performer’s interpretation of his piano music.

³ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (28 May, 2014).

The exegesis documents the methods used to interpret the scores and the rehearsal process, the former by a means of analysis, the latter through a sonic diary. In doing so, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the 'specific', 'non-specific' and 'implicit' forms of notation employed in the selected repertoire?
2. How are the performance practices rehearsed and performed? Using a combination of analysis, sonic diaries and critical self-reflection, the most effective ways of executing these performance practices are highlighted. Sub questions include:
 - i) What kind of approaches regarding style, how much freedom and preparation (if any) etc. should be taken towards improvisation in the selected repertoire?
 - ii) What degree of individuality and/or how much freedom is required when performing the works for speaking pianist in the selected repertoire? To what extent should the spoken text be acted?
 - iii) How should extended techniques be rehearsed and performed?
3. What is the impact on the audience of the execution of theatrical gestures such as drinking out of a water glass, sitting on a whoopee cushion, or blowing a party whistle?
4. Where and when should amplification be used in the performance of the repertoire?

Theoretical Framework/ Methodology

This performance-based study draws on my close workings with the composer, and pursues three intersecting lines of inquiry: Background – Notation – Execution.

Historical Background

A combination of documentary research and interviews with Rzewski sheds light on his aesthetic and personal motivations behind his music. Rzewski's world-view coincides with his evolving search for a new means of communication, through the art of dialog between the performer and audience. By incorporating speech, extended performance techniques and improvisation in his piano works, he has created a new aesthetic that pushes the boundaries of conventional performance practice. Motivations that apply to his personal life, find their inspiration from various texts.

Notation

Rzewski's motivations and their impact on his view of performance practices are identified in selected scores and where necessary, analysed. As noted above, those performance practices are indicated through 'specific', 'non-specific' or 'implied' forms of notation. 'Specific' refers to precise aspects of notation that leave little interpretative choice for the performer. These range from instructions for stomping on the pedal, tapping on the strings inside the piano or speaking in accordance to precise rhythm. 'Non-specific' instructions leave the performer to act at his/her discretion, for example, whether to improvise freely, or indeed, whether to improvise at all. Those instructions that are implied sit between the specific and non-specific aspects of notation. For example, a given text might indicate precise rhythm but leave the performer to pre-determine various parameters, such as dynamics, pitch and timbre when speaking. The range of interpretative possibilities arising from these three types will be analysed in individual cases and more deeply, in the two case studies in Chapter Five.

Execution

This entails consideration and reflection of the processes through which I arrived at my performance decisions. The more challenging interpretative aspects of notation identified in Chapter Two are addressed by showing various possibilities to performance problems in case-by-case examples. Preparatory vocal exercises are provided to aid pianists with little or no acting experience. An explanation of the differences between improvisation and the techniques of improvisation is intended to clarify some of the mystique of improvisation, with the aim to encourage this practice.

Repertoire selection criteria

The selected repertoire has been chosen to demonstrate Rzewski's diversity and breadth of compositional style, while highlighting some common interpretative challenges. Rzewski's prolific output includes only a handful of published piano works, including *The people united will never be defeated* (1975), *North American Ballads* (1978-9) *Squares* (1978) and *Four Pieces* (1977). His lesser-known works are available in the public domain on the Werner Icking and IMSLP Websites. As such, this project seeks to create an awareness of seldom played works and to those which the composer directed me, including *The Road Part 6 'Travelling With Children'* (1999-2000), *Marriage* (2002-3), and a solo adaption for *Coming Together* (1972).

With regard to Volume Two, Disc 1 includes the complete set of *Four North American Ballads* (1978-9). As a personal response to these ballads, the inclusion of my own works 'Ash' *Fantasie* (2010), *Journey To Damascus* (2016) and *Thrashley meets Audrey* (2014), have served as exercises in improvisation that similarly adopt Rzewski's guidelines for improvisation. *Journey To Damascus* uses delay technology and is in collaboration with the New Zealand-born cellist Rachel Johnston. Disc 2 includes *The Road Part 6 'Travelling With Children'* (1999-2000), a complete set of works primarily for speaking pianist that explores a broad spectrum of extended performance practices. Disc 3 includes more recent works for speaking pianist;

Flowers 1 (2009), *Mikhail Bakunin*, *Rentier* (2000) – delivered in French – and *Dear Diary* (2014), uses original text by the composer. *Marriage* (2002-3) is a large-scale work that variously incorporates speech, vocalisations, extended techniques and improvisation. Disc 4 includes *A Life* (1992) and *Coming Together* (1972), the latter of which, because of its difficulty, has only been attempted by the composer himself. The alternative takes for *Which Side Are You On?* and *Down By The Riverside* demonstrate the progressive development of my improvisations for these two works. Disc 5, the DVD, includes three works: *Rubinstein in Berlin* (2008), *Thrashley meets Audrey* (2014) and *Etude for the Beginning of Time* (2014) by Snzeana Nestic. They demonstrate the degree of impact that visual elements have from an audience's perspective. *Rubinstein in Berlin* includes speech, improvisation and an extensive range of extended techniques and the utilisation of various objects. *Thrashley meets Audrey* exercises the concept of improvisation with limited preparation while using an RC 50 loop station to record extended techniques. My intention for including *Etude for the Beginning of Time* for piano and voice (2014) by Snezana Nestic, was to compare and reflect on the implicit and ambivalent aspects of notation by a different composer. This was done in order to highlight the core challenges of interpreting and performing improvisational techniques, extended techniques and spoken text.

Thesis Structure

The dissertation comprises two volumes. Volume One (the current volume) contains the exegesis. Volume Two houses the four CD recordings, a DVD and the scores of the repertoire under examination.

Volume One chapter outline

The primary aim of the research is to inform and further enhance my performance practice, and to demonstrate how I have overcome various interpretative problems embedded in Rzewski's music. As such, the first five chapters analyse selected repertoire with the view to highlighting the extended techniques called for, which are

realised in the recordings included in Volume Two. The conclusion reflects on the ways in which the research has impacted my performance practice.

The exegesis comprises six chapters. Chapter One explores Rzewski's biography, particularly those elements that significantly shaped him as a composer, such as his education, exposure to the cultural landscape of the 1960s, and influences from other musicians. This will show the origins in his use of extended techniques, speech and improvisation.

Chapter Two examines Rzewski's notational practice as it relates to selected examples from the recordings in Part Two. Each of the extended performance practices (extended techniques, speech and vocalisations and improvisation), are identified and distinguished by aspects of notation that are 'specific', 'non-specific' and 'in-between'.

Chapter Three discusses how I have interpreted the notational problems as highlighted in Chapter Two. A list of preparatory vocal exercises is given as an aid to pianists with less experience in the performance of works for piano and speech. An explanation of the dichotomies of improvisation and composition offers insights into improvisation. The chapter shows how I have overcome interpretative obstacles, by providing solutions to case-by-case examples and where possible, in accordance with Rzewski's suggestions.

Chapter Four discusses factors that have impacted the performance outcomes of the selected repertoire. These include:

- 1) Practical considerations including alternative positions for the piano, using an iPad over sheet music and suggested placement of objects.
- 2) Amplification of the voice. For audibility, this has been necessary when performing in large venues, however, because of the vast field of live

amplification and its many unforeseeable technical complications, this study has focused on interpretative problems within a purely acoustic realm, without the use of amplification.

- 3) The pros and cons of studio recordings versus live recordings.
- 4) The extent in which visual elements impact the sound and overall performance.

The two case studies *Marriage* (2002-3) and *Coming Together* (1972) in Chapter Five, discuss interpretative obstacles in more detail. Of particular focus is the interpretation of aspects of notation that are 'implied', such as drinking from a water glass and the 'strange noise' de-familiarization technique found in *Marriage*. Due to the difficulty in preparing and performing *Coming Together* as a solo, I have provided suggestions for adapting the intended ensemble version to the solo version, while introducing exercises for preparation in live performance.

The Conclusion draws together the connections between Rzewski's background, his form of notation and interpretative issues by summarising my discoveries and how I have applied them to his works.

The study finds that, given adequate preparation, precision in performance and clear understanding of Rzewski's notational practice, the interpretative possibilities are both boundless and artistically and personally enriching. Rzewski's deliberately precise, yet ambivalent style of notation contains contradictions that are in themselves inspirational and aesthetically valid.

Chapter One

Historical Background

Frederic Anthony Rzewski was born on 13 April 1938 in Westfield, Massachusetts, to Polish parents. The legendary pianist, Arthur Rubinstein was Rzewski's 'childhood hero', who served as an inspiration for his artistic direction throughout his life, as evident in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (2008). He recalls:

When I was seven years old Rubinstein had a demigod status. [My] family expected me to pick up the national torch of Polish pianism, to carry it on to fame and glory ...⁴

Rzewski earned degrees at Harvard and Princeton, having studied with eminent composers as Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt and counterpoint with Randall Thompson. Early on, Rzewski developed a solid grounding in counterpoint, regarding it as being 'the only one of the classical disciplines that is really important for a composer'.⁵ Rzewski spent most of his time in Europe during the 60s, studying with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence from 1960-61 and with Elliot Carter in Berlin from 1963-65, while earning his living as a teacher and pianist. He performed repertoire ranging from Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* (1818), to works by Eisler and Boulez. In 1962 he premiered Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück X* (1961). While fascinated in deciphering the densest of serial scores, he was equally interested in improvisation techniques and played with eminent jazz musicians such as Anthony Braxton and Steve Lacy.

Rzewski found himself immersed in the avant-garde scene of the sixties, an important historical period where complex inter-related cultural and political trends spread rapidly across the globe. It was the time of 'free speech, 'free love' and 'free

⁴ Frederic Rzewski, programme note to *Rubinstein in Berlin*, <http://www.honens.com/Laureates/Past-Laureates/Development-Diary-Events/Hong-Xu-Wigmore-Hall-Recital-Debut.aspx> (accessed 15 September 2013).

⁵ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (28 May, 2014).

jazz', that reflected the social movements of black power and a rebellion towards capitalism and the consumer society. As Rzewski states:

'Free music' was not merely a fashion of the times, and not merely a form of entertainment. It was also felt to be connected with many political movements, which at that time set out to change the world: to free the world from the tyranny of out-dated traditional forms.⁶

This sudden shift in social class representation was for many artists an environment in which new cultural forms evolved and flourished. Rzewski developed friendships with like-minded composers such as John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Christian Wolff, David Tudor and Louis Andriessen, who were interested in 'exploring the role in which music could play in a broader context'.⁷ Cage had a profound influence on Rzewski's musical direction through his interest in prepared piano techniques and non-standard use of musical instruments. Like Cage, David Tudor was also a great inspiration, particularly in his use of silence and performance style. Rzewski recalls:

I observed his (David Tudor's) playing very closely ... It had a great influence on me by just watching him. He would use silence to keep the audience silent as well. This is what John Cage did too.⁸ ... David Tudor would pretend he was doing something inside the piano but in fact, he wasn't doing anything.⁹

In 1966, Rzewski co-founded the acclaimed *Musica Elettronica Viva* (MEV) with Alvin Curran, Alan Bryant, John Phetteplace, Carol Plantamura, Ivan Vandor and Richard Tittelbaum, a group consisting of mainly trained composers, known for pushing the boundaries of conventional performance through the use of traditional and electronic instruments. They practiced free collective improvisation and open audience participation, and became 'one of the most important new spheres of music experimentation'.¹⁰ The MEV frequently practiced with free jazz musicians and

⁶ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), *Frederic Rzewski*, 56.

⁷ Daniel Varela, 'Interview with Frederic Rzewski', *Perfect Sound Forever online music magazine presents...* <http://www.furious.com/perfect/rzewski.html> (accessed 23 August 2013).

⁸ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 168.

⁹ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (22 June, 2016).

¹⁰ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 254.

reacted against the stale academicism of the time as Curran called, 'the twelve-tone church'.¹¹ Curran recalls of his experiences by saying:

The MEV would reach into untouched territories of improvisation ... The MEV's music right from the start was also totally open allowing all and everything to come in and seeking in every way to get out beyond the heartless conventions of contemporary music. Taking its cue from Tudor and Cage, MEV began sticking contact mics to anything that sounded and amplified their raw sounds: bed springs, sheets of glass, tin cans, rubber bands, toy pianos, sex vibrators, and assorted metal junk.¹²

The MEV concerts included singing, mantra and vocal techniques like yelling, banging on the walls, and would frequently end in riots. They rediscovered the definitions of improvisation by questioning the relationships between the composer, performer and the audience and 'developed an aesthetic in which the egos of the individual composers became submerged in the collective act of improvisation'.¹³ Rzewski recalls experiences by saying:

Improvisation did not simply use writing as a point of departure; it was itself a form of writing, or real-time' composition, and a necessary consequence of the collective concept.¹⁴

Due to creative differences however, the MEV split in 1970, leaving Rzewski and Tittelbaum to continue as the MEV for an aesthetic preference of 'more disciplined structures, as apposed to free open-ended improvisation'.¹⁵ To this day, Rzewski's experiences with the MEV continue to influence him as he confirms: 'I know that my own work would never have developed as it has if I were not periodically plugged in to MEV'.¹⁶ Improvisation became an important feature of Rzewski's piano works, with

¹¹ Alvin Curran, "Music Elletronica Viva." Newworldrecords.org.

<http://www.newworldrecords.org/uploads/filesPdmv.pdf>. (accessed 12 May, 2017).

¹² Alvin Curran, at <http://www.discogs.com/artist/Musica+Eletronica+Viva?noanv=1> (accessed 20 September 2013).

¹³ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 264.

¹⁴ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 270.

¹⁵ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 266.

¹⁶ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 270.

the intention to encourage performers 'to find new things in his music'.¹⁷ He soon abandoned electronics and became interested in working with 'more traditional forms, like writing with pencil and paper', which also had its practical reasons as he recalls:¹⁸

Dabbling with electronics was very time-consuming ... I did quite a lot of work with electronics until my children started to grow up and then I had to make a choice. I couldn't afford both.¹⁹

Rzewski's focus on acoustic music developed into an eclectic extension of the pianist's role, by adopting the execution of various objects. It was perhaps a conscious turning away from 'The De-braining Machine' as he later emphasised in *Stuporman* (2014), towards an embracing of the human element in music making.²⁰ Concurrently, his ideas and deeply felt concerns became a duty, as he expressed in the *Parma Manifesto* (1968):

To create means to be here and now: to be responsible to reality on the high highwire of the present. To be responsible means to be able to communicate the presence of danger to others²¹ ... It is necessary to create a new form of communication ... This form is not telephones, televisions, newspapers; nor is it theatre, music, painting ... The most direct and efficient form of communication is dialog. Dialog in its highest form is creation out of nothing: the only true creation.²²

Rzewski and other liked-minded composers began to include spoken text in their music, much like Christian Wolff had done, in the relation to his democratic socialist position. Wolff recalls:

¹⁷ Bruce Duffie, at <http://www.kcstudio.com/rzewski2.html> (accessed 31 August 2013).

¹⁸ Bruce Duffie, at <http://www.kcstudio.com/rzewski2.html> (accessed 31 August 2013).

¹⁹ Rzewski, Frederic. Interview with Frank J. Oteri, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/frederic-rzewski-visits-america/5/> (accessed 15 September 2013).

²⁰ Frederic Rzewski *Stuporman*, 3.

²¹ Frederic Rzewski, "Creating out of Nothing: Parma Manifesto" in *Frederic Rzewski: Nonsequiturs Writings & Lectures on Improvisation, Composition and Interpretation*, ed. Dieter Schnebel (Köln: Musiktexte, 2007), 156.

²² Frederic Rzewski, "Parma Manifesto", in *Leonardo Music Journal* 9 (1999), 78.

A number of people close to me like Frederic Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew felt that what we were doing should have some connection to political questions. I thought of doing this by associating the music with a text, a message that you subscribed to and you felt should be out there.²³

Rzewski's works have become frequently associated with speech and recalls as being one of the first:²⁴

It all began with *Coming Together*. I found out that I have this voice, which is not easy for everybody and I don't have to work at it ... So I started writing these pieces.²⁵

Like *Coming Together* (1972), Rzewski finds inspiration from texts ranging from controversial issues, with political and socio-political messages, personal affiliations to writing his own. Of particular interest is the realist writer Leo Tolstoy, who was famous for presenting controversially apposing issues such as in *War and Peace* (1869), and contrastingly sensitive topics about abstinence and promiscuity in *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), with the intention to challenge the existing opinions of the reader. In a thematic context, Rzewski adapted the text from *The Kreutzer Sonata* to his own work, *Marriage* (2002-3) describing it as 'the horror of things as they are'.²⁶ Like Tolstoy, he applied *ostranenie*, a technique developed by the Russian Formalists and later known as 'de-familiarization' or 'estrangement', which is defined as:

A theory and technique, originating in the early 20th century, in which an artistic or literary work presents familiar objects or situations in an unfamiliar way, prolonging the perceptive process and allowing for a fresh perspective.²⁷

In conjunction with contrasting thematic subject matters, Rzewski adopts the de-familiarization technique in his piano works, but in a musical context, manifesting

²³ Jason Gross, at <http://www.furious.com/perfect/christianwolff.html> (accessed 23 August 2013).

²⁴ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (1 November, 2013).

²⁵ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (28 May, 2014).

²⁶ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

²⁷ "defamiliarization". Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/defamiliarization> (accessed 10 May, 2017).

itself in various forms, by extending the role of the pianist and exemplifying the visual elements in strange ways. This is evident in the opening cluster effect of the *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues* (1978-9); including the humorous cow moo sound to exemplify the tragic story in *Why?* (1999), and the whoopee cushion and party whistle to emphasize Rubinstein's failed suicide in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (2008).

Still to this day, Rzewski continues to create and reflect in his piano music his personal world-view, while challenging the way in which music is played, heard and even seen. He asserts that:

Recording is a thing of the past. Perhaps music will need a new form of live performance or a new kind of improvisation.²⁸

²⁸ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (8 September, 2014).

Chapter Two

Notation

In conversation, Rzewski's constant questioning and logical way of thinking can be sensed when analysing his scores, as he validates: 'I try to express whatever idea it is in a rational form!'²⁹ Even when hand-written, Rzewski's style of notation not only displays precision and clarity, but also deliberately accentuates its limitations. He explains this in light of the classical tradition:

In classical music there are many forms of expressing ambiguity, and the ambiguity is not a negative thing. The beauty of classical notation is that it can be very ambiguous. So there are continuously changing points of view about how many of these classical texts should be read, should be played and heard, and these things go on and on, and probably will go on forever. One of the reasons why this music continues to live is that it presents constantly new openings for successive generations of interpreters.³⁰

The clear, yet ambiguous aspects of classical notation, 'seem to be designed consciously for that purpose', and described as 'Beethoven's secret' or the 'essence of writing'.³¹

I know Beethoven quite well. He (Beethoven) goes to great pains to notate things very precisely but in such a way as to make it possible for multiple interpretations, all of which may vary widely from one another but are all equally interesting. I think that's his secret.³² ... This is also one of Bach's secrets. A fugue can be loud or soft, fast or slow, played on an out-of-tune instrument, but it's always interesting.³³

Much like in the spirit of Beethoven and Bach, Rzewski's style of notation has a similar function, embodying the polarity of two extremes: precision and freedom. On the one hand, aspects of notation may either be explicit or 'specific', by indicating

²⁹ Bruce Duffie, at <http://www.kcstudio.com/rzewski2.html>. (accessed 20 August 2014).

³⁰ Bruce Duffie, at <http://www.kcstudio.com/rzewski2.html> (accessed 31 August 2013).

³¹ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

³² Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (29 March, 2014).

³³ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

precise guidelines parameters such as timbre, pitch, duration and dynamics, or specific information, by giving limited choice for the performer. While on the other, 'non-specific' aspects of notation push the performer toward the role of composer, such as improvising freely. Rzewski expands this duality further, by creating a spectrum of interpretative possibilities that sit 'in-between' that is, by creating forms of notation that are implied in varying degrees. These aspects of notation are explicit or self-explanatory, but still require the performer to create his/her own parameters and decisions. *Coming Together* (1972) is a good example that demonstrates the polarity of two extremes: improvised techniques determined by strict rules; both of which are dependent from one another, and necessary for the piece to function properly. This dichotomy is commonly misunderstood (see Chapter Five).

Rzewski describes notation as being 'fundamentally ambivalent' and summarizes it as having at least three different functions:

1. Description or 'map' of what one is supposed to hear.
2. Description of the physical actions necessary (right or left hand, etc.).
3. Example of what one could do, but not necessarily what one must do.³⁴

He continues to explain other types of notation as having different functions:

Some music, on the other hand, use only one of the many aspects of notation, and could easily be realized by machine; most serial music, for example. This does not mean it is better or worse; there is good and bad serial music.³⁵

Rzewski makes a conscious departure from electronic music, towards the dependency of the human element in performance. In the notational context of extended performance practices in Rzewski's works, these three functions are interdependent in that they rely on the choice and individuality of the performer. Ultimately, Rzewski's form of notation exercises the degree of notation that is relinquished to the performer.

³⁴ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

³⁵ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

The Notation of Extended performance techniques

Rzewski frequently uses various verbs to describe how certain actions are executed; for example, stomping on the pedal or tapping on the piano lid. *Night Thought* (1999) uses text by Robert Louis Stevenson and is based on 'happy birthday' in the key of G. The melody is unrecognisable and cleverly concealed as repeated melodic fragments interspersed with the marching on the pedals and the spoken text. The precise notation for marching on the left and right pedals offers limited possibility for producing a wide dynamic range and leaves limited interpretative choice for the performer. (see Figure 1),

The image shows a musical score for 'Night Thought' from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children*. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 8/4. It contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a dynamic marking of *f* and a *dimin.* instruction. Above the staff, there are handwritten annotations: 'Not a march;', 'Slow, halting, irregular', and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 112$. The middle staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 8/4, containing a bass line with notes and rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'Marching feet' and has a time signature of 8/4. It contains a sequence of 'x' marks representing pedal strikes, with the sequence '(L R L R L R L R)' written below. The word 'Marching feet' is written to the left of the staff.

Figure 1: The marching on the left and right pedals in “Night Thought” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999), 1-4.³⁶

Why? (1999) applies the de-familiarization technique in a humorous way by including a cow moo device to possibly evoke images such as the depiction of livestock surrounding the tragic story of Lipa and her dead baby (see Figure 2). The attack and decay of the cow moo device is precisely notated but produces an unpredictable length of sound. This suggests that the rhythm should be treated as a guide.

³⁶ Except where indicated, all Rzewski scores, whether excerpts or complete, are freely available in the public domain on the Werner Icking and IMSLP Websites at <http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer1/Rzewski.php>

Slow, plodding

Figure 2 shows a musical score for the piece "Why?" from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children*. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves: Voice, M.D. (Middle Distance), and M.S. (Middle Sound). The Voice staff has the lyrics "My little boy" and "Moi synochek". The M.D. staff has a "cow moo:" symbol. The M.S. staff has a "f" dynamic marking and a series of notes. The tempo is "Slow, plodding".

Figure 2: An example for notating the cow moo device in "Why?" from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999), 1.

The Prodigal Parents (2000) uses Rzewski's own text that mockingly paints a materialistic picture of society, one that is perpetually wasteful, inevitably causing pollution and harm to the planet. It is to be played with the piano lid entirely closed, where its notation symbolically suggests angry measures to portray his message, by means of knocking (using the knuckles), slapping (using palm of the hand), tapping (using fingernails or flesh of the finger) and stomping on the pedal (see Figure 3).

- ⌞ = knock
- ∨ = slap
- ✖ = stomp left foot on the pedal
- ⊕ = fingernails or knuckles, or slap with palm; all others, tap with flesh of finger as indicated in the N.B.

The specific rhythmic notation of these symbols implies varying degrees of flexibility as suggested in the N.B, where the pianist must choose the areas of the piano to strike.

2. The Prodigal Parents (THE ROAD, Mile 42)

Frederic Rzewski (2000)
for Steve ben Israel

4 different wood noises, on different parts of the instrument:
e.g. music rack, top front, keyboard lid, under keyboard
Moderato $\text{♩} = 69$

Right hand
Left hand

Voice

the useless garbage that the people of my generation will have dumped upon them. Plop! Plop! Plop! Plop! Plop!

(knock)
N.B.
(Close keyboard lid)
V (slap)
sempre (Stomp left foot on left pedal)
(fingernails)
(slap)
(tap)
pp
sf
p
f
mp
mf
f sub.

(N.B.: accented notes with fingernails or knuckles, or slap with palm; all others, tap with flesh of finger)

Figure 3: Indicating four different wood noises in “The Prodigal Parents” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2000), 1-17.

Notation of text and vocalisations

As seen in *Why?* and *The Prodigal Parents*, words are notated using precise rhythms by accentuating syllables that highlight the natural flow of speech. Furthermore, various compositional techniques are used to emphasize certain words in order to keep the thematic content understood during performance. A common technique is to isolate words from surrounding parts, as seen in *Stuporman* (2014), where the piano part functions both as an accompaniment and to exemplify certain words (see Figure 4).

STUPORMAN! YES, EVEN YOU CAN BE STUPORMAN!

stringendo
AND YOU! AND YOU! AND YOU!

rallentando
ALL OF US, PLUGGED IN TOGETHER, IN STEP, GLEICHGESCHALTET,

dim. *ff*

Figure 4: An example demonstrating the isolation of words in relation to the piano part in “Stuporman” from *Dear Diary* (Brussels, 2014), 40-8.

Another technique is by synchronising certain words with notes in the piano part in order to enhance their meaning. *Flowers 1* (2009) shows this by giving precise rhythms for the words, while keeping them isolated from the piano part for most of the work, except in bar 35 (see Figure 5). The Ab in the left hand is synchronised to the second syllable of the word the ‘away’ which, being the only time this occurs in the context of the piece, creates a subtle, yet powerful effect.

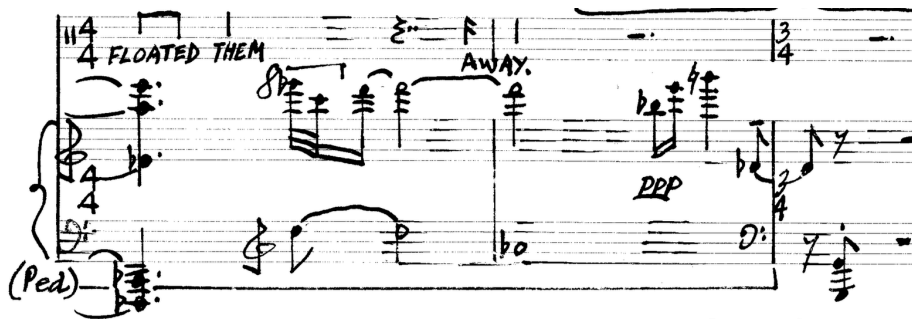


Figure 5: An example showing the synchronisation of the word 'away' with the piano part in *Flowers 1* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2009), 34-5.

In some cases, texts may be freely notated, by giving little or no rhythmic indications, which highlight the flexible and discretionary aspects of the score. These may be in the form of spatial notation, as seen in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (2008), where the text may be spoken freely (see Figure 6).

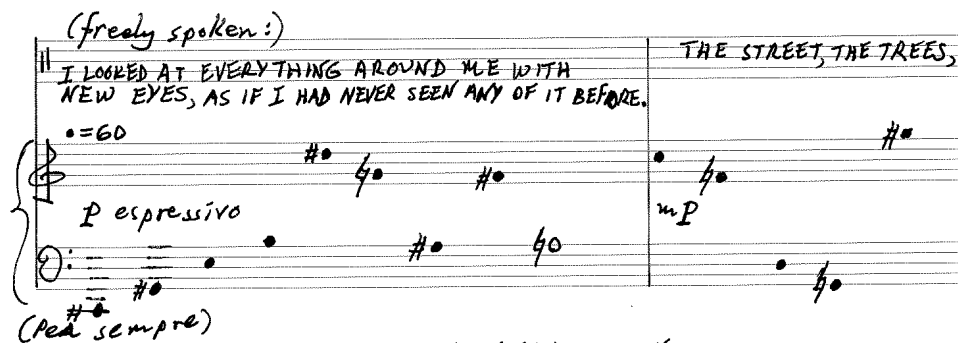


Figure 6: An example showing the use of spatial notation for freely spoken text in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 218-19.

Abadonna (1999) implies considerable rhythmic freedom when speaking the words, by making it deliberately unclear where the words should be spoken in conjunction with the piano part (see Figure 7). The optional Russian text places more importance on the thematic content of the text rather than the choice of language. Furthermore, the indication for speaking in three different voices is given, all of which highlight the discretionary aspects of the score.

4. Abadonna
(Mile 44)

(Introduction:)

NARRATOR:

Use three different voices: low (Master), high (Margarita), medium (narration).

In Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita", Voland (the Master) shows Margarita his magic globus, a kind of crystal ball in which anything happening anywhere can be seen:

Frederic Rzewski (1999)
Text: adapted from Bulgakov
(Master i Margarita, ch. 22)

MASTER:
Blood is a big business.
Krov — velikoe delo.

I see you are interested in my globus— (His:)
Ya vizhu, chto vas interesuyet moi globus— Sssssssssssssssssssssssssss

MARGHERITA:
Oh yes, I never saw a little thing like that.
O da, ya nie videla takoi vyeschitsi.

MASTER:
It's very nice, this gadget. I don't care for the news on the radio.
Harashaya vyeschitsa. Ya nie lyubyu poslednikh novostei po radio.

My globus is much better. For instance, do you see that little piece—
Moi globus gorazdo udobneye. Vot, naprimer, vidite etot kus—

Figure 7: An example indicating two optional languages for the text (Russian and English), to be freely spoken and demonstrating three different voices in “Abadonna” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2000), 1-5.

The following excerpt from *Why?* (1999), gives precise rhythms for the English text. However, the pianist must decide on the rhythm for the Russian translation, which is not indicated, implying that one could adopt a similar rhythm from the English text (see Figure 8).

Tell me, Grandpa, why a child must suffer before it dies?
I skazhi mne, dedyushka, zachem malyenkomu piered smiertyu muchitsya?

cow moo: x

Figure 8: An example indicating implied rhythms for the Russian words in “Why?” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999), 17-20.

In addition to the rhythmic flexibility of words, further instructions requiring the pianist to change the quality of the voice may be applied to texts. The table in Figure 9 shows where they occur in the selected repertoire of Volume Two.

Quality of voice	Name of work
speaking in different characters or gender	<i>Abadonna</i> (1999)
speaking in the role of protagonist	<i>Marriage</i> (2002-3), <i>Rubinstein in Berlin</i> (2008), <i>Night Thought</i> (1999), <i>Why?</i> (1999), <i>The Prodigal Parents</i> (2000)
speaking in the second person roles that is either specified or implied	<i>Marriage</i> (2002-3)
speaking in the narrative	<i>Flowers 1</i> (2009), <i>Stuporman</i> (2014), <i>Samson</i> (2014), <i>Names</i> (2014)
suggesting different vocal qualities or sounds	<i>Mikhail Bakunin</i> (2000), <i>Rentier</i> (2000) <i>Marriage</i> (2002-3)
singing	<i>Dance</i> (1999-2000), <i>Stuporman</i> , <i>Etude for the Beginning of Time</i> (2014)
whispering or half-whispering (flapping of wings)	<i>Marriage</i> (2002-3)
whistling	<i>Dance</i> (1999-2000)
creating various sounds and vocal effects	<i>No Title</i> (1999-2000), <i>Marriage</i> (2002-3)

Figure 9: Instructions requiring the pianist to change the quality of voice in the selected repertoire of Volume Two.

The following selection of examples will show how these additional changes in the quality of voice are applied.

Example 1:

Abadonna (1999) gives approximate indications for the vocal register, requiring the pianist to speak in three different voices: ‘low’ for the Master, ‘high’ for Margarita and ‘medium’ for the narrator (refer to Figure 7). Its vastly implicit notation allows for rhythmic flexibility of the text, choice of language, pitch and quality of voice.

Example 2:

Bar 5 in *Dance* (1999-2000), highlights aspects of notation that are ‘implied’, by suggesting that one should ‘sing’ or ‘whistle’ in unison with the piano part, while not indicating the register for the melody (see Figure 10).

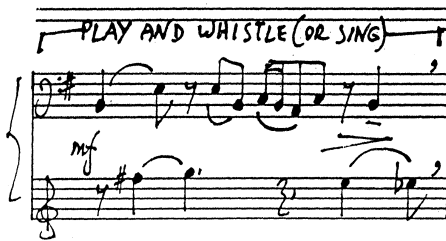


Figure 10: An example requiring the pianist to whistle or sing in “*Dance*” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999-2000), 5.

Example 3:

A similar example implies that the melody should be sung with the piano part.



Figure 11: An example requiring the pianist sing on “LA LA” in “*Dance*” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999-2000), 37.

Example 4:

The text in *Michel Bakunin, Rentier* (2000), requires the pianist to speak in a ‘tired’ manner, while highlighting further ambiguity by giving no rhythmic indications, no pitch and in most cases, no dynamics for the words. This is highlighted in the opening bars (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: An example requiring the pianist to speaking in a 'tired' fashion in *Michael Bakunin, Rentier* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2000), 1-2.

Example 5:

No Title (1999-2000), applies the de-familiarization technique indicated by 'KHHH' with instructions to emulate an 'irregular croaking or creaking noise, always loud possibly suggesting distant thunder' (see Figure 13). It only became clear how to produce this sound after listening to Rzewski's recording of this work, which highlights the limitations for notating this particular vocal sound.

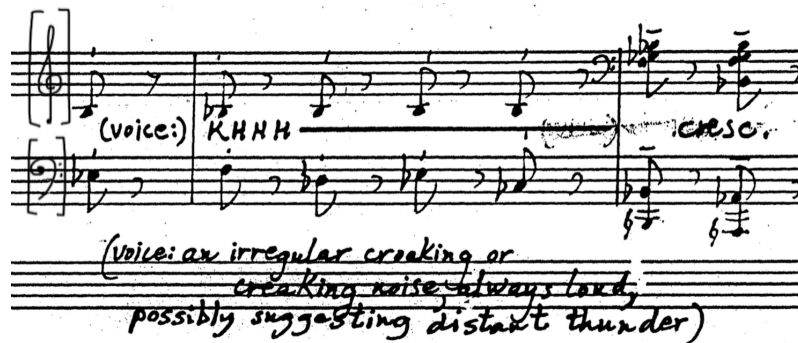


Figure 13: An example of the de-familiarization technique 'KHHH' in "No Title" from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children 5* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999- 2000), 2-4.

Improvisation

Options for improvisation and cadenzas are frequently indicated in Rzewski's works. However, there are inconsistencies regarding how improvisation is notated and how it should be approached. *Marriage* and *Rubinstein in Berlin* specify the option to improvise, while in other works it is unclear whether omitting improvisation may be permitted. Furthermore, as the *Oxford Music Online* states, cadenzas may 'either be improvised by a performer, or written out', as may be commonly understood.³⁷ However, Rzewski clarifies these discrepancies by insisting that:

'Cadenza' and 'Improv' are the same. In neither case should anything be prepared, or even less, composed. The decision to improvise or not should be made in the moment, when you get there.³⁸

Night Thought (1999) as shown in Figure 14, ambiguously gives the indication for cadenzas and improvisations but denotes the same thing.

The figure displays two musical staves. The left staff is a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. It features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A handwritten annotation 'SHORT (CADENZA)' is written above the treble clef staff. The right staff is a vocal line with a treble clef and a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The vocal line has lyrics 'on they go, And still' and is marked with 'rit.' and 'a tempo'. A handwritten annotation '(LONG IMPRO)' is written above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has a handwritten annotation 'tre corde' written above the bass clef staff.

Figure 14: An example giving indications for a cadenza and improvisation in "Night Thought" from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999), 47, 53.

Rubinstein in Berlin (2008) gives an alternative for improvisation as shown in Figure 15, by suggesting the free use of optional musical material as indicated in the

³⁷ Eva Badura-Skoda, et al. 'Cadenza', *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/43023> (accessed 10 May 2017).

³⁸ Frederic Rzewski, Email correspondence (8 December, 2016).

Appendix: 'Of the 5 options (a) to (e), use, any, all or none'. Its intention may possibly be a means to encourage pianists to improvise.

- 19 -

APPENDIX
cadenza, p. 2: *trmmmm*

(♩=60) *pp*

cadenza, p. 2: *trmmmm*

(♩=60) *pp*

cresc.

accel. - - -

f

cadenza, p. 2: ♩=60

N.B. *pp*

Ped

cresc.

f

♩=80

mf

dim.

pp

c.

f

Ped

dim.

♩=80

dim.

8

15

8

N.B.: Of the 5 options (a) to (e), use any, all, or none.

Figure 15: The suggested alternatives for free improvisations as indicated in the Appendix of *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 19-20.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for piano, organized into five systems of staves. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, time signatures (4/4, 3/4, 4/4), and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and ornaments. Dynamics like *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *f*, and *pp* are used throughout. Performance instructions such as *cresc.*, *dim.*, and *Ped.* are present. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The systems are labeled 'd.' and 'e.' on the left side. The first system starts with a treble clef and a bass clef, with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The second system continues with similar notation. The third system is marked 'd.' and includes a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60$ and a 4/4 time signature. The fourth system is marked 'e.' and includes a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$ and a 4/4 time signature. The fifth system is marked 'd.' and includes a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60$ and a 4/4 time signature. The score concludes with a final chord and a *Ped.* instruction.

Figure 15: (cont.)

Improvisation versus Composition

Given that the option to improvise is a common feature in Rzewski's works, so too is improvisation an important part of his compositional process. To help clarify some common misconceptions about improvisation, it is necessary to shed light on Rzewski's thoughts on improvisation, its dichotomy to composition and distinguishing it from the technique for improvisation. He makes clear definitions by saying:

Composition is a process of selectively storing and organizing information accumulated from the past, so that it becomes possible to move ahead without having constantly to re-invent the wheel. Improvisation, on the other hand, is more like garbage removal: constantly clearing away the accumulated perceptions of the past, so that it becomes possible to move ahead at all ... Composition is the result of an editing process in which one's impulses are passed through the critical filter of the conscious mind: Only the "good" ideas are allowed to pass through. Improvisation is more like free association, in which ideas are allowed to express themselves without having to pass this test, somehow avoiding the barriers erected by consciousness.³⁹

According to Rzewski, improvisation and composition are 'fundamental to the brain's activity', implying that both are necessary in everyday life.⁴⁰ He states:

Both things (improvisation and composition) are necessary like when you are crossing the street for example. You have to have a plan but you also need to be ready to jump! So these things are necessary for survival and they are built into the brain.⁴¹

This dichotomy between improvisation and improvisation techniques may be understood differently between performers. My opinion is that the intrinsic essence of improvisation cannot be taught, however various techniques, mindsets or approaches toward improvisation can, which are aimed to serve as a means to 'getting in the zone' within a performance context. Depending on the performer's ability and experience, various techniques may be rehearsed and practiced independently from

³⁹ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), *Frederic Rzewski* 52.

⁴⁰ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), *Frederic Rzewski*, 54.

⁴¹ Frederic Rzewski, interview with Stephane Ginsburgh, at www.ginsburgh.net (accessed August, 2014).

the spontaneous decision to improvise within the context of a work. This inevitably justifies the difference between preparing an improvisation for a given work and preparing and exercising the practice of improvisation. But to what extent is the act of improvisation really planned? What makes an improvisation good or bad? My conversations with Rzewski about improvisation have veered towards philosophical debates that have culminated in his conclusion that improvisation is 'difficult to talk about'.⁴² Nonetheless, Rzewski makes useful comparisons with improvisation and the techniques for improvisation:

Improvisation is the redemption of accident, a magical process in which the unintended is perceived as part of a design. The improviser justifies a wrong note by following it immediately with another one. The two wrong notes together suddenly form a new world in which the errors of the past are reconciled. The same technique can be applied to writing. Writing is not merely a question of notation or recording. It is mainly a mental process in which data is transferred, or not, from shorter to longer memories. This process is largely beyond my conscious control; but I can use improvisational techniques to reveal momentarily what might otherwise be immediately forgotten. The reality that I wish to describe, the reality that I live, is a constant stream of interruptions. How can I express this reality in music? I can use a variety of mechanical systems to simulate it; but all of them involve a turning away from inner experience to something outside.⁴³

Rzewski continues by discussing how improvisation may be applied to composition by comparing the works of Beethoven and Schubert:

When Schubert comes back to a theme like in a recapitulation; what he often does is yank the theme up a major third or something. But he doesn't really change it ... Beethoven brings back the theme, but he doesn't bring it back with the same voicing, sometimes there are very subtle changes for example the way the chord is written. But you could say that Beethoven was sloppy. But I don't think that was true because in fact Beethoven was very fussy. So I think he did this consciously and deliberately, because that's what you do when you improvise. You play a chord and you think, hey, this is a nice chord, let's try and do it again but it doesn't come back exactly the same. There are differences. And I think he does this on purpose to create the illusion of improvisation.⁴⁴

⁴² Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (7 September, 2014).

⁴³ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 78.

⁴⁴ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2016).

Rzewski uses techniques for improvisation in the last page of *Which Side Are You On?* (1978-9) by indicating a 'free improvisation subject to the following conditions' (see Figure 16). These instructions pose obvious contradictions in their specificity and freedom of choice. Like the rest of the Ballads, it is built on a familiar folk theme, in this case, the protest song *Lay the Lilly Low* (1931) sung by Florence Reese, functioning in a similar way to the chorales of J. S. Bach, where the periodic use of melodies could be recognised and sung by the audience. Rzewski explains how the melody may be applied to improvisation:

You could change and distort them (folk melodies) and subject them to all kinds of transformations without destroying them, unlike a twelve tone row. They act like a kind of tonal 'cement' in a musical composition, permitting wide-ranging improvisations without losing a sense of where 'home' is.⁴⁵

Through the association of the melody, it creates an awareness of socio-historical concerns, in this case, the bitter struggle between the miners and miner owners of the Harlan County, Kentucky. The idea behind the work, which its title suggests, is to represent two sides of a complex question, one complex and the other simple, as Rzewski explains in an interview with Sujin Kim:

Are you supporting the miners? Or are you supporting the bosses? ... It's not a question that has a simple answer. It's a difficult question ... Which side are you on? So you have this question of two things in both the written music and the improvised music ... Are you on the side of the written music? Or are you on the side of the improvised music? That's why the two things should be approximately the same length.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), 464.

⁴⁶ Frederic Rzewski, in "Understanding Rzewski's North American Ballads: From the Composer to the Work.", interview with Sujin Kim, DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 2009, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1262054539&disposition=inline (accessed May, 2017).

Optional free improvisation, subject to following conditions:

1. Improvisation should begin as a sudden radical change, with no "transition". That is, there should be no ambiguity about where the written music ends and where the improvisation begins. The manner in which this sense of a leap to a different kind of order is evoked is left to the interpreter. A few simple limitations, however, apply:
2. Begin by alluding in some way to the tonality of B minor. This may be brief. End with a rather long section in C-mixolydian (scale: C-D-E-F-G-A-B^b-C).
3. Improvisation may use techniques employed in written music (polytonal transpositions of theme, etc.) or not; but in any case should represent a different "side" of the same form (many different tonalities in the first part, one tonality in the second).
4. Improvisation, if played, should last at least as long as the preceding written music.
5. If no improvisation is played, pass immediately to the finale.

Finale (♩ = 96)

Addendum

Possible ending for improvisation:

R.H.: every 2 or 3 bars, one of these figures, in any octave; for a minute or two; in any order.

(Dec. 1978)

Figure 16: Indications for an optional free improvisation in "Which Side Are You On?" from *The Four North American Ballads* (Tokyo: Zen-On Music, 1982), 43.

As has been noted, Rzewski's piano works are built using a fundamentally ambivalent style of notation, containing aspects that are 'specific', 'non-specific' or 'implied'. This chapter has shown through various examples, the wide spectrum of interpretative possibilities available and some contradictory aspects, which compel the performer to make his/her own choices, ultimately blurring the line between the composer and performer.

Chapter Three

Performance Considerations

This chapter provides practical solutions by showing how I arrived at my performance decisions, while highlighting some of the difficulties encountered during the preparation of the recordings in Volume Two. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rzewski's ambiguous form of notation offers a wide variety of interpretative possibilities through various implicit aspects, which may be contradictory or even misleading in performance. Various interpretative issues are addressed by focusing on specific examples, which I have determined from both an aesthetically pleasing and practical perspective.

The execution of extended performance techniques

When performing extended techniques, the awareness of bodily movement is crucial making sure they don't look excessive, contrived or unclear. Rzewski suggested that their movements should be 'precisely and carefully calculated and rehearsed beforehand' and that any impression of improvisation or over-acting of the movements should be avoided.⁴⁷ Precise bodily movements became an influential characteristic of David Tudor's performance practice, in which Rzewski observed as being 'so simple and direct, it was fascinating to watch'.⁴⁸ Like Tudor, my aim was to focus on the simplicity of my movements and to keep audiences in suspense. This focus helped me to discover the intent behind the score in relation to my movements and placed awareness on how visual elements may impact the perception of sound in performance.

Striking various surfaces of the piano is a common feature in Rzewski's works, opening up a wide array of interpretative choices in sound production. They range from experimenting with the degrees of tension of the hand muscles, to even

⁴⁷ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (10 May 2016).

⁴⁸ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2015).

deciding on the appropriate length of the fingernails, all of which significantly change the sound. Above all, translating the dynamics of these sounds should be determined according to the balance, audibility and comprehensibility of the text.

Like *The Prodigal Parents*, *A Walk In The Woods* (1999) leaves it up to the pianist to choose fingerings and which area of the keyboard lid to strike. The notation implies that one should keep the hands at a practical distance from the keyboard, in order to make it manageable to play the notes immediately in the next bar and subsequent similar passages. I experimented by using individual fingers or groups of fingers for the rhythms, as they produced significant variances in sound. Using separate fingers for the 32nd notes helped to create a different sonority, making it easier to distinguish between the accented quavers notes (see Figure 17). An alternative was to use the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th fingers together for each note (apart from the trill), which, although produced a strong and consistent sound, was awkward to play and strained the hands and arms at the given tempo. While the first alternative was more practical, ultimately both fingerings worked and produced differently effective results.

Cheerful
♩ = 54

(Tap on keyboard lid, both hands:)

	5 5 5 5		5		5		5		5
	4 4 4 4		4		4		4		4
	3 3 3 3		3		3		3		3
	2 1 2 1 2 1	4 3 2 1 2	1 2		4 3 2 1 2 1	2		2 1 2	2

The musical score shows two staves, R.H. and L.H., in 2/4 time. The R.H. staff begins with a trill (tr) and a forte (f) dynamic. The L.H. staff begins with a trill (tr) and a piano (p) dynamic. The score consists of four measures of music, each containing a series of sixteenth notes. Above and below the staves are fingerings (numbers 1-5) and a 'ped.' (pedal) marking. The music is marked with 'tr' and 'f'.

Figure 17: My suggested fingerings for the opening of “A Walk In The Woods” from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1999), 1.

Rubinstein in Berlin ambiguously gives the indication to ‘drop coins on frame’ inside the piano at bar 58, suggesting a number of interpretative options that need to be pre-determined (see Figure 18). The indication to initially pick up the coins, is not given and since both hands were preoccupied, playing this passage in the given tempo was difficult to manage. Instead of picking up and dropping the coins, my suggestion is to

create a pile of coins prior to commencing the piece, and then to knock them in order to emulate the sound of dropping coins. This can be heard and seen at 4:46 in Disc 5, Track 1. My preference for this was to keep the flow of tempo and the distressed mood of the story.

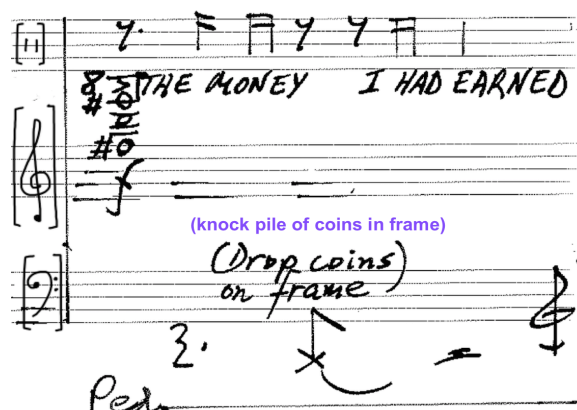


Figure 18: My suggested alternative to knock pile of coins in frame in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 58.

Rubinstein in Berlin (2008) poses difficult interpretative challenges between bars 161-6, representing Rubinstein's failed suicide as he plummets to the ground. To avoid fumbling, I needed to precisely calculate my movements beforehand as well as include additional ones. Bar 162 gives no indication to pull the chair back to its original position, or to sit down again, which posed obvious dangers. By moving the chair backwards in this bar as loud as possible and then quickly and indiscreetly back to its original position at bar 164, helped to create the illusion that the chair had moved considerably. For practical reasons, and to highlight the tragic and yet humorous element at this critical moment, it was necessary to slow the tempo of bar 164, which allowed time to slowly sit on the whoopee cushion, enabling me to create a longer and more audible sound, and to coordinate the blowing of the party whistle. Removing the party whistle from the mouth is also not indicated, which required a pre-determined body movement. I did this by removing it from my mouth during the dotted crotchet rest at bar 164, and then placing it inside the piano during the first beat of bar 166. This allowed me to speak in the next bar, while not disrupting the tense and critical moment of silence in the preceding bar, or by adding more complex movements in bar 164. To avoid ruining the surprising and humorous element of this

passage, I made sure to keep the party whistle and whoopee cushion away from the audience's view. This is implied by giving indications for the left hand to take and sit on the whoopee cushion. My suggested additional movements are given in purple as shown in Figure 19 and my suggested placement of objects inside the piano in Figure 28 of Chapter Four.

161
 PUT IT AROUND MY NECK. AS I
 (slap under keyboard)

162
 PUSHED THE CHAIR AWAY, THE BELT
 (Knock on keyboard lid)
 (Knock on metal bars inside piano)
 (stand up, push chair back) (loudly)
 Ped sempre →

163
 TORE APART AND I FELL ON THE FLOOR WITH A
 (with left hand, take whoopee cushion; place on chair; take whistle)

164
 (party whistle) N.B.
 (remove party whistle from mouth)
 CRASH.
 (sit on whoopee cushion)
 (push chair back to its original position)
 (N.B.—whistle with a dragon or snake that uncoils when blown)

Small text at the bottom: SCA 226 - Steinhilber Musikverlag, Zürich - Printed in Switzerland

Figure 19: My suggested additional movements in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 161-166.

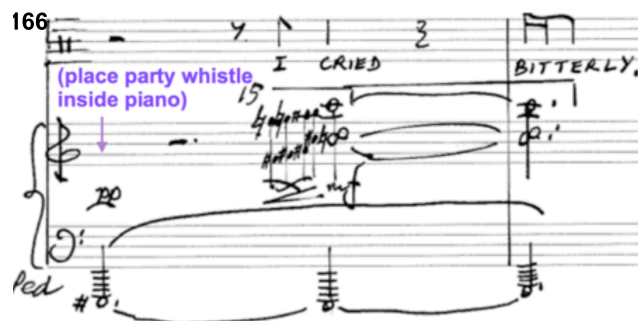


Figure 19: (cont.)

Performing spoken texts and vocalisations

When speaking texts in Rzewski's works, the performer may be faced with a number of choices, such as choosing his/her own register, dynamics, rhythms for words, quality of voice or language. *Abadonna* (1999) highlights all of these aspects (see Figure 7). In some cases, speaking in a different language was not indicated but permissible, for example in *Michal Bakunin: Rentier* (2000). Here, Rzewski suggested that I could replace it for an English translation because of my initial difficulty in pronouncing in French. Aside from such liberties, Rzewski stressed the importance of the thematic content of the text by saying:

You can play a Bach fugue any way you want to, on either an out of tune piano; it can be loud, soft, fast, it can be full of wrong notes ... It doesn't really matter. The notes come through one way or another. But with words it's different. If you don't understand the words then you've missed the whole thing.⁴⁹

My initial approach was by thinking that maximum effort, that is, speaking loudly, would equally give maximum results. However, this did not make the words clearer but rather led to fatigue of the voice and created a one-dimensional sound. By treating the rhythm of the words too literally, also produced a sterile and robotic effect, while pretending to act the words, produced amateurish results. Rzewski pointed this out in my earlier recordings by advising that:

⁴⁹ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2016).

It's music not theatre! ... Don't try to act, unless you have experience as an actor.⁵⁰

Rzewski emphasised clarity and comprehensibility of the text and that the rhythmic indications for the words could be treated more or less, as a guide.⁵¹ Above all, whether or not the rhythms were indicated, Rzewski's suggested that I:

- Aim for clarity, audibility and comprehensibility
- Treat the words or vocal sounds as part of the music
- Avoid using excessive bodily movements when speaking, and to not improvise them
- Should not act out the words, unless I had experience as an actor.

Rzewski's naturally powerful voice is clearly evident in his recordings. While insisting that he was unqualified to offer advice in the field of theatre or speaking techniques, he recommended that I learn from professional actors to help improve my speaking ability. Over time, I developed an approach for finding my 'own voice', without over-acting or speaking too 'straight'. Based on my lessons with the singer and vocal coach Rosie Hosking and German actress Bettina Lamprecht, I compiled the following vocal exercises to assist the preparation and improvement in the performance of spoken text, with the intention to give maximum results with minimum effort.

Vocal exercises and considerations for the application to spoken text

Exercise 1) Develop awareness of the vocal folds. Exercise: a) Silently laugh or yawn to yourself; b) feel and exercise the opening and closing sensation of the vocal folds.

⁵⁰ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2015).

⁵¹ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2015).

- Exercise 2) Incorporate a sufficient level of 'twang' in the voice. Known to opera singers as *squillo*, this involves developing the resonant ringing quality in the timbre of the voice. The purpose is to achieve effortless power and volume of the voice at the right frequency, without over-exertion, tiring the vocal folds or compromising the sound, in order to create a full, resonant tone and to penetrate thick textures of sound in the piano part. Exercise: a) Sing 'miau-miau-miau', by imagining the sound of a cat, or 'baaaaaa', the sound of sheep, keeping in mind that pushing too much air or breath may result in coughing or fatigue; b) find an appropriate balance by mixing the twang with the natural sound of the voice; c) apply this sound to spoken text. For power and volume in the voice, aim for a crow-like twang rather than a muted nasal sound.
- Exercise 3) Choose an appropriate rhythm and rhythmic placement of words in freely spoken text.
- Exercise 4) Exaggerate the articulation of consonants in words by creating an awareness of the sensations of the lips, tongue and teeth. Preparatory exercise: a) Pronounce the consonants 'P' with awareness of the lips, 'D' with the awareness of the tongue and behind the teeth 'K' with awareness of the soft pallet and tongue pushing together; b) Repeat using different rhythms by emphasising the consonants 'P-T-K-P-T-K-P-T-K' and different letters 'B T G. B T G. B T G'.
- Exercise 5) Keep the dynamic level constant, particularly by avoiding a diminuendo when speaking the ends of words or phrases.
- Exercise 6) Imagine 'active', or 'acting verbs' when speaking certain words or phrases in order to enhance their meaning, with the intention to help the listener understand the flow of the story, rather than creating a monotone or robotic sound. Exercise: a) Develop a sense and

understanding of the story from the text in the score; b) Choose an acting verb, for example from the list in Figure 20, that appropriately correlates to the action or meaning of the text; c) When speaking the words or phrases, imagine the acting verb in order to bring the text to life.

List of 'Acting Verbs'

abase	cajole	deny	free	muster	reiterate	suppress
abet	calculate	detect	frighten	mystify	reject	surprise
abolish	call	deter	frustrate	nag	rejoin	swindle
absolve	catch	devastate	fuddle	nauseate	release	tantalize
abuse	caution	dictate	gag	negotiate	relegate	tarnish
accept	censure	direct	gauge	notify	remedy	tease
acquaint	challenge	disconcert	gladden	nullify	renege	tempt
acquit	charge	discourage	goad	obliterate	repel	terrify
addle	charm	discredit	graft	offend	reprehend	thwart
address	chastise	disencumber	gull	oppose	repress	tickle
admonish	cheat	disgrace	hallow	organize	reprimand	titillate
affirm	check	disgust	harangue	orient	repulse	tolerate
afflict	cheer	dishearten	hassle	orientate	resist	torment
affront	chide	dispirit	help	overlook	retract	torture
aid	clarify	displease	henpeck	panic	revolt	trammel
ail	cloak	dissuade	hoodwink	parrot	ridicule	trick
alarm	coax	distress	humble	patronize	sanctify	trouble
alert	coddle	divert	humiliate	perform	satisfy	tyrannize
allow	coerce	divine	humour	perplex	scheme	unburden
allure	collude	dodge	hurt	persecute	scold	understand
amaze	command	dominate	hush	peruse	scrutinize	uproot
amend	commend	dramatize	hypnotize	placate	sedate	urge
amuse	con	draw	imitate	plan	seduce	vacillate
anger	conceal	duck	impair	please	settle	validate verify
antagonize	concern	ease	implicate	pledge	shake	victimize
anticipate	conciliate	educate	indict	pontificate	shame	vilify
ape appeal	condemn	elevate	indoctrinate	pose	shroud	vindicate
approach	condescend	elicit	induce	pray	shun	warn
arouse	confide	elucidate	indulge	preoccupy	sicken	wheedle
arrange	confirm	embroil	insinuate	press	simplify	woo
assess	confound	enchant	inspire	prevail	slander	worry
assist	confuse	endear	insult	prick	slur	worship
astound	consider	endure	interview	prod	smother	wrangle
attack	consign	enflame	intrigue	promise	snare	
authenticate	contest	engross	invite	promote	sober	
baby	convince	enkindle	judge	prompt	somber	
badger	correct	enlighten	lambast	propagandize	soothe	
baffle	corroborate	enmesh	lampoon	propel	spellbind	
bait	court	ensnare	lead	propose	spoil	
bear	cover	entangle	lecture	propound	spur	
beckon	criticize	entertain	libel	prosecute	spurn	
befuddle	crucify	entice	liberate	provoke	squash	
beg	crush	entrap	lure	purge	squelch	
beguile	curse	entreat	magnetize	purify	startle	
belittle	damn	entrust	malign	pursue	still	
berate	dare	eradicate	maneuver	quash	stir	
beseech	deceive	eschew	manipulate	quench	stretch	
bewitch	declaim	estimate	marshall	query	strike	
bid	deduce	evade	mask	rack	strip	
blame	defame	evaluate	mend	rally	study	
bless	defraud	excuse	mimic	ratify	stymie	
bluff	defy	execute	mislead	ravage	substantiate	
boost	delight	exploit	misuse	rave	suffer	
brainwash	delude	facilitate	mobilize	read	suggest	
bribe	demean	feed	mortify	rebuke	summon	
buck	denigrate	force	motivate	recreate	supplicate	
bushwhack	denunciate	frame	muffle	rectify	support	

Figure 20: Paul Kuritz, *Playing: An Introduction to Acting*. (New Jersey: Prentice- Hall, 1982), 11.

The following examples show how these vocal exercises are applied to spoken text:

Example 1 (applying Exercise 3):

The inherent flexible notation in *Abadonna* (1999) shows, that choosing an appropriate rhythm, timing of words, particularly their placement over the notes in piano part, is crucial. After trying various rhythmic approaches for the text, I found that avoiding long gaps of silence between each phrase, helped to keep the words connected to the flow and understanding of the story. By aiming to play the piano part between words of the text, that is, by avoiding synchronisation with the text, also helped to keep the words clear and audible. Because of the relatively fast tempo, it was useful to mark the points of breath in relation to the placement of words in the piano part.

THE ROAD—1 8 2

4. Abadonna
(Mile 44)

Frederic Rzewski (1999)
Text: adapted from Bulgakov
(*Master i Margarita*, ch. 22)

(Introduction:)

NARRATOR:
In Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita", Voland (the Master) shows Margarita his magic globus, a kind of crystal ball in which anything happening anywhere can be seen:

Use three different voices: low (Master), high (Margarita), medium (narration).

MASTER:
Blood is a big business.
Krov — velikoe delo.

I see you are interested in my globus— (Hiss:)
Ya vizhu, chto vas interesuyet moj globus— Sssssssssssssssssssssssss

MARGHERITA:
Oh yes, I never saw a little thing like that.
O da, ya nie videla takoi veshchitsi.

It's very nice, this gadget. I don't care for the news on the radio.
Harashaya vveshchitsa. Ya nie lyubyu poslednikh novostei po radio.

My globus is much better. For instance, do you see that little piece—
Moi globus gorazdo udobneye. Vot, naprimer, vidite etot kus—

The image shows a musical score for 'Abadonna' with handwritten annotations. The score is in 8/2 time and consists of two systems. The first system is for the Master's dialogue, and the second system is for Margarita's dialogue. The annotations include blue circles around specific words or phrases, blue arrows pointing to the notes, and blue text '(breathe)' indicating where to breathe. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The score includes both right-hand (R.H.) and left-hand (L.H.) parts. The R.H. part is in treble clef and the L.H. part is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is for piano (p).

Figure 21: My suggestions for indicating the breath and the placement of the text between the piano parts in "Abadonna" from *The Road Part VI: Travelling With Children* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2000), 1-5.

This is shown in Figure 21, which I similarly applied to the rest of the work. In addition to interpreting the rhythmic placement of words, *Abadonna* employs the de-familiarization technique, by using three different registers for the voice, adds humour to the text, functioning as a means to exemplify the contrastingly tragic content of the story: death, through the outcome of war. I did this by speaking in a high falsetto for Margarita's voice, a natural speaking voice for the narrator, and a low dark quality for Voland, which can be heard on Disc 2, Track 4.

Example 2 (applying Exercise 4):

Emphasising and articulating the consonants of words can be applied in performance, for example in Rubinstein's preparation for suicide, between bars 157-161, in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (2008). My initial approach to the text was to speak in an anxious manner, which, although did seem adequate, sounded somewhat predictable. Lamprecht suggested an effective alternative by speaking in an angry and frustrated manner, which I did by emphasising the consonants of words. This helped to intensify the mood and gave an unexpected element humour to the text and highlighted the contrasting thematic content of the story: suicide. The consonants are indicated by the circled red letters in Figure 22, and heard on Disc 5, Track 1 between 9'53-10'18.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a vocal piece, likely from 'Rubinstein in Berlin'. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written in the vocal line, with certain words circled in red to indicate where consonant articulation should be exaggerated. The piano part includes various performance markings such as dynamics (pp, mf, f, dim, cresc.), articulation (accents), and pedaling instructions (Ped, Ped sempre, Ped #). The tempo markings 'rit.' and 'a tempo' are also present.

System 1: Lyrics: "GAVE UP ALL HOPE, I HAD REACHED THE BOTTOM. I PREPARED FOR THE FINISH. I". Annotations: *rit.*, *a tempo*, *mf dim.*, *pp*, *Ped #*.

System 2: Lyrics: "TOOK OUT THE BELT FROM MY OLD WORN-OUT ROBE AND". Annotations: *PP sub.*, *(Ped, sempre)*.

System 3: Lyrics: "FASTENED IT TO THE CLOTHES-HOOK IN THE BATHROOM. I". Annotations: *cresc.*, *(Ped sempre)*.

System 4: Lyrics: "PULLED UP A CHAIR, SECURED THE BELT ON THE HOOK, AND". Annotations: *f*, *dim.*, *(Ped)*.

Figure 22: My suggestions for exaggerating the articulation of consonants during Rubinstein's preparation for suicide in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 157-161.

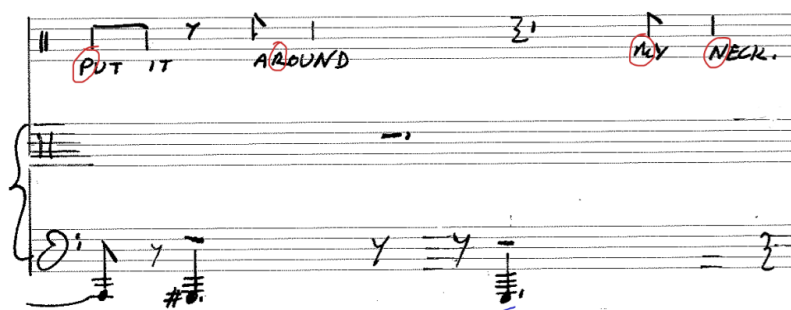


Figure 22: (cont.)

Example 3 (applying Exercise 5):

Keeping the dynamics and articulation of consonants clear and consistent, particularly the ends of words, can easily be overlooked, leading to incomprehensibility of the text. The word 'ALIVE' demonstrates this well in bars 5-7 of *Stuporman* (2014), which could be misinterpreted as 'A LIFE' or 'A LIE', if spoken with an unintended diminuendo (see Figure 23). To solve this problem, I have added additional rhythms, articulations and dynamics to this phrase by indicating tenutos, accents, crescendos and altered rhythms, to help make the words decipherable, which can be heard on Disc 3, Track 2 at 00'26. These additions can be applied to other texts in Rzewski's works. While it is not necessary to apply this approach too literally, the intention is rather, to treat my additional suggestions as a guide, in order to improve the comprehensibility of text.

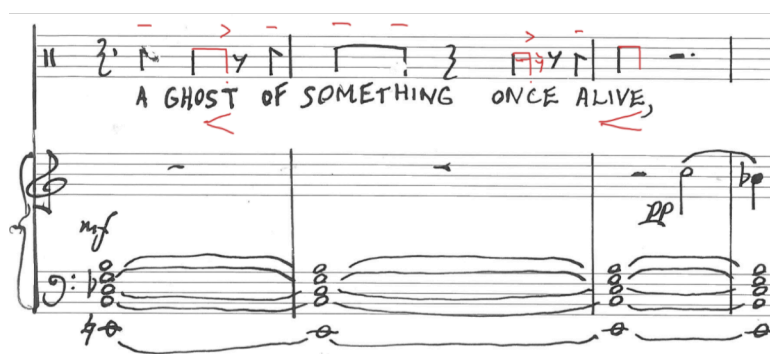


Figure 23: My suggestions for applying dynamics, rhythms and articulations to the words in "Stuporman" from *Dear Diary* (Brussels, 2014), 5-7.

Example 4 (applying Exercise 6):

The following examples show where I use of active verbs in relation to the text as indicated in purple:

Example 4.1

By imagining the words 'painting' or 'envision' when speaking 'in the peaceful moonlight', instantly changes the tone of voice and helps to evoke the impression of painting a picture. This is shown in Figure 24 and the effect can be heard on Disc 3, Track 6 at 00'49.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the phrase "BRINK IN THE PEACEFUL MOONLIGHT,". The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The lyrics are written above the treble clef staff. Above the word "PEACEFUL", the words "painting, envision" are written in purple. There are several handwritten annotations: a "y" above the first note of "BRINK", a "y" above the first note of "MOONLIGHT", and a "y" above the final note of "MOONLIGHT". In the bass clef staff, there is a handwritten "emp!" with a "y" above it, and a "4" above a note. The score includes a double bar line at the beginning and a final double bar line at the end.

Figure 24: My suggestions for imagining active verbs, 'painting' or 'envision' in *Flowers 1* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2009), 1-2.

Example 4.2

Active verbs that are not thematically related to the text may be more effective in some cases, such as in the opening words for *Stuporman* (see Figure 25). Initially, I chose the word 'haunting', but found the words 'enticing' or 'alluring' or 'befuddled' to be more engaging and effective.

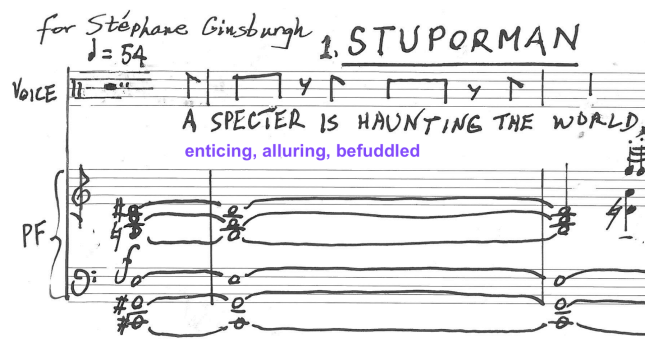


Figure 25: My suggestions for imagining active verbs, ‘enticing’, ‘alluring’ and ‘befuddled’ in “Stuporman” from *Dear Diary* (Brussels, 2014), 1-2.

In addition to imagining active verbs, texts may imply further interpretative possibilities by altering the way words may be spoken, in order to change the way one hears the text (as described in Chapter Two). A good example is in *Rubintein in Berlin*, whereby the simple act of smiling, when speaking the text describing Rubinstein’s positive dream experiences, has the effect of lifting Rubinstein’s happier mood, ultimately enhancing the meaning of the words. Furthermore, to complete the inconsistency of dynamics indicated in the text, I have added the *ff* dynamic at bar 148, which may be a possibly unintended omission by the composer. Figure 26 shows these additions in purple.

seduce, arouse, enchant, charm, mystify

141 (p) JUST AT THAT TIME I HAD FANTASTIC DREAMS. (f)

(d=42) 2 p ppp (d=84) 4 cresc.

143 narrate, enchant, convince confirm, convince

Text WAS A FAMOUS COMPOSER. I CONDUCTED MY NEW SYMPHONY; mp dim.

(Ped) amaze, amuse, baffle

145 confirm, intrigue, enlighten a tempo (p) ALL THE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN WHICH WAS RECEIVED WITH ENDLESS OVATIONS rallentando - 8

triumphant R.R. trem. P (RA under Keyboard) LL ppp

147 WERE AT MY FEET. narrate, confirm mp cresc. f

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piano piece. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is annotated with various performance instructions and active verbs in blue. The first system (141) is marked 'p' and 'f', with tempo markings '(d=42)' and '(d=84)'. The second system (143) includes a 'Text' section and dynamic markings 'mp' and 'dim.'. The third system (145) features 'a tempo' and 'rallentando' markings, along with '8' and 'LL' annotations. The fourth system (147) includes dynamic markings 'mp', 'cresc.', and 'f'. The annotations include verbs like 'seduce, arouse, enchant, charm, mystify', 'narrate, enchant, convince', 'confirm, convince', 'amaze, amuse, baffle', and 'confirm, intrigue, enlighten'. There are also performance instructions like 'Ped sempre', 'Ped', and 'Keyboard'.

Figure 26: My suggestions for imagining active verbs in the dream sequence in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008), 141-151.

delight, revolt, beg, beckon, dramatise, command --||--
 arouse, tempt, correct, victimize

148 (ff) poco allargando (p) a tempo

FOUGHT BATTLES FOR POLAND, I SAVED JEWS FROM PERSECUTION,

8 15) *dim.* *pp* *cresc.*

150 (ff) patronise, satisfy, dramatise (p) satisfy, indulge, confirm

I WAS FABULOUSLY RICH, THE BENEFACTOR OF HUMANITY, MY A-

allargando *f* *dim.* *p*

Figure 26: (cont.)

The *Etude for the Beginning of Time* (2014) for speaking pianist by Snezana Nestic is a prime example of the challenges involved in works of this kind, in that it uses an extremely ambivalent style of notation. As such, it was imperative that I consult with the composer in its realisation. The work is a narrative study in the contemplation of practicing the awareness of moment using improvisation, whereby its free rhythm and tempo, required a pre-determined plan. Its partially graphic notation in the form of *moduls I-IV*, comprises written fragments in the piano part, serving as an accompaniment to the freely spoken text. The lines between the composer and performer became somewhat blurred, leaving Nestic to suggest that parts of the score should be treated as a guide and at my discretion. This work ultimately shared similarities to the ambivalent functions in Rzewski's notation through its many interpretative possibilities and improvisatory elements. As I devised an appropriate accompaniment to this work, Nestic suggested that more eye contact and connection

with the audience could help to enhance the spontaneous nature of the text, which I later applied subtly when performing spoken texts in Rzewski's works. My eye contact with the audience can be seen throughout most of the work on Disc 5, Track 3. My spontaneous physical gestures were intended to exemplify words and phrases, however, after seeing myself in the recording, I found that they verged on the excessive, and arguably detracted from the story. As such, I realised that it was more important to keep the words clear and audible, which I did by applying some of the preparatory exercises as outlined in this chapter.

Improvising in Rzewski's works

When I asked Rzewski why he included free improvisation in his compositions, he replied:

It's a lost art amongst classical musicians. Often, musicians say they are bad improvisers but they have never really tried it. I include these cadenzas to give the 'option' to improvise. People forget, that choosing whether to improvise or not is also a part of improvisation.⁵²

As highlighted in the previous chapter, defining the intrinsic meaning of improvisation in words is a difficult task and fraught with contradictions. Since improvisation itself occurs solely in the moment, it cannot be rehearsed, prompting the question: To what extent does 'practice' become 'preparation' and how should this be applied to the improvisations indicated in Rzewski's works? Understanding the distinction between techniques of improvisation, that is, something that may be already known or acquired, as apposed to improvisation itself, the unknown, may shed light on the approach to improvisation in Rzewski's works. Ultimately, the answer is found in the experience of the moment. Although Rzewski affirms that improvisation should not be prepared, I have found that learning various techniques may be acquired with the aim at developing one's improvisatory skills in order to capture 'successful' or aesthetically pleasing moments.

⁵² Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (28 May, 2014).

My two versions for *Which Side Are You On?* (1978), and *Down by the Riverside* (1978) in Volume Two, demonstrate earlier and later developments of improvisation, both of which tend toward using various polytonal textures, much like the preceding written material. In addition to the guidelines shown in Figure 16, I take the lead from Rzewski's words regarding the polyphony of Bach:

The melody may be cut into smaller pieces, stretched compressed, transposed into other tonalities, and stacked up against itself, but if you look for it, it is always present.⁵³

While following the guidelines in Figure 16, my improvisation begins at 06'29, on Disc 1, Track 2. The 'different side' starts at 11'37 where I chose to play on a C pedal point. Although Rzewski stresses that improvisations should not be prepared, he contradictorily eludes to using techniques for improvisation, calling them 'distractions', that is, an intended focus or a plan of some sort, in order to help stimulate the flow of ideas during improvisation. He highlights this with the following analogy:

It's like reading on the toilet. You're in a stressful situation, so you think of something else, a distraction. Don't think about what you are going to do, just do it. What it is and what it feels like can be very different ... The decision to (improvise) or not should always be spontaneous, in the moment when you get there.⁵⁴

When improvising, I adopt a similar 'distraction' approach, the function of which, acts as a continually interchanging process between two extremes: having 'a plan' and as George Lewis suggests, 'to throw one's self in the deep end and work with what naturally happens'.⁵⁵ Both extremes pose obvious dangers; over-preparing improvisations turn them more or less into compositions, which is not Rzewski's intention, while letting the moment completely dictate may be frighteningly crippling and detrimental in performance. To overcome this dilemma and further develop my

⁵³ Frederic Rzewski, in Dieter Schnebel (ed.), *Frederic Rzewski*, 464-6.

⁵⁴ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 November, 2014).

⁵⁵ David Borgo, *Sync or swarm. Improvising music in a complex age* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 9.

improvisation skills, I was compelled to create my own conceptual pieces that functioned as exercises that similarly adopted Rzewski's analogy, by thinking of 'distractions', that is, by creating various parameters to help me 'get in the zone'. Each work in its own way, applied the polarity of two contradicting extremes, much like Rzewski's descriptions, by using precise guidelines for a free improvisation.

'Ash' Fantasie (2010) begins with the *English suite No. 2 in A minor BWV 807*, that is interrupted halfway with a long cadenza after concluding with the *Prelude in C major BWV 846* from the Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier*, Book One. The Cadenza is an exercise in free improvisation based on the following guidelines:

- 1) Interrupt the piece by exchanging the chord in the right hand with the chord A,B and E-flat for the second beat of bar 108.
- 2) Continue in the same tempo as the prelude using a similar semi-quaver pattern to serve as a rhythmic foundation for the flow of spontaneous ideas.
- 3) Apply various extended performance techniques (such as hitting and knocking different parts of the piano).
- 4) Improvise in a polyphonic manner using fragments of the preceding thematic material.
- 5) The improvisation should be long.
- 6) When appropriate, finish by playing the prelude in C major BWV 846.

As suggested by Rzewski, improvising with other musicians has been an excellent way to improve my improvisatory skills. *Journey to Damascus* was performed with cellist Rachel Johnston and is based on the *Prelude in A minor BWV 889*, from the *Well-Tempered Klavier*, Book Two, where its binary form is separated by a free improvisation. Both instruments were amplified and used electronic delay pedals, which served as a distraction, whereby the continual delayed rhythm effect was intended to assist the flow of spontaneous ideas. Although a loose structural plan was laid out beforehand for the improvisation, we agreed on a reaction-response-based concept and played as freely as possible.

Thrashley meets Audrey is another work that explores free improvisation modelled on the *Prelude in C minor BWV 847* from Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier*, Book One. It adopts the use of an RC50 loop station to record continual loops of percussive sounds, that was created by hitting, tapping, knocking different parts of the piano. In addition, the performance included improvised theatrical gestures and movement around the piano as seen on the DVD recording on Disc 5, Track 2. It demonstrates the comparisons between aural and visual aspects of performance and how this may impact the overall perception of sound.

My works have been based on the idea of how applying 'a plan', 'guidelines' or 'distractions' for improvisations, can serve as a means to push creativity further, which is reflected in the following observation from Rollo May:

Creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations, the latter (like the river banks) forcing the spontaneity into the various forms, which are essential to the work of art or poem.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Rollo May, "On the Limits of Creativity," in *The Courage to Create* (New York: Norton, 1975), 115.

Chapter Four

Other Considerations

Rzewski's scores frequently give indications for page turns. However, I found that removing the music rack from the piano and by reading most scores from an iPad (or similar device), was not only convenient and practical, but created space by making it easier to execute inside piano techniques, such as hitting on the metal frame and tapping on the strings. This also opened up to further possibilities for improvisation inside the piano.

When performing works for spoken text, it was beneficial to tilt the piano slightly at an angle of 30-40° towards the audience, which allowed for better eye contact and connection with the audience helped to improve the audibility of speech. Figures 27 and 28 show my suggested positioning for the piano and placement of the water glass, pitcher and table in *Marriage*, and similarly my positioning and placement of objects in *Rubinstein in Berlin*. By eradicating the music rack and using an iPad to read the score, allowed easier access for tapping the bottom C1 inside the piano in Section A. Refer to *Marriage*, Chapter 5 in the Case Studies.

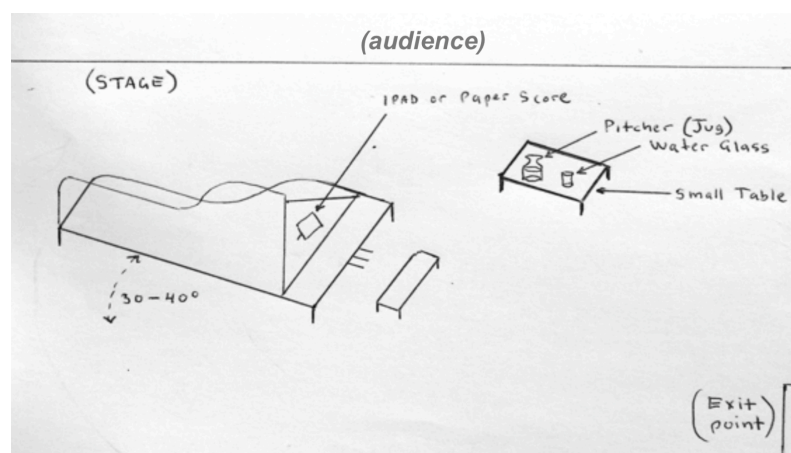


Figure 27: My suggested positioning for the glass, table, iPad and piano in relation to the audience and exit points in "Marriage" from *The Road Part VIII* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3).

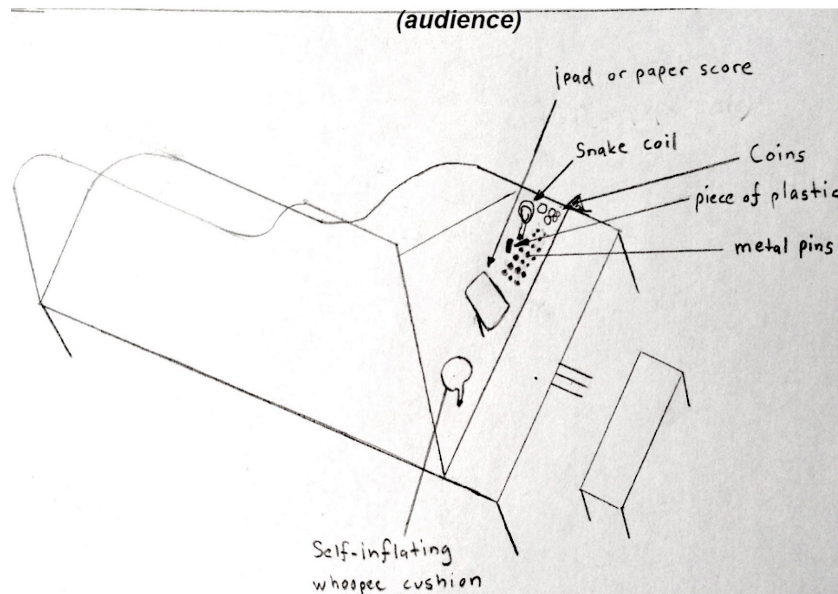


Figure 28: My suggested positioning for the whoopee cushion, piece of plastic, snake coil, coins, iPad and piano in relation to the audience in *Rubinstein in Berlin* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2008).

Amplification of the voice

When performing works for speaking pianist in large venues, it was sometimes inevitable to use microphones to amplify the voice to assist comprehensibility of the words. However, I found that relying too heavily on amplification, significantly changed the sound and audibility of words, which was not always advantageous as may be commonly taken for granted. Rzewski recalls his experiences, regarding the microphone as being a primitive tool for capturing sound:

Most musicians think that a microphone is something that makes your voice louder. But they don't understand that there needs to be a voice in the first place. So a lot of musicians don't know how to use a microphone. And they mumble into it and you don't hear anything ... It's just loud mumbling ... When you speak into a mic you have to 'speak'. Concert theatres and concert halls are designed for the sound to be audible like when the Greeks invented the theatre 2500 years ago. So, if you move around your changing the sound and that changes how people hear. When you talk into a mic it actually makes the sound not richer but poorer, because what ever you do, the sound comes only

out of one point, the same place. If you have to amplify the voice you need to amplify the piano too so it's better to avoid mics altogether.⁵⁷

Even with the aid of an experienced sound engineer, using microphones required skill. My experiences showed that using amplification posed unforeseeable technical challenges, particularly when trying to find a cohesive and optimal balance between the spoken texts and playing the surrounding parts. After performing *Rubinstein in Berlin* in different sized venues, I tried two possible methods for amplifying the voice. One was by wearing a headset, adjusting the microphone at a fixed distance to my mouth; the other was by using several vocal microphones positioned carefully on microphone stands. Each technique showed advantages but introduced limitations. Using a headset allowed for freedom of movement, particularly when standing up, knocking on the metal frame inside piano and sitting on the whoopee cushion. However, because of the microphone's fixed position pointed to my mouth, it was difficult to control the dynamics of spoken text. As such, depending on the level of amplification in the piano parts and extended techniques, which was necessary in some cases, I had to reinterpret the dynamics and largely re-adjust the overall balance. Extra care was needed when blowing into the party whistle, making sure that any subtle movements would not be amplified. The other option was to use several microphones attached to microphone stands and pointing them towards the spoken area. Even though this method gave me more freedom to control the dynamics, I needed to develop my own microphone technique when speaking the text, which required an extra level of awareness of the microphone's position, and eventually impinged on physical movement and freedom during performance. Although it was possible to master this method, it was time-consuming and inevitably made it difficult to find a good balance and cohesiveness between the text, piano parts and extended techniques. I concluded that using amplification required considerable adjustments and re-interpretation of dynamics, constricted the movement of extended techniques and introduced technical problems. Ultimately, my preference for performing without amplification, gave the most satisfying results.

⁵⁷ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2016).

Studio versus live recordings

Recording music 'live' or in a studio, is an under-rated art form for capturing the essence of a performance, because of the endless possibilities for microphone placement, controlling the acoustic space and balance of sound. Rzewski expressed his preferences clearly by saying:

Recordings only make sense as documentaries of some events. I am against all editing etc. afterwards. I am against studios. I'm all for live concerts being recorded with all the mistakes, imperfections and children crying etc. It proves that something really happened. Whereas a studio recording, with all the right notes sounds fake, because it is fake!⁵⁸

A counter-argument regarding live performance and studio recordings is given between Glenn Gould and Zubin Mehta, both of whom express equally valid opinions.⁵⁹ Mehta, whose opinions were in alignment with Rzewski's, explains the necessity for the performer to have a stimulus and contact with the audience who equally needs to receive the music. In contrast, Gould expresses his aversion for the 'rule of mob law' preferring the luxurious options available in a recording environment as a means to discover the composing secrets and the line and architectural projection of a composition. Rather than creating a perfectly sterile performance environment, the recordings in Volume Two focus on capturing the best interpretation and the essence and message of the selected repertoire and where possible, in a live setting with an audience present. As in the same manner as J.S. Bach's intention for *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Rzewski pictured a domestic performance setting for *The Road* (1995-2003), which I found ideal for a studio environment and adopted when recording this work.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (5 June, 2016).

⁵⁹ Glenn Gould, *Interview with Alex Trebek: "I detest audiences"* includes Zubin Mehta talking about Gould. Recorded 1966, Intertel: The Culture Explosion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZTgAGSajA> (accessed 3 June, 2017).

⁶⁰ Frederic Rzewski, liner notes to Rzewski plays Rzewski: Piano Works. 1975-1999, Nonesuch Records 79623, 2002, compact disc.

Seeing versus listening

Countless studies have inquired into how visual elements in music performance influence the audio sensory perception of the listener. One such experiment shows how ‘musical language’, is acquired and linked to the visual and auditory perception.⁶¹ This phenomenon can be similarly observed in the execution of extended techniques in Rzewski’s works, whereby seeing movements coupled with the auditory perception, has a significantly different effect when perceiving the auditory in isolation. I became aware of this when performing and recording *Rubinstein in Berlin*, particularly during Rubinstein’s preparation for suicide as shown in Figure 19. When observing this from an audience’s perspective, actions such as taking the whoopee cushion, placing it on the chair, sitting on it and taking and blowing into the party whistle, demonstrated how the element of humour and surprise could be lost or even dampened, as opposed to just listening to the recording. When referring to the whoopee cushion, Rzewski said after listening to my recording, that ‘it actually sounds more funny if you don’t see it’.⁶² In order to effectively create and not ruin the element of humour and surprise in a live setting, it was important to make sure that the whoopee cushion and party whistle were not visible to the audience prior to this point in the piece. I observed another example in *No Title* (1999-2000), where it was initially unclear how to produce the ‘Khhhh’ sound until I heard Rzewski’s recording. After hearing my recording of this work, Rzewski found that it sounded more interesting when he couldn’t tell how the sound was produced.⁶³ When recording the execution of extended techniques, I found that when isolating the auditory aspect from the visual elements, that is, listening to the CD alone, added a sense of ambiguity from the listener’s perspective.

Another example is evident in *Marriage* as seen in Figure 33, where I tried various ways to mimic the gesture of dragging on a cigarette, which I did either visually, by

⁶¹ B. Haslinger, P. Erhard, E. Altenmüller, U. Schroeder, H. Boecker, A. O. Ceballos-Baumann, ‘Transmodal sensorimotor networks during action observation in professional pianists’, *Journal of cognitive neuroscience* 17: 2 (2005): 282-293.

⁶² Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (15 May, 2015).

⁶³ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (15 May, 2015).

bringing the hand to the mouth, or by simply mimicking the sound to produce a loud exhalation. When creating the exhalation sound alone, it was less clear to the audience what was intended as opposed to using both the physical gesture and sound. A similar effect is noticed throughout the piece when observing the drinking of water, particularly in the last bar with the indication: 'drink water, clear away pitcher, glass', leaving much ambiguity for the listener, making it uncertain whether the piece has come to an end. My interpretations for smoking, drinking from the water glass and leaving the room in the final bar, can be observed on my YouTube recordings of this work.⁶⁴

From an audience's perspective, visually observing the execution of extended performance techniques and vocalisations has the effect of altering the way sound is perceived by creating an expectation to the extent of potentially ruining the element of surprise. On the other hand, perceiving this same sound from a purely aural perspective makes the intentions arguably clearer, in this case, more humorous and surprising. Ultimately, both perceptions of sound inevitably question the intentions behind these actions, and how they should be interpreted, opening up to different levels of effectiveness that should be taken into account, particularly in a live setting.

⁶⁴ Frederic Rzewski, *Marriage*, performed by Ashley Hribar. Recorded on 26 June, 2016. Potsdam <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHMSO9UnZyQ> (Accessed 3 June, 2017).

Chapter Five

Case Studies

Marriage (2003)

Marriage is a large-scale work incorporating spoken text, vocal sounds, improvisation and extended techniques. The text is adapted from Leo Tolstoy's novelette *The Kreutzer Sonata*, based on the opposing controversial issues of abstinence and promiscuity, describing how its main character Pozdnyshev, in the role of protagonist, leads up to the events and killing of his wife. *Marriage* employs the de-familiarization technique by introducing in various ways a 'strange noise', which, being fundamental to the story, is used to personify Pozdnyshev's frightening demeanour and ideology. Rzewski describes this technique by comparing similar functions of the classical tradition:

The 'strangeness' makes it clear what it is all about: 'the horror of things as they are'. It's a little like the whoopee cushion in *Rubinstein in Berlin*. It's true it's difficult for classical audiences. But I think there are parallels in the classical repertoire. For instance the low trill soon after the beginning of the Schubert B-flat sonata. If done properly, these things make your hair stand on end. It makes classical listeners uncomfortable because the classical tradition is really an oral tradition, whose effect has been to smooth out the rough places and remove the radical side of composers like Beethoven. If you play him exactly as he writes, doing things like crescendo to *forte* followed by *subito* piano, something he does all the time, people will tell you 'you can't do that'. But that was what *Sturm und Drang* was all about.⁶⁵

Structurally, *Marriage* is composed in eight sections indicated here with bar numbers:

A (1-16)

B (17- 57)

C (58- 124)

D (125- 163)

⁶⁵ Frederic Rzewski, email (1 July, 2016).

- E (164- 230)
- F (231- 278)
- G (279- 323)
- H (324- 383)

Section A begins with plucking on the strings (and later, scraping), using the fingernails indicated with the + symbol for the left hand, and tapping on the keyboard lid using the fingernails and flesh of the fingers for the right (see Figure 29). When tapping on the strings, I found that subtle movements and tension of the hand and fingers made it challenging to control the dynamics. This was easily solved by hooking my thumb on the metal pins inside the piano, enabling more stability and control. My initial approach, was to begin with the piano lid open, tapping on the top of the lid using the thumb and the 4th finger, which produced an interestingly piercing high-pitched sound, but a relatively soft dynamic. Later, I realised that it may have been Rzewski's intention to begin with the piano lid down, which felt more natural by using alternate fingerings, that is, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th fingers together for the tremolos on the closed lid. This produced a stronger sound, and when opening the lid just for the B section, it added a dramatic effect to the confronting text that succeeded. Either way, by beginning with the lid either up or down, it produced different results that were equally effective.



Figure 29: Indications for tapping on the string and keyboard lid in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 1-2.

Bar 5 introduces the de-familiarization technique by using the 'strange noise', a combination of Pozdnyshev's nervous tick and smoker's cough (see Figure 30).⁶⁶ Notated initially as a 'Grunt', this sound characterizes the piece throughout, taking on various forms, where the pianist is advised in the N.B. to 'Read Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata", then find your own sounds for Pozdnyshev's 'strange noise'.⁶⁷ I did this by experimenting with the dynamics and varying durations for the grunt sounds. Later, I discovered that some audiences members were initially uncertain as to whether my grunts were intentional. Although the ambivalent notation produced different effects, Rzewski later commented on the unsettling yet positive effect it had on the audience.

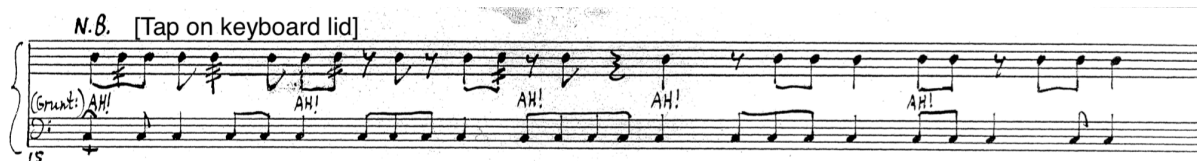


Figure 30: The first appearance of the 'strange noise' in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 5.

Section B introduces the dramatic text, while leaving its rhythm and interpretation to the discretion of the pianist. Bar 29 reintroduces the 'strange noise' in the form of a cough and inhalation of a cigarette, which is indicated approximately but clearly by using arrows (see Figure 31).

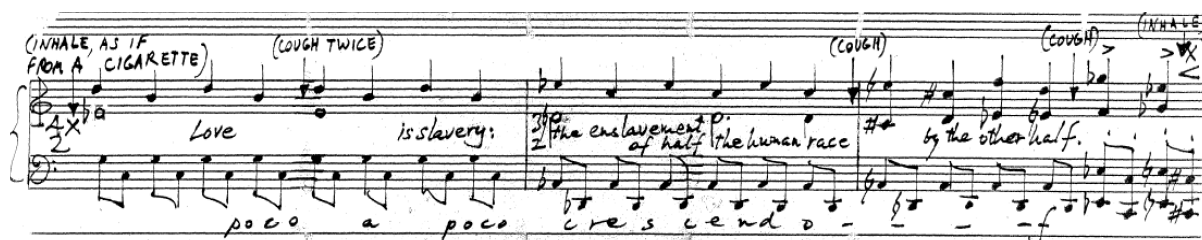


Figure 31: The 'strange noise' notated as a cough and the inhalation from a cigarette, in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 29-31.

⁶⁶ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (28 May, 2014).

⁶⁷ Frederic Rzewski's *Marriage*, 5.

The excerpt shown in Figure 32 required a powerful voice to complement the intensity of the text: 'Sex is Animal behaviour, violence. All sex is rape'. In combination with the loud piano passages in the piano part, it became necessary to shout these words.



Figure 32: Demonstrating the text '... violence. All sex is rape.' in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 33-4.

Figure 33 uses ambiguous notation by suggesting many interpretative possibilities for drinking from a water glass. Initially, I gave little consideration for this passage thinking that improvising the movements would suffice. However, this was not Rzewski's intention, suggesting that I should practice precisely calculated movements and to avoid amateurish movements or the impression that it is improvised. I did this by practicing a sequence of pre-determined actions: moving (or walking) towards the table; picking up the glass, drinking and swallowing the water; placing the glass down and moving back to the piano. In order to convincingly create the drinking sound from a purely aural perspective, and for the purposes of a CD recording, it was helpful to exaggerate the sound of exhalation after drinking.

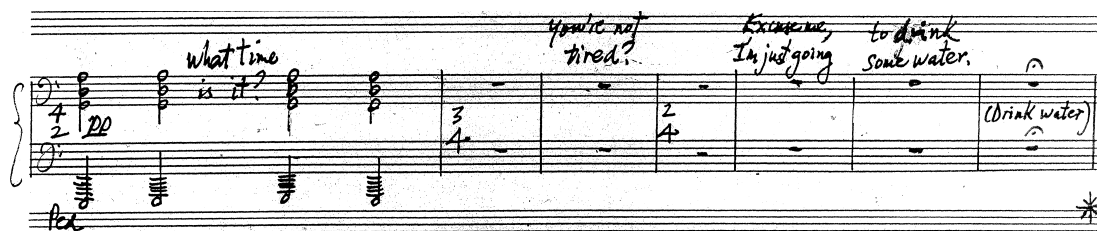


Figure 33: Indications for drinking from a water glass, in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 51-6.

The coughing and sobbing indications as seen in Figure 34 are freely notated over

nine bars, thus capturing a sense of improvised freedom which I achieved by experimenting with various dynamics and rhythms.



Figure 34: Indications for coughing and sobbing notated freely over the piano part, *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 66-74.

Bar 128 gives the indication to ‘drag on a cigarette’ by inhaling on the 2nd beat and out on the 4th (see Figure 35), which I found could be interpreted in various ways. One way was to mimic this gesture by bringing the fingers to the mouth. Although this visual gesture may be implied, it required slightly more time to execute and use of the sustain pedal which necessitated slowing the bar down. Another way, which was equally effective and my choice for the recording, was to continue in the same tempo, by focusing on the in-and-exhalation of sound.

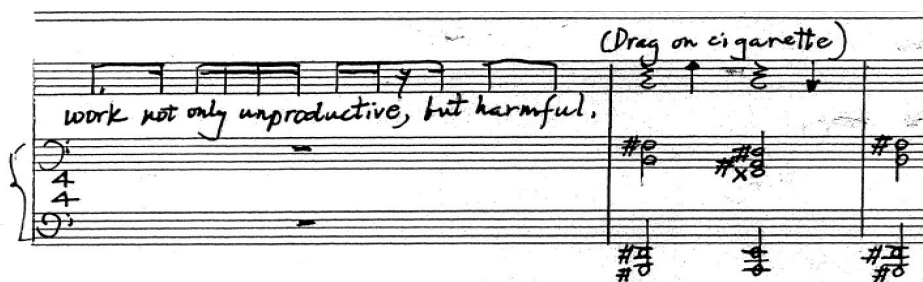


Figure 35: Using arrows to indicate the in and exhale of breath when dragging on cigarette, *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 127.

Figure 36 shows Pozdnyshev’s groans of disgust and loathing. Although precise rhythms, articulations, dynamics and spellings for vocal sounds are used, it ambiguously suggests endless interpretative possibilities for the pianist. Over time, I found that interpreting these rhythms too precisely produced a somewhat mechanical effect, and so I finally adopted a freer approach, which was more convincing.

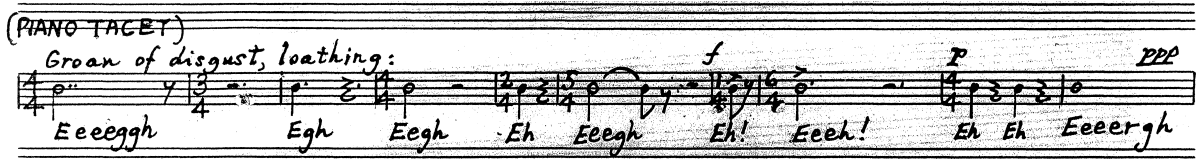


Figure 36: Indications for 'Groan of disgust, loathing' in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 213- 222.

The opening Section F begins to describe the unfolding events that lead to Pozdnyshv killing his wife (see Figure 37). Firstly, the indication that 'The text may be recited by the pianist or another person, or not at all' is an error and should, according to the composer, be deleted. The text implies an approximate rhythm through the close alignment of words over the piano part. My initial approach was to speak as closely and literally in proportion to the semi-quavers in the piano part as possible. However, this constricted the fluency and comprehensibility of the text, with the result that over time I adopted a freer approach by speaking with more rhythmic liberty in my placement of words, which in turn allowed more expressive freedom.

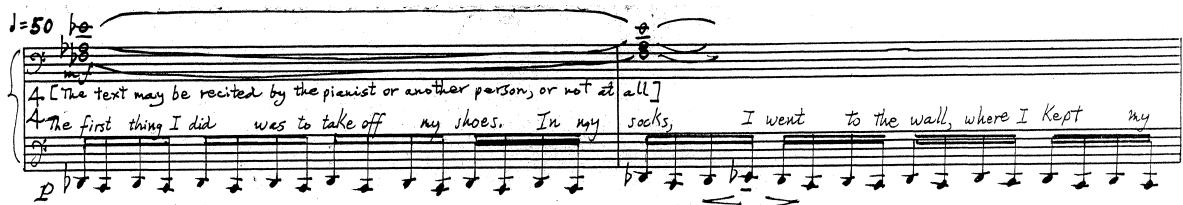


Figure 37: An example demonstrating text with no rhythmic indications in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 230-1.

Section F suggests the impersonation of other characters from the story: Pozdnyshv's wife, lover and sister. An example of this is shown in Figure 38, with Pozdnyshv's wife saying: 'Think what you're doing! What's wrong with you? There's nothing, nothing ...'.

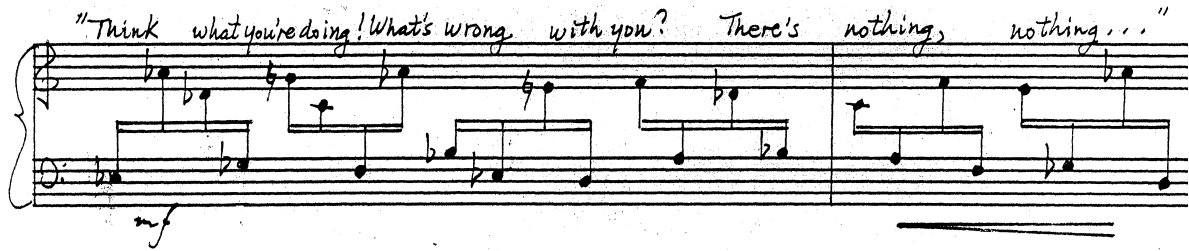


Figure 38: An example suggesting the impersonation of Pozdnyshev's wife in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 253-4.

I found that Pozdnyshev's wife could be imitated by speaking in a higher register or in falsetto, as Michael Kirkendall does, which effectively added to the humorous aspect to this tragic story.⁶⁸ My preference was to alter my voice slightly, and to keep a similar story-telling voice for Pozdnyshev. The notation clearly suggests this, but does not indicate using a higher register for the voice, which ultimately highlights more ambiguity.

My improvisation at bar 276 is relatively short (see Figure 39), running from 19'10-20'00 on Disc 3, Track 1, simply because it felt suitable at the time. I included my own 'strange noise' in the form of a 'groan' at 19'52, to characterise the intense moment of the piece. A more appropriately extensive improvisation of *Marriage* can be seen from 18'07- 19'19, at a performance I gave one month prior.⁶⁹ During the improvisation at 18'30, while improvising inside the piano, the DPA microphone fell unintentionally from the mic stand. Instead of panicking, I used this to my advantage by creating more 'strange noises', while simultaneously getting up to re-attach the mic. This felt appropriate to the flow of the story and the moment.

⁶⁸ Michael Kirkendall performing Rzewski's *Marriage* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCWi1Th_5hs (accessed 14 April, 2016).

⁶⁹ Frederic Rzewski, *Marriage*, performed by Ashley Hribar, Recorded on 26 June, 2016. Potsdam <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHMSO9UnZyQ> (accessed 3 June, 2017).

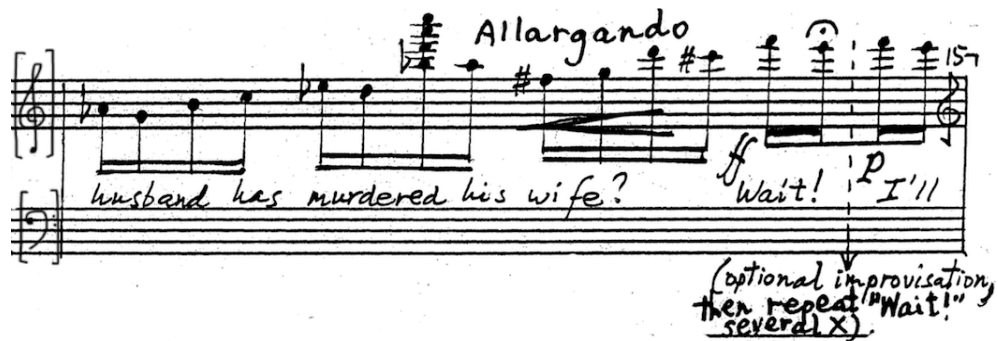


Figure 39: An optional improvisation in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 276.

Section G explores various extended techniques; knocking, tapping, slapping or thumping (with the fist) on various wooden parts of the piano: the front, top, under, side of the piano lid. Although precise rhythmic and dynamic indications for the left and right hand are given, its discretionary aspect leaves the pianist to decide on which areas of wooden surfaces to strike. The ambiguity is most apparent from bars 302- 314, with the indication to whisper while ‘imagining the flapping of vampire wings’, requiring the imagination of the pianist (see Figure 40).

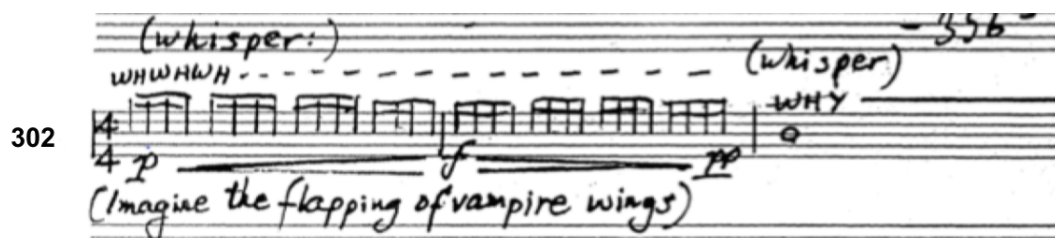


Figure 40: Indications to whisper while imagining the flapping of vampire wings in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 302-4.

Bar 305 gives the indication to ‘Tap under keyboard; move up to lid’, implying that one should tap the lid in accordance to where the notes D4 and G5 are notated. I found that choosing appropriate fingerings and dynamics influenced the sound most of all. Figure 41 shows my suggested fingerings marked in blue.

305

(tap under Keyboard; move up to lid)

306

(Move up and down on Keyboard lid)

308

(Move up and down on Keyboard lid)

Figure 41: My suggested fingerings for Section G in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 305-14.

Handwritten musical notation for measures 310 and 312. Measure 310 features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, with handwritten annotations such as '1234', '6', and 'f'. Measure 312 shows a similar pattern with more rests and handwritten annotations like '321321', 'p', and 'f'.

Figure 41: (cont.)

Again, the ambiguous directions at bar 374, suggests, much like the use of active verbs as discussed in Chapter Three, to enhance the meaning of the text by imagining ‘Like an afterthought – reflectively, without expression’ (see Figure 42).

Handwritten musical notation for a voice part and piano accompaniment. The voice part has the instruction '(Like an afterthought - reflectively, without expression:) E. quality.' The piano part is in 4/4 time, marked 'p', and features a long, sustained note with a fermata.

Figure 42: Rzewski’s performance direction ‘Like an afterthought-reflectively, without expression’ in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 373-4.

The final enigmatic bar, with the instruction: ‘drink water, clear away glass, pitcher’, deliberately proposes a vast number of interpretative options for finishing the piece

(see Figure 43). Pre-determined movements were necessary, making sure that I didn't give the impression that I was improvising. In a concert situation, one option was to play the next work in the program (if there was one) or to stand up and bow indicating that the piece was over. Both options however, seemed somehow, inappropriate. After trying various possibilities, I adopted Kirkendall's performance decision, which was to get up and exit the room. This powerful effect not only added to Pozdnyshev's nervous character, but also left it to the audience to decide if the work had come to an end, creating more ambiguity and leaving them to ponder over the dramatic and confronting story just told.

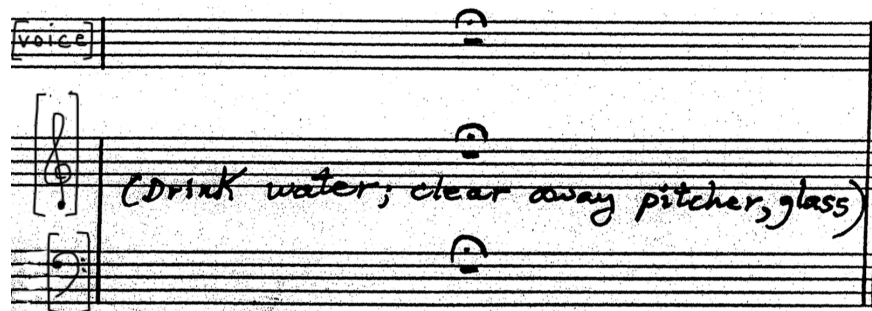


Figure 43: The final bar with the indication to 'Drink water; clear away pitcher, glass' in *Marriage* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 2002-3), 382.

***Coming Together* (1972)**

Coming Together uses texts adapted from the letters of prisoner Sam Melville, who was killed along with dozens of other inmates during a riot in the Attica state prison, New York (1971). It is usually performed in a group of 8-10 players, each of whom must follow strict guidelines for various improvised techniques. Performing the solo adaption of this work was challenging in that it required spoken text, playing continually changing 16th note passages in the left hand while improvising to the rigid guidelines with the right. As such, a long preparation phase was necessary. Aside from the technical challenges, the biggest was to find a balance between the tensions of opposing ideals: freedom and strict control, as reflected in the guidelines for improvised techniques (see Figure 43).

My initial approach was to create the illusion of an improvisation by writing out the notes for the right hand in sections A-H, with the aim of developing proficiency, independence and control while speaking and playing. Over time, my intention was to deviate from my re-composed notes, by improvising from the score directly. However, this was not Rzewski's intention, as he highlights common misinterpretations of this work attempted on the basis of this approach:

The whole point of this piece is to improvise within a structure governed by strict rules that are found in each of the sections. So the idea is much like being in prison with limited freedom but within strict rules. If you plan each of these variations then you have totally missed the point.⁷⁰

Despite this, I found that my re-compositions positively secured my confidence and accuracy in performance, which, through a long process of practice, arguably helped me to understand the intentions behind the work.

⁷⁰ Frederic Rzewski, personal discussion with the composer (19 June, 2016).

Frederic Rzewski: Performance Procedure for Coming Together

Voice: The first fragment of text ("I think") should be spoken as an upbeat to the beginning. Thereafter every fragment of text is spoken at the beginning of each measure. The speaker should try to suggest a different expressive character with each repetition of a sentence.

Instruments: *Coming Together* can be performed by any number of instrumentalists, although it is usually done with a group of 8 to 10 players. At least one of the players, usually an electric bass or bass guitar, plays the entire bass line as written. This may be reinforced by using also piano or synthesizer. For the remainder of the ensemble, there is a single basic playing technique which appears in a somewhat different form in each of the eight sections (letters A through H). In this technique, each player follows the written bass line without playing all of the notes, but only some of them, sometimes at random, sometimes in accordance with a given scheme, sometimes sustaining them and sometimes not. Whether a note is short or long, it must be played together with the bass line, either at unison or some octave doubling, depending on the instrument.

A: All instruments attack the first low G together *ff*, sustaining it (*diminuendo* to *pp*) for two to three measures, after which only the bass line is heard. Gradually, after a few measures of silence the instruments begin to enter in staggered fashion, very softly, with long sustained sounds *pp*. Each note should last at least a measure, and should be followed by a few measures of silence. This last depends on the number of instruments playing, but the general effect should be that of individual isolated sounds of different instruments fading in and out of each other.

B: Divide the ensemble into two groups, high and low. The higher instruments play only the notes with accents, the low instruments only the low G's, somewhat sustained.

C: Somewhat similar in character to A, but with more activity. Instead of playing single sustained notes of one or two measures' duration, as in A, each player plays short chains of two or three notes, *legato*, each note lasting two to four beats. Each chain should be separated by a silence of a few measures. As in A, let only one or two instruments play at a time.

D: Similar to B, but with the rôles reversed. High instruments play only the high B-flats, low instruments only the notes marked *staccato*.

E: Each player constructs short melodies by choosing notes *ad libitum* (but without ever playing two sixteenth-notes in succession), about three or four per measure, and playing them *legato* and *pp*. A melody may consist of five to ten notes. After each melodic phrase a player should rest for a measure or two, then play another melody. This is a rather difficult technique to master. It is important that not all instruments play at periodic intervals (e.g. on the beat). A player should choose beforehand what note he/she wants to play, wait for it to come up, then play exactly together with the bass line. At the end of E all the players drop out gradually with the exception of the bass line.

F: This section resembles E, but has a virtuoso character. Each player chooses notes at random and plays them *staccato sforzato*, as fast as he/she can play without ever playing two sixteenth-notes in succession, and taking care to be precisely together with the bass-line. The combined should be of a continuous rapid alternation of instrumental colors, without ever having more than one pitch sounding at the same time.

G: Continue the hocketing effect of F, except that now each player plays short groups of sixteenth-notes rather than individual notes. These groups are chosen at random by each player: short at first (3–4 notes) and separated by longer silences (a few beats), then becoming longer, with shorter silences between them, as H is approached.

H: Each player plays all of the notes, or as many as possible given the limitations of breathing, etc. The sound should be very full and all notes executed precisely together up to the end, which should be in strict tempo with a sharp cut-off.

ATTICA: The instrumentation is the same as for *Coming Together*. Some instruments sustain a drone on B-flat, or a B-flat major chord. The others follow the written melody, playing or resting *ad lib.*, reading either at the written pitch or playing a parallel melody a sixth below or a third above (always in the key of B-flat). Some instruments may improvise freely within this melody. The music begins softly, builds to *f*, then drops to *p* again on page 3, line 5, then builds to *f* again and ends very loud. The vocalist may speak or sing the words *ad lib.*

Figure 44: The Performance Procedure for Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1971).

The repetitions for each phrase required a different expressive character from the voice, which I did by experimenting with the ranges and melodic inflections, and by matching to the dynamics in the piano part. For the solo version, my adjustments for sections A-H correlated to the higher and lower playing instruments, as described in the performance procedure in Figure 43.

The following suggestions for translating the ensemble instruments to the solo version are not intended for performance, but rather as a compromise to help gain proficiency when simultaneously speaking and playing the piano part.

My suggestions for translating the ensemble version to the solo version in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (1972):

Section A (Bars 1-49):

Add the lower G2 in the bass by holding it with the *sostenuto* pedal (until Section C) to match the opening G sustained note *f*. The G2 decays naturally after a few bars, correlating to the eventual *diminuendo* to *pp*.

Section B (Bars 50-98):

In the right hand, use octaves to represent the higher instruments playing accents, while playing the bottom G octave with the left hand. The G2 note represents the lower playing instruments as it continues to be sustained with the *sostenuto* pedal.

Section C (Bars 99-147):

At bar 99, simultaneously release the *sostenuto* pedal while depressing the soft pedal, to create the *subito p* effect and contrast between subsequent sections.

Section D (Bars 148-196):

At bar 148, hold the B \flat 4 in the left hand with the *sostenuto* pedal to mimic the sustaining high instruments. This causes less strain on the hand by not having to continuously depress this note with the left thumb. The lower instruments are represented by playing with the notes B \flat 3, G3, D3, C3, B \flat 2 and G2 staccato, which can be done by crossing the right hand over the left.

Section E (Bars 197- 245):

a) Practice the following preparatory exercise by playing the following composed melodies in the right hand (see Figure 45); b) follow on by writing similar melodies throughout the section; c) once proficiency and independence of speech is developed, improvise as indicated in the Performance Procedure (Figure 44).

The image shows a musical score for Section E, bars 197-245. The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It features a piano accompaniment of eighth notes in the left hand and a vocal melody in the right hand. The lyrics are: "IT'S SIX MONTHS NOW AND I CAN TELL YOU TRUTHFULLY". The piece starts at bar 197, marked with a box 'E' and 'pp'.

Figure 45: My suggested preparatory exercise for the beginning of section E in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1971), 197-9.

Section F (Bars 246- 294):

a) Practice the following preparatory exercise which suggests the rapid alteration of instruments of ranging timbre in the right hand (see Figure 46); b) follow on by writing similar notes throughout the section; c) once proficiency and independence of speech is developed, improvise as indicated in the Performance Procedure (Figure 44).



Figure 46: My suggested preparatory exercise for the beginning of section F in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1971), 246-7.

Section G (295- 343):

- a) Practice the following preparatory exercise, as an example for the improvised 16th notes in the right hand (see Figure 47); b) follow on by writing similar notes throughout the section; c) once proficiency and independence of speech is developed, improvise as indicated in the Performance Procedure (Figure 44).



Figure 47: My suggested preparatory exercise showing the 16th notes for the beginning of section G in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (Brussels: Sound Pool Music (BMI), 1971), 295-7.

H (344- 392):

- Conserve energy and avoid fatigue in this *ff* section by not beginning too loudly.

It is arguable as to the extent one should prepare this work. On the one hand, the explicit notation implies precision, justifying ways in which to achieve this by using preparatory exercises, as I have suggested. On the other, it may be also intended to

avoid this altogether, as Rzewski suggests, by practicing solely from the original score, without preparation by demonstrating the tensions of rules versus freedom, and allowing for inaccuracies and revealing 'human error'. In a performance context, this paradoxically questions the difference between 'preparing' and 'practicing' techniques of improvisation, which, in the context of this work, ultimately highlights the journey as being in coexistence with the result, rather than the encapsulation of a definitively correct way.

Conclusion

The main aim of this project has been to explore Rzewski's background, understand the intentions behind Rzewski's style of notation, while clarifying some common interpretative challenges. It is obvious that there is no 'correct' or 'standard' way to interpret his works, but rather a multitude of possibilities intended to stimulate creativity by questioning and compelling the performer to make his/her own decisions. Rzewski does so by using a deliberately precise, yet an intrinsically ambivalent form of notation that is either 'specific', 'non-specific' or point in between. With regard to the latter, the polarity between them gives rise to various aspects of notation that are 'implied', which are designed for the pianist to deal with various inconsistencies, contradictions and interpretative issues. Obvious inconsistencies include the indication for cadenzas and free improvisation, which are understood as discretionary and denoting the same thing. Furthermore, Rzewski's persistent affirmation that improvisation should not be prepared calls into question the paradox of practicing and preparing improvisation, and applying it in performance. A classic example is the dichotomy of notation in *Coming Together* (1972), a work dependent on improvisation determined by strict rules, which is often misinterpreted to the extent that performers might actually play their own written out parts instead of improvising.

Composition and improvisation highlight the opposite functions of the brain: remembering and forgetting. Assigning the pianist with 'guidelines for an improvisation' (a complete contradiction in terms) is a way in which he/she can exercise both functions in a continuous process. It is an attempt to bridge the gap between planning the 'thought' of improvising (which is not improvisation) and the act of improvisation itself. Simpler instructions such as, improvising on one note or striking the wooden surfaces with the right hand only, act in a sense, as a compositional tool or ways to fool the performer to tap into an improvisatory realm or 'get into the zone'. Describing improvisation itself is an attempt to define the action of a fleeting magical moment, which is unknown until it occurs and experienced. This state can at best be speculated on and should ultimately be experienced in order to

be fully understood. I feel that there is no aesthetic at play here but rather an opportunity for the pianist to push his/her creative limits.

There are various interpretative choices that remain deliberately unclear and inconsistent in Rzewski's piano works. When speaking texts or creating vocalisations that give no rhythmic indications, pitch, dynamic or quality of voice, or extended performance techniques, these all imply or require some kind of pre-determined approach or theatrical gesture. Above all, it is clearly intended by Rzewski that the pianist should retain the role of musician rather than attempting to act. Particularly when speaking, Rzewski's advice is to keep words clear, comprehensible and to treat them as part of the music, something which may be misleading and easily overlooked. Similarly, the execution of extended performance techniques, for example, movements that involve sitting on a whoopee cushion or drinking from a water glass and so forth, should not be improvised but clearly and carefully prepared beforehand.

These actions open up to various interpretative questions and the impact in which 'live' performance may have, particularly from a visual perspective. It is clear, that the visual perception of these actions are significantly different than from a purely aural perspective and should be taken into account during performance, making sure not to avoid ruining the element of surprise or their intentions. Ultimately, both perceptions of sound, whether aurally or coupled with the visual sense, inevitably question the role of live performance in Rzewski's piano works.

Rzewski's collaboration with *Musica Elettronica Viva* (MEV) and like-minded composers, particularly during the 1960s, was, and continues to be pivotal in the forging of his own eclectic and multi-dimensional form of piano music. He does so by pushing the boundaries of conventional performance practice by extending the role of the pianist, and the way in which music is perceived by the performer and listener.

It is hoped that this deeper understanding of the notational and interpretative challenges embedded within Rzewski's works will serve as a point of reference for

performers who wish also to engage with other repertoire employing extended performance practices.

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Appendix A:

Transcripts of Interviews

Interview with Frederic Rzewski, 31 March, 2014.

- A.H. How would you approach improvisation for example, in Rubinstein in Berlin? To what degree should one prepare it?
- F.R. In my opinion, improvisation should never be prepared, including whether you do it or not. Because, the point about an improvisation, is that it is spontaneous. Many classical musicians think that playing a cadenza means to write it out. This is pointless. This is meaningless. The point of an improvisation is, that it should be improvised. It's different.
- A.H. When I hear your recordings, the improvisations sound as though they are in the style of what you have written just before.
- F.R. That's what you say! If you're improvising, you don't necessarily know even before if your going to improvise. Maybe you don't improvise because improvisation can also be doing nothing.
- A.H. I remember I once sent you a recording of my improvisation for Rubinstein in Berlin. You said "it was ok...", which I understood as being fairly satisfactory. But what I want to know is, how to make a 'good' improvisation.
- F.R. Well, if you don't know, you shouldn't ask. (Laughs). That's what David Tudor would say.
- A.H. Why not?
- F.R. (Laughs). Because the question is meaningless. Either you know the answer, in which case you don't need to ask the question. And if you ask the question, then you will never understand.
- A.H. Ok, that's a good answer! (Laughs). What was David Tudor's playing like? You once said that you really liked watching him play.
- F.R. Many people did. Well, the thing that impressed me the most of David's playing, was his extreme economy of motion. Not just the fingers. He seemed to do nothing that was non-functional.

- A.H. Did he also get into hitting the piano, for example, inside and tapping on the lid etc.?
- F.R. Of course, certainly!
- A.H. And was this also very economical?
- F.R. Yes.
- A.H. So he didn't make a dance out of any of the movements, for example, by making them theatrical?
- F.R. No. But you could say that his way of playing the piano was very interesting to watch, so in that sense, it was a show.
- A.H. So he had a lot of presence on stage?
- F.R. What does that mean?
- A.H. So when he walked on stage, would it capture you somehow but without knowing why?
- F.R. Well, I found it very interesting to watch him. But the answer I suppose is no, because he was the opposite. He was not someone who indulged in gestures for their own sake. The opposite.
- A.H. Apparently, Rachmaninov and Horowitz were also economical in their movements. They sat still but had a lot of presence. I don't know what that means, but they sat there like a rock.
- F.R. Well, I don't know very much about these things. I don't know what Rachmaninov was like, I never saw him.
- A.H. So, when performing 'Rubinstein in Berlin', would it be best to keep the movements simple, for example, the knocking inside the piano etc.? In regards to the text, I remember once you said that I should put meaning into the words when speaking but...
- F.R. I said that?
- A.H. Well you said that one needs to 'hear' it. I have found, that the best way for people to understand the text is to believe you are the character. For example, in the case of Rubinstein in Berlin, by acting the role of protagonist in this piece.

- F.R. I couldn't possibly have said that. No, on the contrary, I would urge you NOT to try to act. Just do what has to be done. It's music not theatre, unless you know what you are doing, unless you have some training as an actor.
- A.H. Well, I am working with an actress who is helping me to bring the text to life and to get the meaning across more. I guess this is what you want?
- F.R. Well maybe, I don't know, that's possible. But as a rule, when musicians try to act, it's a disaster. Acting is a discipline and a difficult thing. Musicians think that it is easy but it's not. And it's usually a mistake. On the other hand, if you are working with a theatre person who is coaching you with this and that, then maybe it's a good idea. As far as I am concerned, the only important thing is to make sure the words are understandable.
- A.H. You mean in order to get a good balance between the dynamics of the words and the piano playing?
- F.R. Well, yes. I mean speaking in public, as you may be aware, is not what musicians are normally required to do. It's not something you necessarily know how to do. I happen to have a voice, a strong and penetrative voice. I don't have any training as a speaker, but I discovered early on, that I can speak and people can understand what I say.
- A.H. Yes, your voice is very clear.
- F.R. Well, I don't know what it is. But not everybody has it. The main thing is to make sure that the words are audible and comprehensible.
- A.H. Do you think I have this quality?
- F.R. I can't say because I haven't heard you in a live situation. I've only heard you in these videos, which are generally not very well recorded, so, it may have to do with the recording techniques and the microphones. I only know what I hear. So, I can't give you good advice except to say, that no matter what kind of microphone or technology that you use, the mic will be useless unless there is a 'voice'. You should be able to speak in a small space, without a microphone, and be understood.
- A.H. I felt better after having worked with an actress colleague of mine, Bettina Lamprecht. Because I don't consider myself a natural speaker, she helped me immensely. In Rubinstein in Berlin, she suggested that I give various titles for certain sections of the piece. For example with the text "suddenly I had fantastic dreams". There she suggested that I smile when speaking this section.
- F.R. What do you mean titles?

- A.H. What I mean is to make a note or simply imagine other words or active verbs when speaking various sections of the text. Another example in Rubinstein in Berlin is to imagine being excited when saying "I was a famous composer etc."
- F.R. I don't understand what you are talking about.
- A.H. To imagine being excited. Or to simply smile when speaking.
- F.R. Well, smiling can affect the voice. You can hear when someone is smiling so that may make sense, yes.
- A.H. And then when speaking during the section "I prepared for the finish. I took out my belt etc." Here, Bettina suggested that I talk in an angry tone. I felt that imagining these words helped me to feel the character and bring the text to life.
- F.R. Maybe, but this is getting into the area of acting, which may be easy for her to say, but not for you. I don't know, I don't know what to say about that. I think that having a coach is a good idea but only for the comprehensibility of the words, that's the only thing I would be concerned about. I would stay away from anything that would resemble acting or theatre or anything like that. That's what I do. There is a big difference of what we do and what an actor does. An actor spends a great deal of time preparing the role or personality and situation etc. and prepares it and does it the same way ever time. What we musicians do, I think it is different. We have a text but we don't do it the same time, we do it the way we feel on any particular time.
- A.H. Wouldn't actors do it the same as musicians?
- F.R. Well, I suppose anybody does, but for a professional actor it's a text, which is what they prepare. Unless there is improvisation involved, it's a possibility, but it's an entirely different thing. When I do these kind pieces, I've never done Rubinstein in Berlin myself, I treat the text as music. It's not theatre its music, so I treat it the same way I do with the keyboard.
- A.H. You mean, perhaps like a song?
- F.R. No. Not a song. It's music. There are notes and rhythms.
- A.H. There are not always notes.
- F.R. Yes, there are rhythms. They are not notes, but in this case they are words. I treat the words as notes. I don't think about what they mean, they are just notes.
- A.H. No?

- F.R. No, I don't think about them at all. Then again, I might do it one way on Tuesday and a completely different way on Wednesday.
- A.H. I myself, try to approach it by using my natural voice. Sometimes I speak a little louder.
- F.R. Well, I may not be the person to talk about these things. I just do it. I probably do a lot of things without knowing what I am doing. I think everyone has to find their own way. For these things, I can tell you more or less what I do which doesn't mean that you or anyone else should do it my particular way. But it works best when I don't try to act. I lived with an actor for 25 years and that made me somewhat humble. I understood that acting wasn't just something that you 'do' so I prefer not to do it and do what I can do. Sometimes, I take risks but it's not usually a good idea.
- A.H. I guess one can run into the danger of looking like an idiot.
- F.R. (laughs) Right!
- A.H. I understand. So what made you get into speech in the first place? Is it because you want to explore a broader context in getting your message across in a more direct way?
- F.R. Well, it probably started with 'Coming Together' in 1972, which I performed as a solo piano piece.
- A.H. Does it work well as a solo piano piece?
- F.R. Well, it worked well then, but I haven't done it in a long time so I can't be sure of that now. I found that I had an ability to get this text across without much effort, which is not easy for everybody. All I have to do is open my mouth and talk! (laughs). That's probably how I got into it, so I started writing these things.
- A.H. When I listen to the recordings of your pieces, I wonder how do you speak so clearly? It seems so simple.
- F.R. Well, it's good to hear because so few people listen to these recordings. One thing that annoys me is that I don't get any feedback from these recordings. I have the impression that nobody listens to them. They are all there!
- AH I think that a lot of people don't know they are there.
- A.H. In Marriage, you describe the story about Pozdnyshhev killing his wife. How did you come to choose such a text for this piece?

F.R. I knew the book (The Kreutzer sonata) and was reading about Tolstoy. As is often the case, Tolstoy re-wrote things a number of times before he got to the final version. Apparently, the original project or first manuscript of the Kreutzer Sonata was intended to be a melodrama or monodrama where the dramatic text was to be recited by some famous actor. Supposedly it was he himself that should recite the story that Pozdnyshev tells on the train. So it was originally intended to be a performance text but then Tolstoy changed it to a short novel that we know today. Of course, Tolstoy never wrote for the theater, but in this case, it would have been the only thing he wrote for the theatre. The text is extremely controversial.

A.H. Wasn't this story banned in the USA and UK and Russia?

F.R. I don't know. But even today, it's a subject of controversy. It's not clear whether it is a feminist text or an anti-feminist text. It's probably both. This is a subject for literary critics to argue about. All I know is that it gave me a musical idea. The pianist, Mukayama wanted short pieces on the subject of passion, so I initially composed the part where Pozdnyshev kills his wife, which is about 3-4 minutes long. Then I thought of including this piece for The Road because the last part, Part 8 of the Road, was nearly finished and for that, I needed a long piece. So, I chose Marriage and just expanded it. The Road starts in short miles with each mile gradually getting longer, like a satellite going out into the solar system and then finally escaping the solar system. The point of the Road is that it never ends but it does stop. Part 8 is the longest of part all with 64 miles in total.

A.H. I noticed in Section F, that the pianist may 'recite the text himself, or by another person or be left out altogether'. Why is that?

F.R. This must be from the original version where I thought the piece could be done in this way or just as a piano piece. But, I can't imagine this section without the text, so thank you for pointing it out. Some things should have been erased.

A.H. Do you recall lighting a cigarette?

F.R. No. Does it say it?

A.H. It says 'drag on a cigarette', but I like the idea of lighting a cigarette.

F.R. If you read The Kreutzer Sonata, you will see that the main character is a very nervous individual. He has a tick and makes this noise. It's a mysterious noise but we don't know what it is so you have to find what it is. Some kind of smoker's cough or something. People do not like this piece. There's something about Marriage that people hate. It's very disturbing and it should be! But it's also supposed to be funny. For example, when he insists on wearing his socks. In Tolstoy's text, it's supposed both horrible and funny.

A.H. Did Anthony de Mare perform it`?

F.R. No, I think he only did the short version. No one has done the whole work but me. There are a number of pieces that people just don't touch. It can be pulled off as a performance. But you have to know exactly what you are doing. It's something that could take off. If some famous critic came and decided that your performance was important, one could imagine that it would be something that people would want to hear. But it's unlikely. There are many pieces by famous classical composers that nobody wants to hear, for example the Art of Fugue by Bach, or the late string quartets of Beethoven or the entire opus of Schoenberg. It's great music, but not today. Perhaps tomorrow, or like most contemporary music for that matter. There's a lot of stuff that reaches only a relatively small number of people, but it still reaches somebody. There is no way of predicting that. On the contrary, there are pieces that nobody seems to like at first, and then unpredictably, they become popular. This was my experience with the People United Will Never Be Defeated. No body liked it at first. Everybody hated it in fact. There were two kinds of audiences, the contemporary music audience, and the political and revolutionary audiences of the 1968s1969s. They both hated it. The contemporary audiences thought it was reactionary, neo-romantic or something and the opposite of avant-garde. The political people hated it because they thought it was elitist and for intellectuals only. So, it went nowhere for a number of years. Then Marc-André Hamelin played it a lot, then other people started to play it, and so it gradually started to get popular. These are things that have nothing to do with music.

A.H. Like a social freak of nature?

F.R. I don't know. Who knows? The record companies don't know what people are going to buy. They might know more what sells and so on, but I'm not particularly interested in that. I'm just interested in my job. Few composers might have a better understanding of what it's like to please the audience. For example, Phillip Glass. I think he had some kind of understanding. What struck me is how he seemed to know that his music was going to be successful. He was very convinced and must have known something that I don't know. What struck me about Steve Reich is that he was not at all secure, perhaps even the opposite. He was uncertain but also very driven.

Interview with Frederic Rzewski, 33 June, 2014.

A.H. In regards to your music, you said that Beethoven composed in such a way that created controversy because of the many different ways one can interpret his music. Do you think the same intentions lie within your music?

F.R. Yes, I think so. I feel I know Beethoven quite well and kind of know some of his tricks and secrets. For example, one of them is to go to great pains to note things very precisely, but in such a way as to make it possible for multiple interpretations, which may vary widely from one another but are all equally interesting. I think that's his secret.

A.H. Can you give an example?

F.R. Yes, the beginning of the Waldstein Sonata. It's very precisely notated with its sequence of repeated chords and only some dynamics, but that's it. There are thousands of different ways you can play it. All kinds of different things are possible. A lot of it has to do with dynamics and I think Beethoven was very clear about that. It was not necessarily controversial, but provided a great space for personal interpretation.

A.H. Flexibility.

F.R. Yes, especially his piano music. It's less true for his orchestral music. But even then, there are conductors like Furtwangler who made his reputation for taking for example, a slow tempo in the Pastoral symphony. You can do it with Beethoven.

A.H. In regards to your own pieces, such as Rubinstein in Berlin and De Profundis, is it this type of interpretative flexibility that you are talking about? For example, a woman could speak it, or you could speak in a high-pitched or low-pitched voice. Is that one of the 'secrets'?

F.R. I don't think that's a secret. Sex doesn't matter.

A.H. But you mentioned register or dynamics?

F.R. I don't think that that matters either. In many ways, it's just an ordinary piano piece, it just happens to have spoken text. I don't know because I have never played Rubinstein in Berlin myself. I only have a one-sided view of it so I don't have anything to say about this piece as a piano player.

A.H. The more I play it, the more I enjoy it.

F.R. I am glad to hear that. Well, it's about suicide, but with humor. And I was very depressed myself when I wrote this piece, so it was very therapeutic.

A.H. I'd like to talk about the subject of improvisation. Why have you given so many opportunities to improvise in your pieces? Is it because it has become a dying art amongst classical musicians and you want to encourage its practice?

F.R. Well, improvisation has been an important part of my adult life. After all, in the 60s I didn't compose very much. I was mainly improvising and mostly working with my group the MEV and not dealing with written music much at all. I went back to writing in the 70s, although I never completely abandoned it, so it was always an important thing. Then somewhat later on, I tried or started to apply improvisation techniques to writing itself. I don't want to get into how that's done right now, but the conjunction between these two things has always been very interesting for me. It took some time before I acquired some clarity about the exact relationship between these two things. In the 60s and 70s there was a wide spread feeling that these two things were actually the same, merely two sides of one thing. Then I decided that this was not the case, that in fact these things were two completely different functions of the brain, which are not only independent of each other but also opposed to each other. Both things are necessary like when you are crossing the street for example, you have to have a plan, but you also need to be ready to jump! So, these things are necessary for survival and they are built into the brain. The brain is like a football field in which there are millions of players, billions of players and they don't even know of each other's existence and they are all doing their thing without any awareness of the other, so it's immensely complex. It's a very gross simplification saying that it all boils down to writing and improvising, because it's much more complex than that. The number of interactions of these things is so large we can't even come close to understanding it. But it's something like that. So both of these things are somehow important. So that's why I very often include improvisation in the writing and vice versa, so you might be in the middle of an improvisation where you might also play written music.

A.H. So, you do that?

F.R. I can and I do. (laughs).

A.H. What if I started to play a Scot Joplin rag during the cadenza in Rubinstein in Berlin? Would it fit?

F.R. I can't say. I don't think there is a way I could answer that question. But it might fit as long as you didn't think about it before hand. If it was something that happened to you in the middle of an improvisation, then why not?

A.H. When I improvise, when it 'goes well', I find it very liberating, that's why I am interested in improving my improvisatory skills. I feel as though I want to plan

and rehearse my improvisations. But you can and you can't really. It's like a paradox.

F.R. No.

A.H. I mean there are good improvisers and there are bad improvisers. The good ones tend to really practice improvisation. For example Steve Lacy, Keith Jarrett. They could tap into this 'football field' as you say, where they...

F.R. There are obvious conventions that are respected in say, the field of jazz. In some ways they are very rigid. So, it's difficult or impossible to say what improvisation is, because it may vary widely according to the situation and there are probably new forms of improvisation that are yet to be discovered. After all, I mean this thing we call improvisation is very recent. There is a misconception about jazz that it has to do with improvisation, but most of the classical jazz has nothing to do with improvisation. What we call improvisation today didn't really start to appear until around the 1960s with the free jazz movement and Ornette Coleman's double quartet. Of course there was something like improvisation in the be-bop era also, but the meaning of the word keeps changing. And it's likely to evolve further.

A.H. It's like trying to define god almost. Somehow.

F.R. Well, I'm not sure this will develop further or it's a dead end. A lot of what we call free improvisation seems to be a characteristic of a certain generation, which is becoming grey.

A.H. Like in the 60s and 70s era, where it had a particular sound?

F.R. Yes, and it doesn't seem to have evolved a great deal. It's very hard to say. On the other hand you can't know what is going to happen in subsequent generations.

A.H. I mean, you are either good at it or not. You can't just boil it down to that? I have good days and bad days.

F.R. All you can say is, you can only know what you see. And what I can see, is that there are a whole lot of people specializing in improvisation. The 'so-called' improvisers are simply repeating things from the past. Well, the jazz improvisers are mostly repeating things from before, so it's become a kind of classical music. The so-called contemporary and experimentalists don't seem to be interested in improvisation much at all. They are interested in making a kind of pop music and selling it. So, it's hard to say where things are going. On the other hand, there are all sorts of influences coming from different places on the planet. There is no way of predicting really where music is going.

A.H. Do you think that it's always been like that?

F.R. No.

A.H. Or that perhaps in Beethoven's time, he may had a conversations with other composers saying things like 'we are coming to an end, what's the direction now?

F.R. No, I think there are incontrovertibly things that are happening today that have never happened before with many different kind of changes. Never in the world before has there been 7 billion people on the plant. There are all kinds of things that are happening today that are unprecedented. On the other hand, there have been things that have always been there. One thing that has definitely changed the character and face of music is the music industry- the exploitation of music by capitalism! You could say this has always been true. Yes, there has always been commercial exploitation.

A.H. Do you think religion or the Church for example has acted like a kind of capitalism?

F.R. No. It was not capitalism. (laughs). Let's dot our eyes and cross our t's please. And let's not use these words loosely because they mean something. One thing that has never been is the music industry before, in the character that it is now, and that is its complete monopoly. It is has certainly exerted a powerful force in the way people hear and think of as music. For one thing, people seem to have forgotten that music is something that you do, not something that you buy. Today, music is something that you buy and not something that you do. Well, that happens to be true now, but that might not be true in 100 years. Apparently, music has been around for about 40,000 years at least, so I think we can be pretty confident that it would resist the deformations in which it has been subjected to in the last 100 years.

A.H. Do you mean the industry and technology?

F.R. We don't know what form it will have in the post-capitalist age, but I don't think we need to be too worried about its survival. Music will survive in one form or another. Some forms will disappear.

A.H. You said at one time you got into electronics. Why did you stop and get into more acoustic music? Did you find it more powerful?

F.R. I stopped getting into electronics because it was costing me a lot of money and I had a family to support. So, I decided to give all my equipment to Alvin Currin, who had no family. I devoted my time to things that were going to pay the rent.

- A.H. In the 70s, was there an 'anti electronic music' crusade? I think it might have been Keith Jarrett, who played with Miles Davis, that said 'keyboards are just toys'. So, just sound coming out of a speaker.
- F.R. I never had anything against electronics. No, certainly not. It was just more practical without.
- A.H. I find something more special for example, with the sound of hitting on the table or in the piano, in terms of the effect of its vibration. It just seems more pure as apposed to just sound coming out of a speaker.
- F.R. The most intelligent comment I know on this subject was something that Elliot carter once said in the early 90s. There was a concert of his music after which where he answered various questions by the audience. Someone asked 'Why haven't you done any electronic music? He answered by saying that he thought electronic music was about sound and he was interested in writing and from the standpoint of writing. Electronic music seemed to be a regression from an earlier stage of writing, like hieroglyphics. I entirely agree because by the 90s, it was clear that electronic music had stopped evolving or going somewhere. All the work in electronics was done in the 50s and 60s. Listen to the electronic music of today but with different technology. The sound is still the same but it was done in a more interesting way. For example, the music concrete people and the music of Stockhausen in the 1950s. It's the same stuff.
- A.H. I just feel that everything that comes out of speakers, is and sounds like ones and zeros. That's why I tend to prefer live acoustic sounds, such as tapping or hitting. It seems to penetrate more for the listener. So, I'm hoping that the performance of live acoustic music will come back in a different way in that respect.
- F.R. Yes, I think so too. In fact, it already has come back in many ways. What we need is more concerts. We need to get rid of the automobile for all kinds of reasons and return to a situation where people come together to listen to a lot of music. I think optimistically, that this will happen.

Appendix B:

Ethics Clearance



RESEARCH BRANCH
OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS, COMPLIANCE AND
INTEGRITY

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CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

19/12/2013

Professor M Carroll
School: Elder Conservatorium

Dear Professor Carroll

ETHICS APPROVAL No: HP-2013-139
PROJECT TITLE: **Realizing the Unconventional Performance Practices in Selected Works for Piano by Frederic Rzewski (b. 13 April, 1938): A Portfolio of Four (CD/DVD) Recordings and an Exegesis**

The ethics application for the above project has been reviewed by the Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of the Professions) and is deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* involving no more than low risk for research participants. You are authorised to commence your research on **19 December 2013**.

Ethics approval is granted for three years and is subject to satisfactory annual reporting. The form titled *Project Status Report* is to be used when reporting annual progress and project completion and can be downloaded at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ethics/human/guidelines/reporting>. Prior to expiry, ethics approval may be extended for a further period.

Participants in the study are to be given a copy of the Information Sheet and the signed Consent Form to retain. It is also a condition of approval that you **immediately report** anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants,
- previously unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project,
- proposed changes to the protocol; and
- the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Please refer to the following ethics approval document for any additional conditions that may apply to this project.

Yours sincerely

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RACHEL A. ANKENY
Co-Convenor
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of the Professions)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PAUL BABIE
Co-Convenor
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of the Professions)



RESEARCH BRANCH
OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS, COMPLIANCE AND
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Applicant: Professor M Carroll
School: Elder Conservatorium
Project Title: Realizing the Unconventional Performance
Practices in Selected Works for Piano by
Frederic Rzewski (b. 13 April, 1938): A Portfolio
of Four (CD/DVD) Recordings and an Exegesis

**Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the
Faculty of the Professions)**

ETHICS APPROVAL No: HP-2013-139 **App. No.:** 0000018155

APPROVED for the period: 19 Dec 2013 to 31 Dec 2016

This study is to be conducted by Mr Ashley Hribar, PhD Candidate

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RACHEL A. ANKENY
Co-Convenor
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty
of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of the
Professions)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PAUL BABIE
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of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of the
Professions)

**The Realization of Extended Performance Practices
in Selected Works for Piano by Frederic Rzewski:
A Portfolio of Recordings and Exegesis**

Volume Two

Ashley Hribar

B. Mus (Hons.) 1997 (The University of Adelaide),

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(Hanover University for Music, Drama and Media),

M. Mus. 2001 (The University of Melbourne)

Submitted in the fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Elder Conservatorium of Music,

Faculty of Arts

The University of Adelaide

July 2017

Contents: Volume Two

CD/DVD

Track Listings:

Disc 1

Frederic Rzewski: *North American Ballads (1978-9)* and other works by Ashley Hribar

Track 1:	<i>Dreadful Memories</i> by Frederic Rzewski	4'15
Track 2:	<i>Which Side Are You On?</i> by Frederic Rzewski	13'45
Track 3:	<i>Down by the Riverside</i> by Frederic Rzewski	11'29
Track 4:	<i>Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues</i> by Frederic Rzewski	10'31
Track 5:	'Ash' <i>Fantasie</i> (2012) by Ashley Hribar	11'02
Track 6:	<i>Journey To Damascus</i> for cello and piano (2016) by Ashley Hribar	9'11
Track 7:	<i>Thrashley meets Audrey</i> (2014) by Ashley Hribar	4'41

*Tracks 1-4

Recorded at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in
Copenhagen Academy (Denmark) on 6 and 7 June, 2015.

*Tracks 5

Recorded at Studio 520, ABC Studios, Collinswood, Adelaide
on 15 September, 2013.

*Track 6

Recorded at the University of Adelaide 18 September, 2016
with Rachel Johnston (cello, delay pedal).

Track 7

Recorded at Studio 520, ABC Studios, Collinswood, Adelaide on
12 May, 2014.

Disc 2

Frederic Rzewski: *The Road Part 6, Travelling with Children*

Track 1:	<i>Sailing to Palmyra (Mile 41)</i> (2000)	11'16
Track 2:	<i>The Prodigal Parents (Mile 42)</i> (2000)	9'40
Track 3:	<i>Dance (Mile 43)</i> (1999-2000)	7'14
Track 4:	<i>Abadonna (Mile 44)</i> (1999)	6'03
Track 5:	<i>No Title (Mile 45)</i> (1999-2000)	5'38
Track 6:	<i>Night Thought (Mile 46)</i> (1999)	7'30
Track 7:	<i>A Walk in the Woods (Mile 47)</i> (1999)	7'07
Track 8:	<i>Why? (Mile 48)</i> (1999)	8'00

*All tracks

Recorded at *Bleekhaus Studios* in Hanover, Germany between
26-31 July, 2016.

Disc 3 Frederic Rzewski: *Marriage* and other works for piano

Track 1:	<i>Marriage</i> (2002-2003)	27'28
Track 2:	<i>Stuporman</i> (2014)	4'47
Track 3:	<i>Names</i> (2014)	3'37
Track 4:	<i>No Good</i> (2014)	2'22
Track 5:	<i>Samson</i> (2014)	2'48
Track 6:	<i>Flowers 1</i> (2009)	4'55
Track 7:	<i>Mikhail Bakunin, Rentier</i> (2000)	7'59

*All tracks Recorded at *Bleekhaus Studios* in Hanover, Germany between 26-31 July, 2016.

Disc 4 Frederic Rzewski: *Coming Together* and other works for piano

Track 1:	<i>A Life</i> (1992)	4'35
Track 2:	<i>Coming Together</i> (1972) (for solo piano)	16'08
Track 3:	<i>Which Side Are You On?</i> (1978)(Alternate take)	9'35
Track 4:	<i>Down by the Riverside</i> (1978-9) (Alternate take)	7'33

* Tracks 1-2 Recorded at *Bleekhaus Studios* in Hanover, Germany between 26-31 July, 2016

*Tracks 3-4 Recorded at Studio 520, ABC Studios, Collinswood, Adelaide on 15 September, 2013.

Disc 5 (DVD) Frederic Rzewski: *Rubinstein in Berlin* and other works

Track 1:	<i>Rubinstein in Berlin</i> (2008) by Frederic Rzewski	17'35
Track 2:	<i>Thrashley meets Audrey</i> (2014) by Ashley Hribar	4'41
Track 3:	<i>Etude for the Beginning of Time</i> (2014) by Snezana Nesic	5'54

*Track 1 Recorded at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen Academy (Denmark) on 7 June, 2015.

*Track 2 Recorded at Studio 520, ABC Studios, Collinswood, Adelaide on 12 May, 2014.

*Track 3 Recorded at the 2014 Koper Biennale Contemporary Music Festival, Slovenia on 9 April, 2014.

Note: The 5 CD/DVDs containing 'Recorded Performances' are included with the print copy of the thesis and held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Disc 6

Musical Scores: Discs 1-5 (PDFs)

Musical Scores (Disc 1)

Frederic Rzewski: *North American Ballads* (1978-9) and other works by Ashley Hribar

Frederic Rzewski

North American Ballads (1978-9):

<i>Dreadful Memories</i>	2
<i>Which Side Are You On?</i>	7
<i>Down by the Riverside</i>	16
<i>Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues</i>	23

Ashley Hribar

<i>'Ash' Fantasie</i> (2012)	36
<i>Journey To Damascus</i> for cello and piano (2016)	43
<i>Thrashley meets Audrey</i> (2014)	45

Musical scores (Disc 2)

Frederic Rzewski: *The Road Part 6, Travelling with Children* (1999-2000)

Frederic Rzewski

The Road Part 6: Travelling with Children (1999-2000):

<i>Sailing to Palmyra (Mile 41)</i> (2000)	2
<i>The Prodigal Parents (Mile 42)</i> (2000)	9
<i>Dance (Mile 43)</i> (1999-2000)	17
<i>Abadonna (Mile 44)</i> (1999)	21
<i>No Title (Mile 45)</i> (1999-2000)	25
<i>Night Thought (Mile 46)</i> (1999)	29
<i>A Walk in the Woods (Mile 47)</i> (1999)	36
<i>Why? (Mile 48)</i> (1999)	44

Musical scores (Disc 3)

Frederic Rzewski: *Marriage* and other works for piano

Frederic Rzewski	
<i>Marriage</i> (2002-2003)	2
<i>Dear Diary</i> (2014):	35
<i>Stuporman</i>	36
<i>Names</i>	42
<i>No Good</i>	45
<i>Samson</i>	50
<i>Flowers 1</i> (2009)	53
<i>Mikhail Bakunin, Rentier</i> (2000)	59

Musical scores (Disc 4)

Frederic Rzewski: *Coming Together* and other works for piano

Frederic Rzewski	
<i>A Life</i> (1992)	2
<i>Coming Together</i> (1972)	4
<i>Which Side Are You On?</i>	27
<i>Down by the Riverside</i>	36

Musical scores (Disc 5)

Frederic Rzewski: *Rubinstein in Berlin* and other works

Frederic Rzewski	
<i>Rubinstein in Berlin</i> (2008)	2
Snezana Nestic	
<i>Etude for the Beginning of Time</i> (2014)	22
Ashley Hribar	
<i>Thrashley meets Audrey</i> (2014)	25