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Contemporary Music Review

ISSN: 0749-4467 (Print) 1477-2256 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gcmr20

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To cite this article: Nicholas Melia (2011) Stille Musik—Wandelweiser and the Voices of Ontological Silence, Contemporary Music Review, 30:6, 471-495, DOI: 10.1080/07494467.2011.676897

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2011.676897

Contemporary Music Review
Vol. 30, No. 6, December 2011, pp. 471–495

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Taylor & Francis Group

Stille Musik—Wandelweiser and the Voices of Ontological Silence

Nicholas Melia

The 1991 Boswil Composition Seminar took place under the doubled thematic rubric of 'Stille Musik'/'Quiet Music' and constituted a legitimating Ursprungsort *for the fledgling Wandelweiser composers in attendance. This article explores the contexts in which silence emerges as the site of musical and philosophical contestation in Europe during the second half of the twentieth century, and examines the persistence of theoretical, literary and musical silences drawn from the thought and writing of Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Edmond Jabès and Alain Badiou in the work of Wandelweiser composers and Boswil prizewinners Jürg Frey and Antoine Beuger.*

Keywords: Badiou, Alain; Being; Beuger, Antoine; Derrida, Jacques; Frey, Jürg; Heidegger, Martin; Jabès, Edmond; Silence; Wandelweiser

In September 1991, the tenth edition of the *Internationale Kompositionsseminar* at the *Künstlerhaus Boswil* in the northern Swiss canton of Aargau welcomed into the kernel of its 'heavenly state' (Huber, 1999, p. 291) eight composers selected for their work under the Janus-faced rubric of 'Stille Musik' and/or 'Quiet Music'. If this provocative doubling—not by any means an occurrence unique in the history of the event—heralded a willful lack of prior divination about the thematic specificity of the seminar, it nonetheless gestured obliquely towards founder and composer Klaus Huber's insatiable musical appetite for a 'transcending … spiritualization of silence' (Huber & Mahnkopf, 2010, p. 123), an ecstatic elision of earth and Eden in the spirit of Meister Eckhart's assertion that the 'most noble of all actions is to remain silent and let God work and speak' (Blakney, 1941, p. 99).[1] While such rapturous union remained unsolicited by thematic instigators Dieter Schnebel and Max Nyffeler, who established and finalized their concept during a single brief meeting in early 1991, Huber's penchant for mysticism, developed during the Second World War as a retreat from a reality positing itself in the form of the 'crude deception' (Huber, 1999, p. 76) of Nazism, petitioned for a silence not beyond the egregious historical *topoi* of the seminar: silence, Huber claimed, promised 'new experiential possibility'

ISSN 0749-4467 (print)/ISSN 1477-2256 (online)
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2011.676897

(Huber & Mahnkopf, 2010, p. 128), appealing not only to a distinctive compositional *telos* bent on exceeding, eroding and reconfiguring the normative cultural limits of the auditory imagination, but to a revolutionary pedagogical vocation committed to extending the capacity for human expression into uncharted territory, initiating a spiritual overcoming of the ideological subjugation characterizing the voice of man, and permitting an emancipatory discourse to develop wholly 'by itself' (Huber, 1999, p. 291).

During the inauguration of the first Boswil seminar in 1969, Huber characterized this utopic endeavor as *anti-Babel*, a rhetorical salvo borrowing from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's furtive attempt to rediscover a fundamental discursive unity that served nonetheless to preserve differences in creed and understanding. The legacy of Huber's pursuit of the inaudible and the extra-sensible, however, issued not from the militant prelapsarianism that cast the anti-Babel as symptomatic of a desire to discern in our 'earthly, fallen language the now inaudible word of God' (De Certeau, 1982/1995, p. 96); rather, the degradation, fragmentation, and reconfiguration of ideology ravaging the political and aesthetic sensibilities of the period compelled the 1991 seminar to elicit parentage in diverse and fecund sources, not least in the array of musical and philosophical silences and quietudes issuing from opposing flanks of both Atlantic and Iron Curtain in the second half of the twentieth century. In such a climate, the doubling of the seminar theme served to emphasize as much the dismantling of disciplinary unities and the unravelling of the limits and logics of the musical ear, as it did the possibility of their remolding and refashioning in the likeness of a divine other. This eavesdropping upon the mute and ineffable voices lingering beyond the threshold of the audible thus promised to forge its alloys not only from the alternative stalwart authorities governed by the Webernian emancipation of the rest and the beatific Cagean liberation and, indeed, liberalization of sounds and silence, but from the timely imperative compelling European philosophy to question the authority of its own logic as well as the soil in which authority itself might take root. Such questioning readily and widely invoked the figures of silence and silencing in order to erode the calciated presence of an omnipotent voice at the heart of Western metaphysics, and it is towards the development of these voices and their impact upon the music of Boswil prize-winners and Wandelweiser composers Jürg Frey and Antoine Beuger that our attention will ultimately be drawn. In doing so, this article will survey the emergence and influence of silence as a central and problematizing occurrence in the philosophy of the twentieth century, most notably in the thought of Martin Heidegger, before examining the considerable and various implications, for the fledgling Wandelweiser composers, of the confrontation with silence characteristic of some of Heidegger's subsequent interlocutors. Finally, the article will gesture towards Antoine Beuger's compositional attempts to emerge from the shadow of the metaphysical edifice constructed and maintained in the aftermath of Heidegger's prioritization of silence, exploring the reassessment of the theme of silence evident in Beuger's post-1995 work in the light of his encounter with the writing of Alain Badiou.

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The complex of musical and theoretical silences impacting upon and arising from the Boswil seminar constituted a legitimating *Ursprungsort*, if not a *tabula rasa* for Frey and Beuger.[2] Frey's work had been 'quiet, slow, without drama' since its inception in the mid-1970s, but the seminar encouraged a renewed 'foregrounding' of silence and pause in his compositional posture (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 1 May 2011). Beuger, meanwhile, had harbored a preoccupation with 'silence and . . . single sounds' prior even to commencing study with Ton de Lieuw at the Amsterdamsch (now Sweelink) Conservatorium in 1973 (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 4 March 2011). These concerns provisionally coalesced around a monthly series of high school performances and workshops during which Beuger and school friend Joep Dorren performed pieces by John Cage, Morton Feldman and the Fluxus artists alongside self-penned compositions including, according to Beuger, one particularly 'Wandelweiseresque' piece written in accompaniment to an experimental play by Dorren. The successes of the Boswil seminar, taking place in the wake of a decade-long compositional hiatus precipitated by a difficult pupilage with de Lieuw and a subsequent commitment to Otto Mühl's infamous Friedrichshof Commune, nonetheless provided Beuger with a contemporary context in which his concern for silence might be apprehended.[3]

Beuger and Frey alike registered surprise at the announcement of the seminar theme, but neither recalls the notion of 'stille Musik' receiving liberal employ during this period. However, while the expression gained little traction in describing a particular aesthetic paradigm, future Wandelweiser composer Manfred Werder, resident in nearby Bellach at the time and present for some of the seminar events, attests to a more significant pejorative use of the phrase in the 1980s and early 1990s as the signifier of a mistrust and frustration resulting from a perceived regression and lack of structural rigor in the work of the influential Feldman and those following in his wake. American composers—and Feldman in particular—had become increasingly ubiquitous in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, their presence made possible initially by the financial patronage of the DAAD program and sustained by 'Americaphiles' such as Walter Zimmermann, whose *Desert Plants*, a groundbreaking collection of interviews with American composers, appeared in 1976, and who, alongside Nyffeler and Renate Liesmann, organized the partially silence-themed 'Raum – Zeit – Stille' composition competition and exhibition in Cologne in 1985. Other supporters included influential figures in European new music radio in Germany and Switzerland, such as Boswil prize-winner Ernstalbrecht Stiebler, who, in 1989, took charge of a rebuilt *Hessischer Rundfunk Konzerthalle* with 'recording characteristics particularly kind to *piannissino* tones' (Beal, 2006, p. 218), in order to record and champion the quieter music evidenced by emerging figures such as Feldman and Giacinto Scelsi.[4]

The European fascination with silence and quietude had expanded in the decade following the Second World War, during which time the celebration of Webern's liberal use and perceived coordination of the rested measure offered the tantalizing prospect of subjecting even the inaudible limits of compositional procedure to serial organization. Yet, while Hebert Eimert, Christian Wolff, Henri Pousseur and

Heinz-Klaus Metzger variously protested and contested the Viennese provenance of the serialized rest in the dedicated Webern edition of Karlheinz Stockhausen and Eimert's journal *die Reihe* (1955), and Schnebel (1952), Pierre Boulez (1952), Niccolò Castiglioni (1958) and Gottfried Michael Koenig (1961–1962) wrote and lectured on the structural and conceptual opportunities presented by the pause, Cage and David Tudor headed the exploratory movement of a more informal and theatrical caravan of the unsounded and the inaudible towards sanctuary from institutional disregard and, later, disapproval, in the respective drawing room and atelier of Cologne publisher Ernst Brücher and gallerist Mary Bauermeister. Mere months after Tudor provided musical illustration to Stefan Wolpe's 1956 IFNM lecture addressing—albeit fleetingly—the new American structural penchant for quietude and silence, Brücher hosted the American pianist's European première of Cage's 'silent piece', *4′33″* (1952), at the family residence in the exclusive Cologne suburb of Hahnwald. Meanwhile, the *Atelier Bauermeister*, on the *Lintgasse* in Cologne's Old Town, provided a safe haven for those whose music and art situated itself just within, as well as beyond, the exclusive catchment of the Darmstadt *Ferienkurse*; its proprietor was, with the assistance of Metzger and Hans G. Helms, equally instrumental in encouraging a proliferation of musical silences—including Cage's—during the frenzied gallery activity of the early 1960s. Indeed, Metzger had written to Tudor in May 1960, informing him of the availability of Bauermeister's studio and of 'her proposition' to host a program of events specifically including 'John's three silences' (G. Metzger, letter to David Tudor, 4 May 1960, quoted in Beal, 2006, p. 116). Bauermeister confirmed Metzger's proposal in a letter written just a week later, suggesting moreover that the request for Cage's 'three intermission piece' had been levied at the behest and with the encouragement of Helms. (M. Bauermeister, letter to David Tudor, 12 May 1960, quoted in Dörstel, 1993, p. 27).

This creative gathering intersected with the rise of the Fluxus movement in Europe and presaged a fertile period of informal and experimental musical activity, distinguished partially by the flaunting of a plethora of silences around gallery and loft spaces on both sides of the Atlantic, and culminating in events such as Philip Corner's concert of silent piano music at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Riverside Park, New York City in 1974 and London gallerist Brian Lane's attempts to host similar events in England and Switzerland.[5] While the 'silences' of the period consisted predominantly in unsounding but idiomatically 'musical' events sustained by the displacement, reimagining or reconfiguring of musical instruments and activity, the general negation of musical events, the destruction of musical apparatus, or notational interventions affording non-musical or inaudible outcomes, many works nonetheless gestured towards the exploration of the notational dexterity of the pause and the idiomatic value of silence, charmed by the welcome iconoclasm of the American contingent yet embroiled in a complex critical relationship to the historical and cultural practice of musical notation and inscription in Europe.[6]

Cage's *4′33″*, meanwhile, remained more readily discussed than performed during its first thirty years, before becoming, by the mid-1980s, a heavily exploited avatar of a musical avant-garde revelling in its annex to the profitable worlds of museum and

gallery, and bent on preserving its riches in aspic or exploiting their inexhaustible adaptability in novel guises designed to generate column inches.[7] Ironically, the very same fiscal motives that conceived of *4′33″* as a coveted historical remnant of the salons of the late 1950s and 1960s also led to Cage's work being transposed from the atelier and drawing room to the inner sanctum of the concert hall, crowned not only by the emergence of the standard Peters editions of his *oeuvre* from 1982 onwards, but by an explosion in European concert scheduling and publishing. Cage's acceptance of Stiebler's invitation to return to the Darmstadt fold in 1990, more than three decades after his ill-received 1958 performance and celebrated with the presentation in person of the ISCM Schönberg-Medal, signaled the end of the informal fringe status initially bestowed upon his work in the late 1950s and early 1960s by the patronage of Brücher and Bauermeister. By the time of Cage's death, less than twelve months after the Boswil seminar, the strategic deployment of 'silence' stood beside 'quietude' at the nexus of a series of oppositional and sometimes dangerously tired and parodic tendencies in European contemporary music, speaking not only of the remnants of a creative intervention in the collapse of the vocabulary of modernist composition, but to disputes over Cage's legacy, the at once contested and celebrated status of *4′33″*, the lingering mistrust of American compositional presence in Europe, and the acceptance and rejection of multiple resistances to the still-powerful specter of Darmstadtian hegemony represented, for example, by the various reactionary *neue Einfachheit* composers, many of whom submitted work to the *Künstlerhaus* in 1991 in advance of the *Kompositionsseminar*. It is in context of such contestation that the Boswil seminar took silence as its agent.

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Antoine Beuger acknowledges the 'discovery of silence by Cage' (Steins, 2010, p. 85) as the spark igniting the shared compositional tinder of the collective, but the Wandelweiser composers nonetheless remain intent upon 'mining different dimensions of silence' and 'filtering out those dimensions which Cage could not see'. Indeed, the inevitable proximity of *4′33″* to the topsoil of contemporary music serves to conceal a more complex topography of silences, born of multiple interpenetrative strata and as readily contingent upon contemporary philosophy and literature as upon music in general, and Cage and Fluxus in particular. Beuger's early work displays a deference to Cage in its sustained use of rests, indeterminacy, and precompositional chance procedure, but it also occupies a similar referential quarter to late-period Luigi Nono and pivots upon a thinking of silence beginning with the Abrahamism of late Jacques Derrida and the apophatism of Nono collaborator Edmond Jabès, before passing through the transcendental empiricism of Gilles Deleuze ('especially his work on Spinoza and Leibniz… and his thinking [of] the event') to Alain Badiou's militant 'Platonism of the multiple' (which 'finally offered the philosophical framework I had been searching for all these years') (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 6 July 2011). Other Wandelweiser composers share in this

sensibility: Michael Pisaro draws extensively upon Badiou, but his work is also heavily inflected with reference to writers for whom silence provides figuration and motif, such as Samuel Beckett, Paul Celan, Emily Dickinson and E. E. Cummings. Manfred Werder, meanwhile, begins at the terminus established between the Fluxus text-score, in which words are problematized by the intervention of their materiality and inexhaustible ability to signify, and the impenetrable and fathomless swathe of the Mallarméan blank page. Werder also quotes extensively in his post-2004 work from the speculative realism of Iain Hamilton Grant's circumscription of Schelling, from Badiou and Michel Foucault, and from Fernando Pessoa and Francis Ponge, yet draws most fruitfully on Deleuze and French sinologist François Jullien, whose *La Grande Image n'a pas de forme, ou du non-objet par la peinture* (2003) and *Eloge de la Fadeur* (1991) provide the template for a 'silent music' which maximizes its efficacy in eschewing conventional or, indeed, interventional realization. Furthermore, Jürg Frey's work, which superficially affirms a Cagean abdication of precompositional authority and control, adheres itself moreover to Martin Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot and Emmanuel Levinas, for whom silence is concerned with the contestation of the metaphysical *Abgrund* between being and beings.

The broadly formal economy and minimal aesthetic of much of the output of these composers thus belies the diversity and historical depth of the conceptual architecture upon which they draw in thinking about silence. Likewise, the tradition from which such thinking emerges remains anything but impoverished. The influential waft emergent in the wake of Heidegger's repatriation of the questioning of the category of being into European thought necessitated a wholesale renegotiation of the philosophical contingencies of sound and silence, given the crucial function allocated to the displacements of language, voice and ear, and the privilege granted to *Schweigen* and *Stille* in his conceptual vocabulary. In 1952 alone, the ascendant revival of ontology under Heidegger and its confluence with the conservative theological buttressing of philosophy in the immediate postwar resulted in a proliferation of silences beyond David Tudor's controversial August *première* of *4′33″* in the Catskills: aside from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's seminal 'Le Langage indirect et les voix du silence', published in *Les Temps Modernes* over two issues in June and July (Merleau-Ponty, 1952a; 1952b), the refounded and denazified *Bertelsmann Verlag* included German theologian Hans-Jürgen Baden's *Die Schweigen* as part of their *Leserring* series, while British musicologist Stanley Godman's translation of Swiss theologian Max Picard's seminal text *Die Welt des Schweigens* appeared in English as *The World of Silence* in October. Baden's text is a lengthy treatise in the tradition of theological exegeses on the subjects of silence, passivity, quietude and anticipation that at once casts silence as a cosmological *Urstoff* that 'stands always at the beginning and end' (Baden, 1952, p. 5), revealing itself the more one strives for knowledge, and contributes to an emergent strand of reinterpretation privileging the structural and discursive *aporia* of its quarry. Picard's work, meanwhile, was published in the United States by Henry Regnery, whose conservative opposition to liberal modernity resulted in the first published English translations of Heidegger in 1949 (see Nash, 2006; Regnery, 1985); indeed, *The World of Silence* displays a

considerable debt to Heidegger in positing its subject as an originary and autonomous phenomenon underlying the basic structuration of man; like Heidegger and Baden, Picard claims the presence of a ubiquitous third party pervading all discourse: 'Silence', he writes, 'is listening' (Picard, 1948/1988, p. 25), and beyond even its capacity to listen and to pervade listening, it remains fundamentally irreducible. In the best Heideggerian tradition, '[i]t', Picard asserts, simply 'is' (p. 17), and this is the source of its greatness; there is 'nothing behind it to which it can be related except the Creator himself'.

It is important to note that Heidegger's own multifaceted apprehension of silence maintained a stranglehold upon the European thought in the second half of the twentieth century, and its impact permeates the work of many of the thinkers to whom the Wandelweiser composers are indebted. In *Being and Time* (1927), silence (*Schweigen*) is introduced as an expressive aspect of talk or discourse (*Rede*), the avenue through which intelligibility expresses itself. Initially, keeping silent constitutes merely a way of expressing oneself about something to others, a modality belonging to discursive speech and hence, one of talk's ways of being. Discursivity, however, remains charged with articulating only the intelligible and therefore any understanding of the world and its significance remains prior to it. In pursuit of the underlying fount of discursivity and hence, comprehension of the world, Heidegger introduces a 'primordial' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 208) silence, 'authentically' possible only in 'genuine discoursing' alongside an equiprimordial 'hearing' (*Hören*) that articulates not only a 'following' and 'going-along-with' (p. 206), but the privative modes of 'not-hearing, resisting, defying and turning away' (p. 207). The silence of *Schweigen* is likewise extended beyond the psychological withdrawal of its limited functionality, proposed instead in the form of a reticence (*Verschweigenheit*) that 'does away with idle-talk' and the '[u]nintelligibility of the trivial' (p. 208) Collectively, not only do these attitudes afford a 'listening to one another' (p. 206) and establish a 'potentiality for hearing which is genuine' (p. 208), they also constitute a making 'entirely plain' of the discursive function's orientation towards the 'existentiality of existence' (p. 204).

Schweigen and *Hören* thus paradoxically function as the currency in which being is expressed in a more authentic sense than the discursivity of which they present but two modalities, alongside such trifles as 'idle talk'. Yet, this pairing is not merely to be assayed against the traditional yardstick of discursive modes. Rather, it is characterized as a '*possibility*. . .belonging to discursive speech' (p. 204) or an 'essential *possibility* of discourse' (p. 208; emphasis added), where discursive speech is understood not as 'the idle talk of the ''they''' (p. 296), but as a potentiality for hearing more primordial than the 'sensing of tones and the perception of sounds' (p. 207). Such 'possibility' or 'potential' thus elevates silence from the realm of the mundane world of beings, things, objecthood and words, since the causal hierarchy privileging actuality over potentiality or possibility is overturned by Heidegger: 'higher than actuality' stands 'possibility' (pp. 62–63), that by which the 'essential' may be 'seized'. This 'possibility' is not to be confused with an incompletion or relative lack, nor is it to be found in the multitudinous range of actualisable futures. Rather, beyond the actual, the possibility described by *Schweigen* and *Hören* stands in

excess of and prior to our ability to choose, as an openness to alterity, a disjuncture between being and actuality that characterizes *Dasein* as *Mitsein*, or being-with.

For Heidegger, such a disjuncture necessitates the presence of a mediative interlocutor, and *conscience* is the name given to that adjudicating voice between beings and being that calls Dasein back from the inauthentic life. This voice is internal to and yet heard by Dasein as the voice of another, and thus voices a silent call, for which 'vocal utterance… is not essential' (p. 316), that 'dispenses with any kind of utterance' (p. 318). While discursive utterance is of the realm of inauthentic chatter, this call must affirm Heidegger's intent to at once install language in the immediate cradle of being and to shelter the voice from finitude and the ignominy of being merely a being amongst beings. Being must be sayable, since the Heideggerian imperative commits, *via* the interrogation of language, to an appearing or coming-to-presence of being, but while discourse merely articulates intelligibility, the silent call—of genuine discourse and conscience—must remain 'nothing less than [the] obscure and indefinite' call of being prior to yet belonging to discourse itself. It must 'do its calling without any hubbub' (p. 316), positing that which the later Heidegger calls a 'soundless' call, a peal of stillness (*das Geläut der Stille*) or enowning of stillness (*das Ereignis der Stille*), a call 'unequipped' with the instruments of voice, yet compelled to 'speak' (Krell, 1978, p. 411).

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Heidegger's positing of silence as a prediscursive avatar of being that 'speaks' by showing itself beyond 'saying' provides an aperture through which it is possible to listen in on the silences in the music and thought of Jürg Frey. Frey confesses to a 'selective' philosophical background and retains a degree of skepticism about the value of such attribution, but he professes nonetheless to harbor a 'deep experience' of the silences of Heidegger and his subsequent interlocutors, Maurice Blanchot and Emmanuel Levinas (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 12 May 2011). This experience turns upon the ineluctable and problematic presence of silence, the possibility of an *aletheia* or disclosure beyond the significatory clutter of beings or events, the instability of the membranes differentiating between interiority and exteriority, and a concern for a permeative hermeneutic of silence and sonority that '[t]ogether … comprise the whole complexity of life' (Frey, 1998a).

Frey's silences are manifold, but they do not care to skirt around the edges of perception: the composer consistently refutes the idea that his 'taciturn music' balances 'like a virtuoso upon the threshold of silence' (Frey, 2008). 'Even when the music is very soft', Frey asserts, 'it is not about falling into silence' (Frey, 1998). Instead, it at once courts, resists and succumbs to concurrent and multitudinous silences, instantiating itself briefly before long rested passages, sometimes staff notated, sometimes consisting in free-floating note- or time-events, sometimes fragmented and submerged in a surrounding ocean of untamed silence. The performer is often left helpless as an informal *al niente* or *morendo* is swallowed up by the fathomless abyss, and even formal

pauses or rests are occasionally rendered isolated and powerless against a silence exterior to the work, standing out unaccountable, just beyond the reach of the supporting lattice of the staff, cut loose against the white of the page.

In a passage from an unpublished text submitted to the *Künstlerhaus* reflecting on the 1991 Boswil seminar, and powerfully reminiscent of the opening of Maurice Blanchot's *Thomas L'obscur* (1941), in which a swimmer finds increasing difficulty in differentiating himself from the intoxicating ocean swell in which he is immersed, Frey reflects upon a music engaged in a constant battle to keep its head above the surf, emerging for 'a few seconds before it sinks back into the silence' (Frey, 1991). At its most terrifying, it even carries a 'tendency to cease (or not to begin at all)' or to 'remain lying unwritten in the silence'. Yet, despite conceding a 'helplessness' before such silence, to which the composer does not 'expose [himself] unprotected', Frey neither submits the participant to the mere oscillation of a futile and irrevocable *fort-da*, nor does he task the composer to mastery. Instead, the text proposes an abandonment of the very 'lifeboats' of precompositional structuration—ideas, motifs, development, repetition, gesture, 'notes'—and, borrowing from Blanchot, submits to a silence that is neither the conclusive moment of an aesthetic experience nor necessarily a stable object of empirical study. Instead, it is a mediation of the raw, uninterrupted silence of the outside of the work that 'cannot cease speaking' (Blanchot, 1982, p. 27). It is furthermore held in abeyance by the instantiated echoes or silences tamed within the work. Between these silences, Frey asserts, the composer must '[be prepared to] drown' (Frey, 1991).

In the later 'Architektur der Stille' (1998a, 1998b), Frey elaborates this complex lattice of silences, describing how sounds enter into a covenant with silence, initially occasioning a seemingly conventional triumvirate of 'silence before, after and between sounds' (Frey, 1998a). These multiple yet convergent silences are evidenced in the distribution and elision of silences in contemporaneous works such as the accompanying *Architektur der Stille* (Frey, 1998) and *Exact Dimension without Insistence* (Frey, 1999), in which two performers each choose one of 29 instrumental voices [*Instrumentalstimme*], some consisting in single sounding events, some in brief musical or spoken phrases, and many adorned with rests of varying length. A radio part, for example, presents a free-floating whole note rest followed by a fleeting burst of transmission, while a percussion part features 30 quavers, 23 of which are rested. These events occur as a 'formation or a shaping' and acculturate a residual 'colouring' of their accompanying silences (Frey, 1998a). Such silences derive their power from their correspondence to the absented sound, and remain under the influence of the 'time-space of sounds' [*der Zeitraum des Klanges*], rather than functioning autonomously. Nonetheless, in this contingent state, Frey grants these silences a provisional 'time-space' [*Zeiträume des Schweigens*], and together, sound and silence constitute a *Gegenwärtigkeit* (Frey, 1998b), a restrictive Heideggerian presence-to-time, or 'nowness' that differentiates beings (for Frey, distinctive and individuated events) from being (the preindividuated and permeating condition for the emergence of such events).

The perfomer of *Exact Dimension without Insistence* also chooses from one of 27 durational schedules consisting in up to 16 time points [*Zeitpunkte*], each of which corresponds to the initiation of a chosen instrumental voice and specifies the position of each instance of sounding within the 20-minute duration of the piece. Thus, beyond the *Gegenwärtigkeit* of the sound/silence event internal to each instrumental voice, there exists a series of unnotated and unaccounted-for silences incurred when the duration of a sounding event is not coincidental with the duration specified between its initiation and the initiation of a subsequent event. During these interstitial silences, sound recedes from memory, and thus so too does the contingency of its accompanying silence [*Stille*] upon the 'glimmer of content' that constitutes the residue differentiating events from the void from whence they emerge (Frey, 1998a).

Subject to these withdrawals, silence instantiates itself as a physical and permeative presence with a duration and location of its own. This 'Zeitraum der Stille' displays a complete and powerful indifference to sounds, and hence, to those silences weaving their presence between sounds, 'coloured by … sounds', and marked by the dividuation and differentiation of sounds (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 11 May 2011). Furthermore, the *Instrumentalstimme* of *Exact Dimension without Insistence* are executed with a degree of autonomy that unmoors events from a global compositional lattice such that the limits or thresholds of the piece are called into question: here, silences mingle without always respecting the distinction between compositional interiority and its expansive exterior: events are no longer ringfenced by the specificity of compositional design or united by a structuating adhesive. However, rather than merely 'getting rid of the glue' in order to liberate sounds, this process instead exposes the work to a more disconcerting silence.[8]

In fact, Frey differentiates between the silences internal to the work and the exterior silence that at once conditions and threatens its autonomy. Sounds and their corresponding silences 'come into being by crossing a border' (Frey, 1998a). This border is a 'slight, but clearly drawn' marker between the silence exterior to the work and the interiority designated by sounds and their silences, but it also separates the primordial and preindividuated from the discrete. Here, while '[o]ne single note changes 'silence itself' into a individuated silence', the silence exterior to the work, or 'silence itself', 'does not know the border' (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 12 May 2011). Rather, it remains impervious to the dividing operation it engenders, and thus to the differentiation occurring between sound and silence. It is in this sense that the border divides sounds 'from all others'—not from other sounds, but from the unformed 'all' prior to the emergence of a particular sound (Frey, 1998a). Frey thus follows Heidegger in differentiating between an intelligibility configured by sound and silence alike as mere modes of individuating activity and a primordial silence, a 'comprehensive, monolithic presence [that] always stands as *one* against an infinite number of sounds or sound forms', a 'one' of which we can know nothing. Just as Heidegger's voice of conscience *says nothing* in calling Dasein back from the inauthentic world of chatter about things, so Frey's silence consists only in the 'impossibility of saying anything about its content', since there can be 'no silence

through production.' Indeed, to bear content would be to undermine the univocity and permeation of such a silence and enter into that realm of labor that determines or exposes sounds as differentiated from their fount. That which 'stands as one' must remain prior to all substantial coordinates, and hence, Frey asserts, this silence 'is [just] there, where no sound is', an 'unchanging and unchanged' presence 'without temporal direction' and thus no longer described by the presence-to-time or immediate 'now' of *Gegenwärtigkeit*. To describe this state, Frey instead uses the similarly Heideggerian *Anwesenheit* (Frey, 1998b), a pure presence, coming-to-presence, a presence-ing, or emerging that conditions temporal and spatial differentiation or individuation, and yet knows nothing of either.

Hence, just as Heidegger supports a language that speaks beyond the opposition of its audible and inaudible content, so Frey's monolithic silence retains jurisdiction not merely over the inaudible. In a manner akin to Heidegger's silence, its power is such that it is to be found not only 'there, where no sound is', but also there (*Da*) where sound *is*. The presence of this silence in sound constitutes a '*Da-sein* of sound', but Frey's Heideggerianism tells us that the *Da* of *Da-sein* should be understood as neither specificity nor 'being here or there', and that *Da-sein* should be thought not in any privative sense as the individuation of silence or sound as a being or discrete occurrence (Frey, 1998a). Indeed, in order to gain access to the silence of sounds, one should 'let go of everything that gets in the way of silence', surrendering the 'utility' and historicity that constitutes material as material 'in itself' and precludes access to the 'simple, unequivocal' form that remains undisclosed or prior to individuation and structuration, much as Heidegger's *Schweigen* is concealed by idle talk and hubbub (Frey, 1999). A sound bearing this silence is, Frey asserts, merely there, 'without an idea of what it might mean or how it might be used' (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 9 May 2011), 'without our wishes and actions', a 'nothing', placed 'uselessly', without function (Frey, 1999).

Frey's *Da-Sein* is clearly implicated in an act of ontological priority, permeating sounds and silences alike, yet contrary to the composer's invocation of *Anwesenheit*, it is precluded the generous mediative distribution of presence to beings characterized by the Heideggerian *es gibt*, knowing nothing of the abundance that is drawn from it. Instead, this *Da-sein* might best be understood as drawing its sense from the notion of the *il y a* developed in the wake of Heidegger between Levinas and Blanchot as an attempt to short-circuit the finitude of *Dasein* as being ultimately towards death. While there are substantial differences in orientation in Levinasian and Blanchovian renderings, in each case, the *il y a* describes a persistence of being in the face of extermination, incurred as a 'content obtained through the negation of all content' (Levinas, 1947/1978, p. 58) or that which 'manifests existence without being, existence which remains below existence, like an inexorable affirmation, without beginning or end' (Blanchot, 1949/1981, p. 47). Just as Frey's *Da-sein* proposes a silent and 'simple, unequivocal material' (Frey, 1999) stripped of autonomy and persisting nonetheless in sounds that relinquish their functionality and character, so the pervasive *il y a* posits an existence in which being relinquishes its existents, yet

subsists as a *there is*, a 'murmur of silence' (Levinas, 1947/1978, p. 59) that undermines the resolution of the founding act in remaining determinable only through the aperture of beings. The *il y a* presents this founding act as a radical contingency that stands out not as the impregnable ground of presence, but as a remainder incurred by being in the absence of its determinant. In locating a remainder in the 'event of being', alterity and exteriority are thus implicated in this prediscursive act of foundation in the form of an 'anonymous and senseless rumbling' (Levinas, 1982/1985, p. 52), less a 'something' than an 'atmosphere of presence' (Levinas, 1948/1978, p. 55) that, Levinas suggests pertinently, behaves 'as if silence were a noise' (Levinas, 1982/1985, p. 48) and in which 'one has the impression of a total impossibility of … ''stopping the music''' (Levinas, 1947/1978, p. 49).

For Frey, this persistence is recognizable in the exposure of sounds to a silence that constitutes not a reduction of the audible to nothing, but to the presence of an exteriority that occurs when material is stripped of its meaning and autonomy, as much as when music ceases or fails to begin. Herein lies a 'something that is there already' (Frey, 1999), a remainder that circumvents the same finitude opposed in Heidegger by Blanchot and Levinas. Rather than disclosing an originary state in relinquishing its character, this material remains 'silent' in rebuking its originariness and establishing a foundational contingency. Indeed, Frey rejects the originary, asserting that 'original material', or material that proclaims its status as material 'in itself', must always 'speak of its originality', thus implicating voicing within the dominion of finitude, individuation and autonomous presence, and ignoring the alterity inherent in origin itself. The silence of Frey's *Da-Sein* is that which is 'there' in material left bereft of character. In the presence of such material, the composer is cast adrift: one 'does not know what lies' ahead or, indeed, 'where one is'.

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If Frey motions towards Heidegger, Blanchot and Levinas in affirming the persistence of a silence permeating sound and material, Antoine Beuger is concerned less with the residual presence of silence in the materials of composition than with staging the mechanics of its interruptive persistence in the foundational relation between voice and being. Jacques Derrida, to whom Beuger's pre- and early Wandelweiser work is indebted, is likewise concerned with this site of contestation, and attempts to exact, from Heidegger himself, a rigorous undoing of the elision of a 'voice of being' with that which is 'silent, mute, insonorous, wordless' and, crucially, the 'originarily *a-phonic*' at the heart of Western metaphysics (Derrida, 1967/1998, p. 22). Derrida conceives of Heidegger's silent voice as the problematic avatar of a privileged relation of voice [*phonè*] to being as *logos*. It is, Derrida suggests, integral to the metaphysical illusion in which 'being' and 'voice' are complicit in the 'absolute and irreducible' presence of a transcendental signified, that which is present above all in the complicity of voice and reason, rendered in the single French expression, '[l]a voix *s'entend*' (p. 20): at once, the voice heard and understood.

Derrida contends that this 'voice of being', heard in the Heideggerian silent 'call' of conscience, corresponds merely to the 'unique experience' of a 'signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self … in the element of ideality or universality' (Derrida, 1967/1998, p. 20); he assures us that the uncontestable nature of this synthesis is not merely a localized sleight of hand, but the very stuff of western metaphysics, the 'experience of being' in the form of the irreducible unity of the sign, and 'the condition of the very idea of truth'. Hence, the unworldly or, for Heidegger, uncanny character of this emergence is entirely constitutive of its ideality. Such ideality 'gives voice' to being and is only submitted to examination on condition that the terms of its assessment are provided by an already entrenched metaphysical grammar, that which, from the *eidos* of Plato to the *res cogitans* of Descartes, usurps the calling into question of 'being' itself and strengthens the currency of presence.

In subjecting being to inquiry, however, Derrida's Heidegger sets out not to confirm but to confront being in a preconditional and prelinguistic state. Heideggerian 'being' is, Derrida contends, an *Urwort*, an 'originary' term designating a weakness in the elision of language and transcendental signified. The *Urwort* functions as a Rosenzweigian 'silent accompanist', a presence always exterior *to* yet necessarily *of* language, 'heterogeneous to the set of terms thus defined and concerned by its power' (Derrida, 1987/2008, p. 235). Rather than pursuing onto-theological disclosure, Heidegger posits 'being' as a term prior to language, diluting confidence in the structural integrity of the 'voice of being', casting radical doubt upon the ideality marked by the collusion of being and its audible fount, and instigating a breach in the very presence, or voicing, of the transcendental signified. This reintroduction of doubt into the category of 'being' upturns the throne of onto-theology: being can no longer issue decree in the form of a present and hence audible voice, since beyond the discursive threshold, the 'voice of the sources is not heard' (Derrida, 1967/1998, p. 22). Heidegger, Derrida contends, interrupts its gestation and delivery, introducing a 'rupture between the originary meaning of being and the word, between meaning and the voice, between "the voice of being" and the "*phonè*", between "the call of being", and articulated sound'.

For Derrida, then, like Levinas and Blanchot, silence is a noisy remainder, performing the 'irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and against which alone language can emerge' (Derrida, 1967/2001, p. 65). This spectral presence, manifest in the homonymic play of the neographism *différance* against *différence*, already at once difference and deferral, and evident exclusively upon the page in the form of an excess evaded in voicing, haunts Beuger's early Wandelweiser work. Between 1990 and 1994, Beuger's compositional output bears the distinctive hallmark of Derrida's attempted fragmentation and deregulation of the terrain upon which silence is coterminous with voicing, understanding, presence and *logos*: **ashes* (1991), for mixed choir and tape, for example, is scaffolded around Derrida's *Feu la cendre* (1982/1992), a text pivoting upon a further homophony incurred between the phrases *il y a là cendre* and *il y a la cendre*, in which the legible *grave* accent falls silent to the ear, risking, in the inscribed effacement of the definite article, the autonomous presence of the cinder, and, in the elevation of the definite article incurred in

vocalization, the 'mention or memory of … place' (Derrida, 1982/1992, p. 22) posited by the adverbial *là*. Moreover, Derrida renders the cinder as an indistinguishable and irretrievable 'remnant of a remainder' incurred in the ruinous incineration of matter. The cinder recalls—but does not re-present—a past presence unsustainable as or able to maintain its autonomy or voice. While one might maintain 'an ear for the flame', 'a cinder is silent'. It is not 'what is', but rather, it remains (p. 35). Furthermore, it 'is' not a remaindered *something* coextensive with a substantial or subsistent presence, but 'is' in the form only of a trace, in the spoiling of the site of presence and memory, a 'destruction without return' (p. 55).

**ashes*, following Derrida's cinder, eschews the status of its constitutive components as substantive and consistent expressions of a compositional and musical unity: even the title, rendered on each occasion with performance date replacing asterisk, serves to defer and displace the self-identicality and stability of the work's coordinates, rendering it nameless to ear, if not page. Other components likewise stage the rescinding of their signifying power while upholding, like Derrida, a responsibility to render legible that for which there remains no possibility of *aletheia* or full disclosure. An organ part, for example, immerses a series of ciphered renderings of the letters of the title amongst other, arbitrarily chosen tones, while a series of empty 4/4 measures are gradually filled with untraceable signifying fragments, dispersed across the extended duration of the work in the form of 'scattered sound particles' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 6 July 2011). These fragments consist in initials and dates relating to the lives and poetry of Celan, Hölderlin, and Mallarmé, alongside similar selections pertinent to Beuger and other, arbitrarily chosen signifiers. Additional 'single sounds' are drawn from Heinrich Isaac's fifteenth century song, *Innsbruck, Ich muß dich lassen*, itself bespoiled, silenced and concealed beneath Bach's *O Welt, ich muss dich lassen*; from Verdi's submission for beatification, the fourth and final setting of the 'Ave Maria' in the *Quatro Pezzi Sacri*, and from the second movement of Nono's *Il Canto Sospeso* (1955–1956), infamously subject to euphemistic contestation in *Die Reihe 6* by Stockhausen, who claimed as inappropriate the setting of texts demanding that 'one should be particularly ashamed that they had to be written' (Stockhausen, 1960/1964, p. 49). These sounds are also dispersed throughout the score, their positions determined in each case by chance operations. Furthermore, performers are instructed to choose three vocal fragments of their own, consisting in pertinent initials or letters to be freely articulated during a 50–60 minute recording session prior to the performance. These recorded vocal fragments are subsequently replayed during the performance, throughout which the choir reiterates the scored fragments, constituting an encoded and indecipherable network of articulated and rearticulated pasts and presents, rendered such that they 'cannot be traced back and are not representative of their 'origins' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 6 July 2011).

Spatial and temporal dispersal of sounds and silences is also characteristic of Beuger's other early large-scale Wandelweiser pieces, such as the Boswil submission *lesen hören, buch für stimme* (1991). Like **ashes*, it foregoes thematic development in favor of a

methodologically arbitrary scattering of sound and prose fragments across its (predominantly empty) duration. Three voice parts, two of which are recorded and only one of which is replayed audibly throughout, utilize the same atrophied temporal palette as **ashes*. The first recording runs concurrently with the performance, but is made audible only occasionally, in the tradition of Helmut Lachenmann's *Accanto, für Klarinette und Orchester* (1974–1975), during which the *Tonband* replaying Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A major* (K622) passes stealthily beneath the instrumental performance of the work, emerging at audible volume for only two short bursts and entering into a complex interweaving of structural and cultural oppositions.[9]

lesen hören, buch für stimme, however, predominantly concerns itself with silences of a differing kind, appropriating its texts from exiled Francophile Jewish–Egyptian–Italian writer Edmond Jabès, upon whose conceptual idiom and thinking of silence Beuger's contemporaneous works, such as *silences, fur mundharkmonika in B* (1992), *die stille, die zeichen* (1993) and *a silent understanding* (1994), draw extensively. Jabès, for whom silence serves a multiple signifying function and whose fragmentary prose particles share a Derridean preoccupation with the role of silence in the collapse of the discursive field relating to a transcendental signified, maintains an interpenetrative conceptual hierarchy borrowed by Beuger for *lesen hören, buch für stimme* and described by the figures of *Book, Word* and *Letter*, each of which enter into multiple and differential relations with the totality or unity of the work. Man strives for recovery of the ungraspable and enigmatic first *Word*, the fallen Word of God, which is accessible 'in its infinity only as absence and silence'. For Jabès, totality is not merely the sum of fragments or 'vocables'; rather, it remains in excess of its exploded fragments, 'always the beyond of speech' (Jabès, 1990, p. 102). In the absence of the *Word*, one is condemned to pursue totality in the fragmentary and re-presented form of *words*, symbolized by the shattering of the tablets of the law by Moses and the ensuing exodus. All human language and writing is thus assigned the vain task of reconstitution, in which the movement of endless iteration constitutive of the finite space of the human is a silent 'abyss of… infinite possibilities' (Waldrop, 2002, p. 104).

The *telos* of this diasporic procedure, which exposes the essential preoccupation of the exiled Jew, is, for Jabès, also that of the writer, and, for the early Beuger, the composer. It is directed at once towards the 'truth' of an absented unity and revealed only in the 'very movement of questioning' (Jabès, 1990, p. 59); hence, 'to be is to question', 'to question means… to refuse resolution' and thus to resist locating authority in the presence of a voice, text or sonorous object (pp. 74–75). Resolution is never more than 'weariness, an extreme exhaustion, a giving up' (p. 77) of infinite permutation in the service of a temporary and self-deceiving stasis: to be human is to expose oneself to a questioning that 'can only develop from a rupture' (p. 80) in a language escaping into silence and 'of which we can only ever claim arbitrary assemblage' (p. 94). Unlike the mysticism that establishes this endeavor as an affirmative and fertile stem reuniting God and man, such a schism is not bridged by union: instead, there is a 'solidarity at the heart of the rupture' that Jabès asserts is the solidarity of an irreconcilable and shared estrangement 'made up of all the individual solitudes', or, for the writer, *letters* (p. 59).

Beuger impresses this Jabèsian schema directly onto the musical work in *lesen hören, buch für stimme*, staging a spoiling of the site upon which a unified work might take root, decentring the tenor of its apprehension and rendering instead the work in the form of a series of interpenetrative fragmentary units which appeal to, and yet are denied participation in, a full disclosure of the global form to which they appeal. Indeed, fragmentation and dispersal provide the very structure of the work, presenting an inexhaustible series of potential audible and inaudible combinations that share only their role in the radical irresolution and incompletion of the work. The voiced texts, broken into graphemic fragments, distended across the duration of the piece and offset by the quietly audible presence of their pre-recorded doublings, acknowledge the solidarity established by the permeative communion of fragments in both form and content. Indeed, while the score insists upon the impossibility of reconstitution, encouraging instead an 'infinite listening', the fractured form of each unique example constitutes the only unity of the piece: 'if you listen to a grain of sand in the desert. . .it tells the story of every grain'. Furthermore, Beuger is careful to caution against the apprehension of the work as a musical setting of a poetic text in the score, at once encouraging 'multiple reading of [the] text, letter by letter', scattering the audible outcomes in distributing *singstimme* and *sprechstimme* voices between four loudspeakers in the performance space, and collapsing their articulations into an unmediated and unnarrativized pathology of wheezing, breathing and choking.

This structured fragmentation is redoubled by the inclusion in the score of 'silent reading' material to be apprehended by the listener during the performance. This material consists in a complement of prose particles that serve to disrupt or elide the recited and audible graphemic fragments, further dissembling the confluence and authority of internal and external voices, urging the reader to silently 'question the innermost voice' and thereafter presenting a series of Jabèsian textual interjections that explore the tentative and unstable sovereign unity of voice, ear, reader, and listener. Such distribution of materials recalls and extends laterally the reflective demands of Nono's *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima* (1980) in which performers are invited to read silently from the fragmentary shards of Hölderlin's poetry distributed across the score. Beuger, however, unburdens composer, performer and listener alike of their respective stalls within the formal hierarchy of the piece: not only is 'the singer', Beuger explains, no longer directed '"towards" the audience', the listener is implored to 'read and hear' the fragments silently, dissembling the *telos* whereby ear is subordinated to sound object (A. Beuger, 9 May 2011). In the performance instruction provided for *lesen hören, buch für stimme*, '[c]omposer, performer, listener: all are listeners, readers', but 'nobody speaks'. Here, the various interpenetrations of audible and inaudible, performed and unperformed, performer and audience are designed to break the complicity between hearing and sounding in order to undermine the authority of the voice.

This sentiment is elaborated in the unpublished text submitted by Beuger to the Boswil Künstlerhaus in response to the 1991 seminar, which again eschews the centrality of voice and explores instead the limits of the relationship between silence and audibility, asking, 'is the silence of hearing the silence of a silent music?' and

exposing subtly opposing discursive cambers of object and ear. Music concerned with the fringes of audibility is situated '[a]t the edge [*Rande*] of falling silent' (Beuger, 1991), delimited by a vocabulary concerned with presence, finitude, corpus, hem and place: 'edge' or 'threshold' administer the empirical limits of a 'there' where the ear discerns 'more or less', where it may be subjected to the sovereignty of an (albeit tentative) sonorous or voiced object, and where it is impressed upon a ground before which objects may or may not materialize. Beuger gestures away from this metaphysics of musical presence, pointing instead to the distinctly Derridean-Heideggerian possibility of an alternative, 'silent' music functioning '[p]erhaps by allowing the listener to hear instead of offering something to hear (to understand)'.[10] In place of an edge where silence *is* or *is* other, listening, Beuger suggests, also 'has a border' [*Grenze*], reminiscent of Heidegger's circumscription of the boundary as 'not that at which something stops', but 'from which something *begins* its essential unfolding', less 'place' than operation, an endless doubling and dividing, a perpetual renegotiation impervious to permanence and finitude (Heidegger, 1978, pp. 335–336). This renegotiation is expressed succinctly in *die stille, die zeichen* (1993), in which notational fragments merely contribute to a 'great silence' [*grosse Stille*]: during the unnotated impasses between sounding events, there are 'no pauses, just an increasingly engaged listening' (Beuger, 1993). Here, all events, notated or otherwise, fall unhierarchized before a 'sensitive and appropriate form of listening'. Furthermore, in *variations (silences): goldberg für klavier* (1994), in which Beuger merely provides a list of the silences lying dormant between each of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, a short text bookends the diverse temporalities of waiting, forgetting, vigilance, and becoming with invocations of silence and listening, a sentiment redoubled in the *calme étendue* series (1996–1997), which constitutes its silences, during which performer 'does nothing', as the 'time of listening… in which events can occur'.

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If Beuger's early Wandelweiser work follows Edmond Jabès's suggestion that '[o]ne has to write out of that break, out of that unceasingly revived wound' (Jabès, 1990, p. 62), founding itself in the silences of the fragmentary and the unrecuperable, a modification in the orientation of this rupture or break is identifiable in the philosophical grammar accounting for Beuger's understanding of silence after 1995. This shift results in silences that 'sound completely different to the silences in the earlier pieces' (Kösterke, 1999). Indeed, while '[t]he idea of silence as a cut' addressing 'passing', 'disappearing' and 'the experience of loss and memorialization' is maintained, Beuger's concern shifts from 'music as art' towards the vitality of a music 'dealing with the event' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 20 May 2011). Following exposure to the philosophy of Alain Badiou, whose thought permits an 'idea of the cut' accounting for the 'rareness' and 'suddenness' of a discrete sound event in relation to its silences, Beuger has come to reject the passive tenor and fragmentary, textual residue of irretrievable metaphysical unity circumscribed by Jabès and Derrida, and, in its place,

embraced the decisive Badiouian 'event' in the form of a localized instance or occasion of sounding that 'ruptures the situation one is in' (Beuger, in Warbuton, 2001).

While Beuger's use of the incision may appear to cleave a metaphysical divide consonant with the fragmentation and rupture invoked by Derrida and Jabès, Badiou's conception of ontology as set-theoretical instead exploits the global notion of the empty set as axiom, forgoing the necessity for an originary (onto-theological) unity (or, indeed, its trace), and instead naming an uncounted, undifferentiated and chaotic multiple from which (musical, for example) structurations or *situations* are derived. Processes of structuration gives rise to particular *states of situations* describing modes of closed presentation (such as late Romanticism, serialism, etc.) and these reified states, inconsistent and exclusive, are subject to contestation in the form of occasional and irruptive *events* in excess of the situation to which they are sutured; Badiou favors examples drawn from the French Revolution, which constitutes the event in excess of the *ancien regime*, and Schoenberg's twelve-tone theory, situated in excess of tonality. The event, a sustained fidelity to which is accounted for by upholding a procedure unverifiable by and indiscernable to its contingent state, makes visible the limitations of the situation to which it remains exterior. Thus, while remaining outside of the verifiable strata of knowledge endorsed by the state, the event acts upon and alters the vocabulary of its situation. Events constitute a 'truth' that variously 'punches' or 'pierces' a 'hole' in or 'makes' an 'incision' into the body of knowledge charged with ordering the situation, but the event itself remains exterior to ontology.

Beuger utilizes the structure of the Badiouian incision liberally, in order to account for the emergence of global or historical compositional strata, to define the potency of an irruptive event, and to describe a mechanism internal to its structuration.[11] Intervention occurs as a 'supplement to the continuity and 'monotony' of being' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 9 June 2011) described by the Badiouian empty set, a 'manifold without a predicate other than its own multiplicity' (Badiou, 1998/2006, p. 36) corresponding, for Beuger, to the (infinite) sum of possible musical resources characterized variously as 'all that is (sounding)' and an 'infinitely dense continuum' (Beuger, in Saunders, 2009, p. 231) into which the composer might make temporary and approximate incursion.

Hence, Cage's *4′33″* is, for Beuger, an 'event' marking the occasion upon which 'music is experienced for the first time' as a 'direct incision into the eternal murmuring' (Beuger, 1999). This incision is achieved in the erection and intervention of an empty durational scaffold upon and within the 'continuum' in the form of a counted time that locates the listener for the duration of a performance. The differentiation between 'all that is (sounding)' and all that sounds in a performance of *4′33″* is accounted for by a minimal act of presentation and delimitation, the content of which, undecidable in advance, presents the sounding continuum in performance and is named by 'silence'. *4′33″* is thus pertinent less as a 'request to open the ears, whereby everything appears as music', than as a decisive gesture in which '[i]t is not vital what is included by the cut', but 'that it is an incision', a jettisoning of the enveloping and originary silence underlying all sonorous activity in

favor of an understanding of silence as intervention. It is in this sense that Beuger recognizes in *4′33″* 'the beginning—not an end—of a serious involvement with silence as an autonomous musical phenomenon' (Beuger, 1997).

Beuger's third and final incision governs the relationship between sound and silence characteristic of localized events internal to the composition. It borrows from Badiou's assertion of the event as a 'subtractive procedure' or negation, and allows for the examination of a musical event in terms not of the presence of a sound, but of disappearance, tracing the process whereby the withdrawal of an event modifies the structure of the situation to which it is appended. For Badiou, this process takes the form of three negationary movements: 'vanishing, cancelling and foreclosure' (Badiou, 1992/2008, p. 49). These movements may also be discerned in Beuger's understanding of the sounding event and its relation to silence. In *ins ungebundene* (1997–98), for example, occasional sounding events incurred at intervals determined by their performer conclude with a minimum of 20 and maximum of 50 minutes of uninterrupted 'post-evental' silence. In these silences, Beuger asserts, there is 'no way to locate the event (of the tone having gone)' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 20 May 2011), since the sound leaves nothing in its wake except a name—'silence'—in the place not of an event, but, as Badiou attests, of a 'having-taken-place (of an event)' (Badiou, 1992/2008, p. 53). In this environment, the listener, Beuger maintains, 'slowly discovers [something] must have taken place' previously, and this recognition marks a shift in the orientation of the piece, turning the sounding event and the silences prior to it into something 'having been there, but never coming again', since the insistence of silence serves merely to supplement the evacuation (or 'nudity') of the site in which the event took place: it stands in for the abolition of the event, rather than for the event itself. Thus, a *vanishing* establishes the abdication of the event at the site of its occurrence.

Thereafter, Beuger marks a subtle shift in the constitution of the post-evental silence. 'The silence after the 'event' is different from the silence before', but is no longer clearly sutured to its sounding event. This shift is indicative of a second movement, or *cancellation*, that which Badiou calls 'subtraction from subtraction' (p. 53). This *cancellation*, constituting a disappearance of the absence of the event, is incurred by the undecidability or doubt that questions not only the occurrence of the sounding event but, consequentially, its perishing, 'cancelling out its vanishing' and rendering, for Beuger, 'the absence of something which was there before, but now has gone (forever)'. Such a cancellation henceforth heralds silence as a 'new silence', fundamentally different from its predecessors, having been irrevocably modified by a sounding event.

Finally, a third negation, or *foreclosure*, gestures towards that which Badiou suggests is the 'unnameable' of the event, or the 'uncrossable limit of a truth-process', in which the singularity of the event remains resistant to sublation by or reduction to metaphor (Badiou, 1992/2008, p. 57). Here, while the nature of the piece has shifted, Beuger suggests, the event is recognized as no longer graspable or recuperable. In this acknowledgement of the disappearance of disappearance, 'the listener has to come to terms with … absence, maybe by gradually turning his

attention to whatever is sounding in the environment' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 20 May 2011).

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This procedure bears a sympathetic and significant resonance with Frey's description of the processes of appearance and disappearance, and the subsequent abdication of their opposition. It is a resonance, however, that echoes from an opposing flank of the metaphysical canyon. The primordiality of Frey's silence, which subsists beyond the threshold of such an abdication, is maintained within the jurisdiction of a distinctly Heideggerian ontology, whether in the disclosure of *aletheia* or in the remaindered 'experience' of the Levinasian *il y a* that exceeds it. Indeed, Frey affirms the possibility of a bearing witness or psychological exposure to this silence, asserting that 'silence itself is accessible in the music' in the form of an 'intuitiveness' or 'clue' (J. Frey, personal correspondence, 9 May 2011), as a 'hint of permeability' pervading sounds, and in *Da-sein's* 'presence and charisma' (Frey, 1998a), qualities that 'make themselves felt' in composition.

Despite Heidegger's own claims—buttressed by Derrida—to have unraveled onto-theology, uncovering the 'still unthought unity of the essence of metaphysics' (Heidegger, 1957/1960, p. 48) and subjecting it to questioning, the possible exposure of beings to being remains a site of contestation for the philosopher and composer alike. Alain Badiou goes so far as to dismiss the reintroduction of the category of being into philosophy as a 'vain nostalgia for the sacred' (Badiou, 1992/1999, p. 58); this dismissal grounds Badiou's exclusion of the counted unity of primordial being from his subtractive ontology and furthermore substantiates an important transition in Antoine Beuger's thinking about silence. In his early Wandelweiser work, Beuger remained concerned with staging the problematics of disclosure and presence rather than testifying to their possibility. Following the discovery of Badiou's thought, however, the priority and teleology of disclosure are reversed, privileging the events of appearance and disappearance of sounds and silence as decisive interventions in excess of being, rather than subject to its enveloping allure.

There are, ultimately, dangers in subjecting Wandelweiser to metaphysical assay, and Frey in particular is—rightly—reluctant to wholly cede the practice of composition to philosophical exposition; yet hazards also reside in bolstering the mismatched weave of the ontic and ontological, in the compositional, as well as theoretical, conflation of 'silence' as an empirical and unsounding *cochlear* duration with 'silence' as a remaindered, inhering, subsisting, atrophied, fragmented, negated or, indeed, originary *textual* operation or assertion. If the plethora of reference, influence, citation and dedication characteristic of the Wandelweiser catalogue, allied to the industrious generation of new work, at once demands and undermines steady conceptual regulation, then a survey thus using philosophical markers in order to determine compositional strata, and in which the (only sometimes) latent signature of the thinker is moved from the margins to the center of the score beneath that of

the composer, seeks merely to orient and introduce, rather than prescribe and exhaust.

Notes

[1] For example, the theme of the 1976 seminar, 'Der Komponist als Mitarbeiter', was translated variously and provocatively among the strong English-speaking contingent as 'Composer as Co-worker' or 'Composer as Collaborator', dependent on political sensibility (see Tilbury, 2008, pp. 817–818). Despite—or perhaps as a consequence—of this precedent, composer and jury member Jakob Ullman suggests, 'it was not so clear in the beginning what ''stille Musik'' is or could be' and, furthermore, that '[t]he question of the great difference between ''stille Musik'' as ''silent music'' and ''stille music'' as ''soft music'' was discussed during the (preliminary) meeting in relation to the different pieces but not so much as a theme in general.' (J. Ullman, personal communication, 14 March 2011). The composer Ludgar Hoffman-Engl went so far as to write to the Künstlerhaus to ask for clarification regarding the theme.

[2] Beuger's *lesen hören, buch für stimme*, for voice and tape, and Frey's *[Unbetitelt]*, for viola and piano, were among 213 scores submitted to the *Künstlerhaus*. They were chosen for performance and discussion from works by 169 applicants of 22 nationalities, resident in 16 countries across four continents (roughly one third arrived from beyond the nexus of Germany, Austria and Switzerland). Schnebel presided over an international jury consisting of Ullman, Roland Moser, Alfred Schnittke, Marianne Schroeder and Christian Wolff. Blind score assessment took place at the offices of Schnittke's publishers, Sikorski, in Hamburg on 13–14 May 1991, although Wolff was absent from the final selection processes due to ulterior commitments, and Moser and Schroeder examined the scores beforehand in Boswil. The former then joined the remainder of the panel in Hamburg, while the latter provided written assessment and maintained telephone communication during the final examination. Schnittke, after whose *Stille Musik, for violon und violoncello* (1979) the seminar had been named, withdrew after only a few hours of the first session due to failing eyesight and stamina, having examined only a handful of scores and leaving only Moser, Schnebel and Ullmann to complete the assessment in person. Eight composers were selected as prize-winners: Beuger, Frey, Hirotoshi Kihara; Ricardas Kabelis, Chico Mello; Ernstalbrecht Stiebler, Urs-Peter Schneider and Dieter Jordi.

[3] Beuger had begun work on *lesen hören, buch für stimme* prior to the announcement of the seminar theme; for detail on Beuger's period in Mühl's commune, see Barrett, G.D. (2012) The Silent Network—The Music of Wandelweiser. In *Contemporary Music Review*, this issue.

[4] The *DAAD*, or *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (German Academic Exchange Service) funded exchange programs and residencies for American composers visiting Germany; Feldman first benefited from the program in 1971.

[5] For a detailed account of Lane's attempts to host a concert of silent music, see Glew (2009) Amor Vacui. In Armleder, J. (Ed). *Voids*. Zürich: JRP-Ringler, Zürich, Ecart Publications; Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, pp. 350–361.

[6] Some examples of Fluxus-related silences consisting in predominantly unsounding but contextually musical events sustained by the displacement, reimagining or reconfiguring musical instruments and activity include George Maciunas's *12 Piano Compositions for Nam June Paik* (1961); George Brecht's *Incidental Music* (1961); *Piano Piece, 1962* (1962); *Solo for Violin, Viola, Cello or Contrabass* (1962) and *String Quartet* (1962); and Mieko Shiomi's *event for the late afternoon* (ca. 1963). Nam Juin Paik's *One for Solo Violin* (1962) ultimately utilises the destruction of musical apparatus in order to engender its silence. Silences proposing a general negation of musical events include, for example, Geoff Hendricks's *Erase everything*

(1964); George Maciunas's *Homage to Richard Maxfield* (1962), which instructs the performer to 'erase' a master recording of a previous performance; and George Brecht's *Instruction* (undated), in which the performer responds to a fleeting radio sound by immediately turning off the wireless set. Pieces concerned more directly and explicitly with the absence of sound and quietude include Martin Knizak's *A Week* (1965), which specifies that a performer must remain mute for the whole of the second of the seven days constituting the duration of a performance; Mieko Shiomi's *Boundary Music* (1963) instructs the performer to disregard audibility in the production of a sound; her *Music for Two Players II* (1963) is executed by two performers instructed to spend two hours together without speaking; George Brecht's *A Christmas Play* (undated) features a child that remains silent, despite being subjected to ongoing questioning, throughout a performance. In opposition to the Cagean extension of musical jurisdiction, La Monte Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor No. 2* (1960), in which the performer opens and closes the lid of the piano with diminishing audibility, derives its silence from the imposition of, rather than liberation from, a delimiting of musical territory, while George Brecht's *Solo for Wind Instrument* (1962) achieves similar effect in requiring the performer to relinquish his or her instrument. Of Ligeti's three Fluxus pieces, *Trois Bagatelles for David Tudor* (1961) similarly turns upon limitation rather than extension, specifying the minimum compositional gesture necessary to prevent the disappearance of the work into the unstructured chaos of silence: it consists in a single C# resounding once in the opening movement, followed by two formally rested movements and an encore comprising solely of a rested quaver. A second Ligeti Fluxus piece, *Die Zukunft der Musik –eine kollektive Komposition* (1961), published in Wolf Vostell's *Dé-coll/age* in December 1962, dramatizes a collapse in the authority of musical discourse, using a parodic notation which silently rechoreographs an (indignant) audience response to a lecture given by the composer in Alpbach, Austria during the previous year. Despite the brevity of Ligeti's flirtation with Fluxus, both pieces resonated across the Atlantic: Philip Corner, later responsible for the ongoing series of silent pieces to be performed or recited under the title 'Some Silences', premiered *Die Zukunft der Musik* at Charlotte Moorman's *6 Evenings* festival in New York in 1963: Corner would later perform the *Three Bagatelles* during his New York concert of silent piano music in 1974. In addition, following the 1967 publication of Irwin Kremen's 1953 manuscript of Cage's *4′33″* in Peter Garland's *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde* Magazine, further American silences proliferated: explicit examples included John Mizelle's *Radical Energy I* (1967) (the score stipulates a six-year silence between first and second performances), and John Dinwiddie's *Hercules for David Tudor* (1967) (a text-score advising that none of its component sounds should, if possible, pass into the realm of the audible).

[7] For example, in September 1988, Cage's residency at the *Musica Nova* festival in Glasgow was accompanied by a performance of *4′33″* in an arrangement for bagpipes by the traditional Scottish folk group The Whistlebinkies, while an August 1986 realization by Cage himself at the *Kölnischer Kunstverein* in Cologne, was performed in celebration of the opening of 'Die 60er Jahre Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole Vom Happening zum Kunstmarkt', an exhibition dedicated to a decidedly retrospective meditation on the gallery-based art events of the 1960s in the city. William Fettermann describes some other notable and outlandish performances of the piece in Fettermann (1997, pp. 69–95).

[8] In 'History of Experimental Music in the United States' (1959; reprinted in Cage (1961)), Cage recalls a remark by Henry Cowell, who suggested the dissolution of global structure binding discrete events together in the music of Brown, Cage, Feldman and Wolff amounted to a 'getting rid of the glue' (1961, p. 71). Cage interprets this abdication of continuity as necessary 'so that sounds would be themselves'. For more, see Nicholls, (2002a; 2002b).

[9] Beuger acknowledges a considerable yet cautious debt to the silences of Lachenmann and Nono in the early Wandelweiser pieces: '[a]t the time I wrote these pieces, I was very

interested in the work of both composers [but] I always looked at Lachenmann and Nono from [a Cagean] perspective' (A. Beuger, personal correspondence, 21 April 2011).

[10] In place of the French *s'entendre*, employed by Derrida (1967/1998; see above) to suggest both hearing and understanding, Beuger parenthesizes: '(zu verstehen zu geben)'.

[11] Beuger describes 'incisions' made into 'Baroque, classical, romantic' musics for example, in the form of 'Josquin, Händel, Haydn, Debussy, or: late Beethoven, early Boulez, late Nono' (see Beuger, 1999).

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