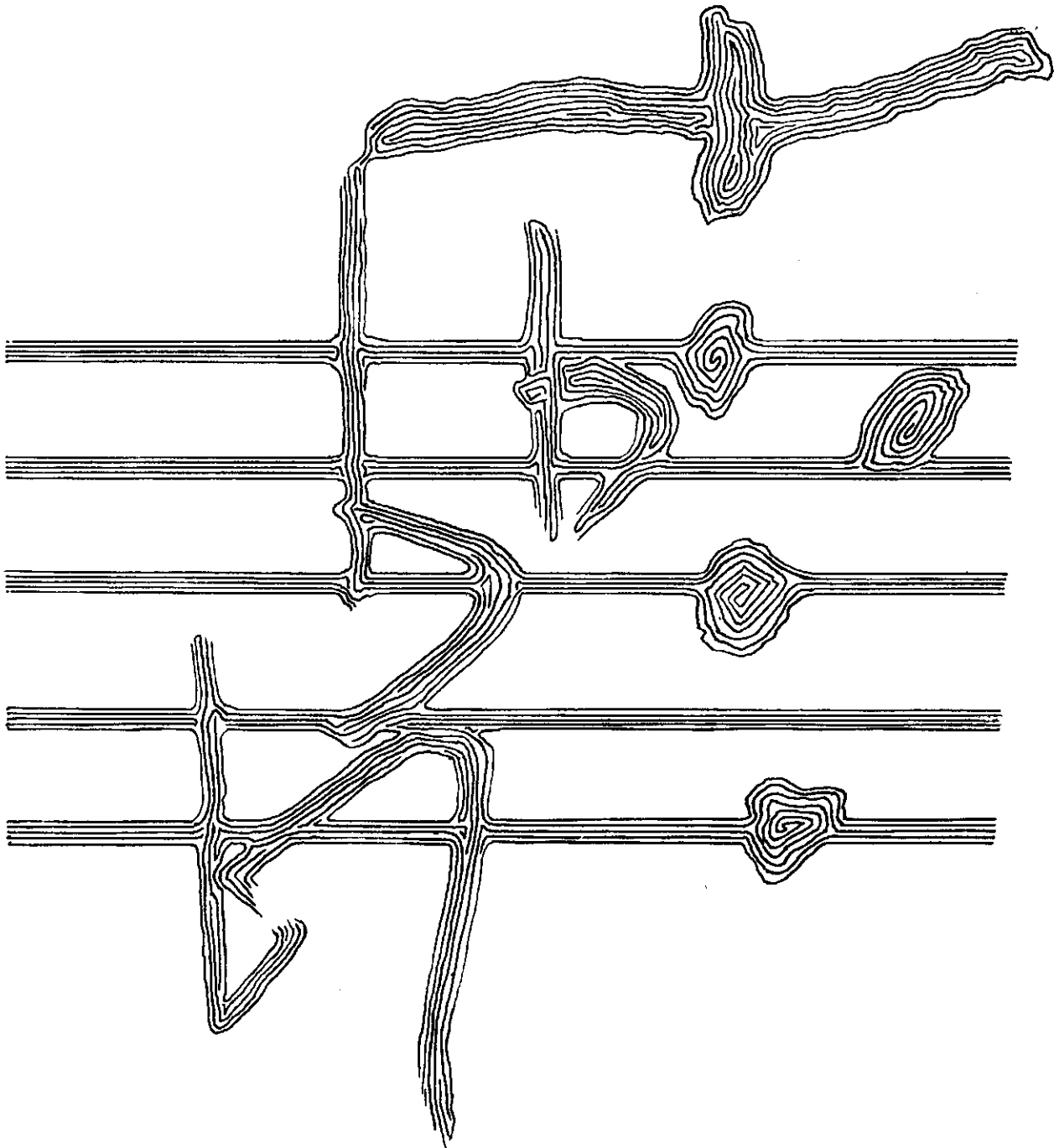


Cornelius Cardew

February Pieces for Piano
and
Octet '61 for Jasper Johns



Interpretation.

Each sign is a musical event.

The piece is cyclic (start anywhere, joining the end to the beginning, or the beginning to the end if you are reading backwards) and may be played for any length of time. End anywhere.

Not necessarily for piano.

This manuscript may be copied freely by hand.



Use this sign anywhere and as often as desired.

In the signs:

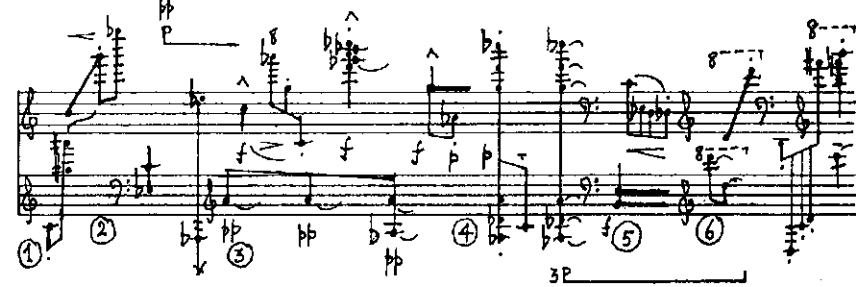
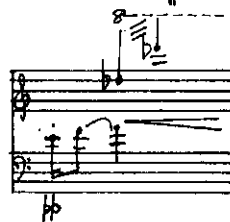
- + plus/more
- minus/less
- staccato/short
- longer/medium duration
- △ long/longest possible
- ≡ trill or tremolo
- / read above the line in treble clef, below in bass
- \ slide
- ⋮ come back to here as often as you wish, going as far ahead each time as you wish
- ⋮ end here (before continuing, if you wish to do so) as many times as you wish, picking up from as far back as you wish
- ↗ out, away; something completely different. This sign should be interpreted only once in any performance of the piece.
- ∞ these pitches may be used as often as required and in any register, or several registers (colour pitches).
- these pitches may be used as often as required, but only in the given register (functional pitches).

Free use may be made of notes apart from those provided.

The interpretation of the numbers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 is free (uniformity is not required).

The length of time taken for each sign is free; they may also overlap.

No part of any sign is obligatory.



Note on Octet '61

The signs should be allowed to suggest something concrete; a sound, a technique. The traditional connotations of signs or parts of signs should provide sufficient context for a concrete interpretation of at least one sign by almost any musician. This done, his utterance of the one sign should provide sufficient context for the comprehension of neighbouring signs. And so on.

Take No 22: two whats? An exploration of No 21 may provide some answers. For example: No 22 could consist of a second version of No 21, or No 21 itself played twice more. Or one could retain two notes of No 21, or two anythings, or anticipate two notes or anythings of No 23, the two fs perhaps.

Playing from the score is not recommended except for experienced performers. A version or many different versions may be made, constituting a bloc of material from which the interpreter can draw. See examples of No 19 down the left-hand side of this page.

The piece is an opportunity for an interpreter. It demands no very sophisticated formal approach (the performer does not have to be a composer, he merely has to discover and use that modicum of creativity that is available to all) for the simple identity of the piece is given once for all by the sign /: the piece will be known and remembered (if at all) as 'the piece where something peculiar happens in the middle'. Any composer or potential composer interpreting the piece and wishing to take the problem of form on his own shoulders will probably interpret / either at the beginning or the end.

The sign that can be used anywhere and as often as desired provides the key to very simple unproblematic interpretations: make one short characteristic version of this sign and use it as punctuation. Break the piece down into a series of statements separated by this sign. Or, if several players are taking part, one of them can interpret this sign, and only one, and this is the only sign he can interpret. All procedures can be legitimized.

If the most important function of a composer were the stimulation of an interpreter this piece would be a composition. The stimulation of the interpreter is a facet of composition that has been disastrously neglected. Disastrously under-stimulated performances of contemporary music are the result (for here, past glories cannot act as stimuli). When performed, the piece may be judged as a musical experience (sounds brought together by human agency) and thrown down the drain. No one is to blame. My reputation is free to suffer. This piece is not gilt-edged.

Partial key to example below:

1. Seven taken literally as a configuration in musical space. Six Cs, one added to each of the first six signs
2. Add E flats
3. Three As. Five A flats. Three sustained notes forte: the others piano or pianissimo. Five-note cluster-type chord
4. Two chords piano following the dot-dash rhythm of the Gs in 3
5. Slide from E down towards B
6. Six different registers for D (colour pitch). Seven described as in 1. One described as subsequent cluster. One C at given pitch—longer duration

CORNELIUS CARDEW — FEBRUARY PIECES

General Performing Directions

EITHER

play each or any of the February Pieces separately—start with any section and play round the piece, joining the end to the beginning (in III read each section normally—forwards—, but reverse the order of the sections—i.e. turn over pages backwards and join the beginning to the end.)

OR

two, three or all four systems may be combined, to start with, according to the following scheme:

After playing a section

—of the first or second system, play either the succeeding section of the first or second system, or the same section of the third or fourth system.


—of the third or fourth system, play either the preceding section of the third or fourth system, or the same section of the first or second system.


If the player finds himself unable to continue without repeating a group already played, he *may* use this as an excuse to stop.


To have played all the material is *necessary* neither before stopping, nor before repeating a group already played.

It is not necessary to follow a scheme (the one outlined above or any other) when combining the pieces.

February Piece I

 —as fast as is comfortable (aperiodic), legato unless otherwise specified.

 —periodic, tempo free (or determined by the situation).

 —legato connections (aperiodic).

• —staccato—attack and release are not separately perceived.

τ/- —relatively short/long durations where the release is heard distinctly.

⤿ —held till extinction.

➤○ —diminuendo to nothing.

’ —wait a moment.

February Piece II

Notes which might be mistaken for minims are in all respects identical with notes which might be mistaken for quavers, except in this, that their dynamics are written in capital letters.

Each ‘quaver’ is one sound in a natural process of decay, therefore the prescription ‘legato’ should be observed wherever applicable. Not all the pedalling is given.

Players with small hands may recompose to the best of their ability the places where the stretches are too big.


The duration of each ‘quaver’ is free or determined by the situation. Some situations are suggested by:


➤ —wait till the sound reaches the dynamic level specified at the end of the dim., then play on, *or*


⤿ —a constant rate of increase in intensity between the initial and final dynamics, this making

the intermediate dynamics dependent on the intermediate durations (and/or vice versa), *or*


× —all sounds sounding at this point should be equally balanced, either

 —at the beginning, *or*

 —at the end of the ‘quaver’ concerned.

 —the key is released (sometimes only partially) and retaken, so as to retain a faint echo of the original sound (this is sometimes achieved by means of the pedal).

•□ or ◊□ —the key should be ‘prepared’; something (preferably a rubber wedge) inserted to keep the key depressed while both hands are otherwise engaged. If a third pedal is available this procedure is unnecessary.

 —take the pedal just after the attack (and/or release).

February Piece III

Play any section (in whole or part) over and over. Refer back to sections. Change anything (as indicated). The thick vertical lines between the 2 staves are beats. No beat should be twice as short or long or more than those on either side of it. A vertical dotted line indicates simultaneity.

A vertical wavy line—arpeggiate in any order. Connections by quaver-sign indicate legato and/or fast and/or something in common.

Dynamics suggest a dynamic for the note they are written near.

The player may observe such indications as are given (e.g. ⤿ excludes • or τ) until such time as he has no further need of them and/or grounds for ignoring them.

The Fourth System

This is a skeleton. The given bones may be clothed, decorated or connected in any way the player may consider appropriate.

Tones written one above the other need not necessarily be played simultaneously; they just belong together.

Tones in brackets may be played or not, but should in any case be less prominent.

section

1

February I

(1st System)

February II

(2nd System)

February III

(3rd System)

(4th System)

section

1