Testing the Consequences—Multipart Series in the Work of the Wandelweiser Composers

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Series comprising multiple autonomous parts that share common features and/or a determining principle are prevalent in the work of the Wandelweiser composers. This article compares these composers' use of multipart series with related practices in the visual arts, considering the differences between open and closed series. It focuses on three conditions by which series may be terminated: predetermined conditions decided upon in advance of making the series; circumstantial conditions which emerge whilst making the series and logical conditions which are integral to the materials and processes used in making the series. It examines differences in the methods of presentation of work framed as series and the way this impacts on the eventual perception of the work.

Keywords: Circumstantial; Logical; Multipart; Predetermined; Series; Wandelweiser

Multipart series are commonly found in many visual art practices, particularly monochrome and colour-field painting and some conceptual and object art. Commenting on the function of seriality in visual art, Sol LeWitt (1966) defines the term in relation to his *Serial Project #1 (ABCD)* (1966):

> Serial compositions are multipart pieces with regulated changes. The differences between the parts are the subject of the composition. If some parts remain constant it is to punctuate the changes. The entire work could contain sub-divisions that could be autonomous but that comprise the whole. The autonomous parts are units, rows, sets, or any logical division that would be read as a complete thought. The series would be read by the viewer in a linear or narrative manner even though in its final form many of these sets would be operating simultaneously, making comprehension difficult. (item 17)

While this definition is specific to the work in question, there are many aspects of it that are applicable to multipart series in general. LeWitt sets out the basic condition

of seriality as work comprising multiple autonomous parts that share one or more common features and/or a determining principle. Although LeWitt suggests that the parts of his serial pieces are presented together, in work by other artists, the parts may be separated in space and/or time, preventing a single experience of the series and a reduction in the perceived linearity. The parts may behave more as autonomous pieces linked by a serial principle and have a distributed field relationship.

This autonomous approach to the presentation of parts of a series is found in the work of the Wandelweiser composers. Although multipart series are less common in music than in visual art, a high proportion of music by the Wandelweiser composers is formed in series and the use of serial principles is central to much of their work.[1] Whilst the logical progression implied by LeWitt's definition can be seen in some of these series, there is also a sense of methodical exploration underpinning the use of series by these composers. Antoine Beuger summarizes this as 'staying with an idea, testing the consequences of it, trying it out until I get stuck or just leave it' (Saunders, 2004, p. 240).

Typically, serial work presents multiple articulations of a central formative principle or group of principles. By experiencing multiple versions of a work, these principles may emerge through comparison, whilst each part may retain its autonomy. Serial approaches challenge the need to address why only one prioritized result of the creative process is required,[2] and question what is gained by presenting multiple articulations of a principle or set of materials. Manfred Werder observes that 'working with multipart series meant a new, structural, serial, practice-oriented rather than linear and result-oriented approach to artistic production' (personal communication, 12 February 2011). The focus shifts to making as an end in itself. The outcomes of the production still have validity as representations of the process, but their status is tempered by knowledge of the method of their creation. For Dan Flavin (1966), this focus on ongoing practice, as opposed to the objects that derive from it, draws attention to the similarity of materials and processes employed in his work, and the concepts that frame it:

> [My work lacked] the look of history. I have no stylistic or structural development of any significance within my proposal—only shifts in parative emphasis—modifying and addable without intrinsic change. ... All my diagrams (for the proposals), even the oldest, seem applicable again and continually. It is as though my system synonymizes its past, present and future states without incurring a loss of relevance. It is curious to feel self-denied of a progressing development, if only for a few years. (p. 27)

For painter Marcia Hafif,[3] the continuation of parallel series is part of her working method and provides a constraint that allows her to concentrate on her own artistic priorities:

> Rather than think about the larger history of painting, I work in it and expand the fifteen or more series I have developed. I do not think so much about "Why paint" since within this context there is endless work to do. (Weckop-Conrads, 1990)

Hafif (2010) frames this investigation under the collective title *The Inventory*, which she describes as

> a chronological listing of each series of paintings including each item of work. Each series follows in some way my original project of examining the methods and materials of Western Painting in the form of paintings themselves.

The Inventory currently comprises 24 separate series, each of which uses a particular constraint to determine the methods and form of its constituent paintings. So, by working with series, some preparatory decisions are made, allowing Hafif to focus on the differences between articulations of the serial principle or what Flavin calls a change of 'parative emphasis'.

Series may have a logical conclusion after a particular number of articulations or be thought of as ongoing investigations. Although many series are eventually completed, there is a sense of the possibility of infinite extension implied by beginning a series of works. Eva-Maria Houben is drawn to 'a philosophical aspect: I like the perception of infinite landscapes, unfinished works, pieces without beginning, without ending... I like the idea of infinite things—but I only may show them in finite forms and sounds' (personal communication, 16 January 2011).

Although for a composer like Houben working on a series may be an ongoing and seemingly endless activity, there are nevertheless factors that determine its nature and extent. A series is initiated, so there are principles governing why and how this happens and, likewise, how it may eventually be terminated. There are also principles linking the constituent parts of a series, creating constraints for the maker, and presenting points of contact between the parts that may allow the nature of their relationship to be apparent to someone experiencing the work. For Michael Pisaro (personal communication, 20 February 2011), there are two situations that result in a new series being established in his work:

> (1) a process I initiate which can be applied to a variety of instruments or situations (the *mind is moving* series, *here* series, *harmony series*, *within*, *hearing metal*, for example)
>
> (2) an open-ended investigation which, after the first work, seems to need to continue—and whose trajectory is thus created on a case-by-case basis (*ascending series*, *fields have ears*, *distance*, *encounter*, etc.)
>
> So in one case (1), the ''parent'' is a concept (harmonic series, superimposition, physical material) that gets implemented in a way ''all at once'' (though it is of course still the case that the pieces have to more or less be composed one at a time). In the other case (2) the ''parent'' is the first piece in the series, with each new piece being an extension of the concept—in order to see how it can be taken further.

This exploration of alternatives is revealing. The first approach suggests that an idea can be reapplied to create variations revealing new things about the work. This considers the parent as a template to be used as a starting point for making additional parts, each of which have an equivalent hierarchical status. The second approach is

more directed, such that it challenges the boundaries of the work, attempting to locate what it is which, by working in sequence, defines the series. Here, the parent initially acts as a template, but subsequent parts may use any of the previous pieces in the series as their template, resulting in a more complex branching as the space of the work is mapped. Hybridizing these two approaches is also possible, however, as Pisaro (personal communication, 20 February 2011) goes on to suggest:

> In reality there might be some overlap between these two ways of working: some pieces that fall into (1), might in fact only grow out of experiences with actual performances—as happen in both *mind is moving* and the *harmony series* to some extent and some series of type (2) might have started with some kind of conceptual overlay ("ascent" or the mapping of field on a grid respectively).

In a similar way, for Craig Shepard (personal communication, 3 February 2011), the decision to make a series generally comes after an initial piece has been completed, rather than at the outset. He notes:

> It doesn't seem to work for me to set up the parameters of a piece before I get into the composition of it. With the notable exception of *On Foot*, the series have evolved because I found the idea to be fruitful ground for further work, and not because I decided beforehand to write such a series.

Whilst a current series might be said to be open in the sense that there is potential for it to be extended through the addition of new parts, many series are, at some point, deemed complete. The decision as to how a series is closed is determined to some extent by the structural principles that underpin it. There are three main ways in which a series may be terminated: a predetermined condition may be decided upon in advance of making the series; a circumstantial condition may emerge whilst making the series; or there may be a logical condition integral to the materials and processes used in making the series.

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The extent of series that are terminated by predetermined or logical conditions is generally known in advance, and in this sense, they could be deemed closed from the outset. It may be possible to determine how many parts such series might have and, possibly, the nature of each part. The making of the series then becomes an execution of this plan. Determining the limits of logical series can be achieved in different ways. For some artists, seriality is a method where the varying element(s) are ordered so as to make the differences between the parts clear. The regulated changes to which LeWitt refers provide a means to observe the serial principle and, for Bochner (1967a), '[t]he serial attitude is a concern with how order of a specific type is manifest' (p. 28), emphasizing the central importance of this principle to the experience of the work. Bochner (1967a) also suggests that serial works using logical principles exhibit three traits:

(1)   The derivation of the terms or interior divisions of the work is by means of a numerical or otherwise systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal).

(2)   The order takes precedence over the execution.
(3)   The completed work is fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting. (p.28)

For Bochner, seriality requires systematization of the ordering principle, such that it is possible to discern the ordered progression of change through each part of the series and that all possible variations of the parameters under investigation are presented. He notes elsewhere:

> Systems are characterized by regularity, thoroughness, and repetition in execution. They are methodical. It is their consistency and the continuity of application that characterizes them. Individual parts of a system are not in themselves important but are relevant only in how they are used in the enclosed logic of the whole series. (Bochner, 1967b, p. 40)

Bochner contrasts this logical approach with work that exists as multiple variants, in which such variants may demonstrate some of the same features as the work, but lack the order and self-exhaustiveness of a series under his definition. His approach prioritizes a clearly expressed common relation between several elements. There is a logical procedure, determined in advance and related to the materials of the work. For work involving, for example, permutation or serial progressions, it may be expected that completion of all possible variations will conclude the series.

An example of this view of seriality can be found in Sol LeWitt's *Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974). The work comprises 122 small structures made with equal lengths of painted wood such that they each describe the outline of a cube with at least one of the edges missing. These are arranged in a grid on a wooden base. Paired isometric drawings and black-and-white photographs of each cube are framed and hung on the walls next to the wooden cubes and the information is also presented in a book.[4] The work is exhaustive in that it presents every possible instance of a cube with between three and eleven edges (three is the minimum number required to represent all the dimensions of a cube).[5] Each cube is presented as part of an ordered series. In both the layout of the wooden cubes and in the other documentation, the parts are grouped by the number of edges: All the 'threes' are presented together, all the 'fours' and so on. There is a separate *Schematic Drawing for Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974) that arranges diagrams of each cube in a square grid, labelling each according to the number of sides and its place in the progression.

It should be noted that with logical series in visual art, the units are often presented as part of a single work. The requirement that links are made between the parts is central to the representation of the work. This contrasts with the majority of series by Wandelweiser composers, which tend to exist as groups of related but autonomous works, perhaps sharing a title format but articulated as separate pieces.[6] Logical or exhaustive approaches are of reduced importance in their work, which instead favours the exploratory aspect of serial working.

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The other approach to fixing the structure and extent of a series in advance of realizing it is to use predetermined conditions. In contrast to logical series, in these situations there is nothing inherent in the work that forces it to comprise a particular number of parts. Examples might include filling pages in a book, producing one part per day for a certain number of days, responding to a limited number of external stimuli or by arbitrarily choosing a number of parts in advance of making the series. The decision to constrain the series is an arbitrary one derived from the circumstances of creating the work (it is equally possible to use a larger book, a shorter time period, different stimuli, etc.).

Manfred Werder's *ausführende* series (1999–) is an example of a predetermined series. It has its root in the earlier *stück 1998*, a piece which comprises 4000 pages, each of which uses the same format: A 5×8 grid of pitches notated using letter names and numbers (e.g. c1, #A1). Each page in *stück 1998* has a different distribution of pitches, selected from a six-octave range. Each notated pitch represents a unit of the piece and there are 160,000 units in total. A unit has a duration of twelve seconds, comprising the notated pitch sustained for six seconds, followed by a silence of equal duration. The piece can be played by any number of musicians. Where a given pitch falls within the range of an instrument, it is played; where it falls outside the range, it is omitted, resulting in a twelve-second silence for that unit. In the instructions for the score, Werder states, 'the score is performed—in sections—in one succession', such that each performance uses a sequence of pages that contiguously follow those used in the previous performance. So, for example, one performance might use pages 679–693, with the following performance—which may take place some time later, in a different location and with different musicians—using pages 694–697, and so on.

For Werder, the composition of *stück 1998* provoked the question of whether he could 'motivate the specifics in the use of instrument, duration, timbre, chance and filter operation, etc. in respective scores. The fact of these specifics appearing in the scores, often motivated by the opportunities of concert practice, was no longer sustainable' (personal communication, 12 February 2011). This resulted in a series of conclusions that underpin both *stück 1998* and the later *ausführende* series, shifting the balance in favour of what Werder calls an 'absolute structure':

> One work with its ongoing structure replaces the development of autonomous works.
> There is no reason for any specific duration of a work.
> There is no reason for any specific duration of a sound event
> As there is no reason for any specific relation of duration between sound and silence, there will be conceptually equal duration of both.
> The compositional structure reflects the presentation structure: the structure of sound and silence reflects the structure of "presentation moment" and "non-presentation moment". (M. Werder, personal communication, 12 February 2011)

Although *stück 1998* is not a multipart series in the sense that it comprises autonomous divisions,[7] since the performed sequences are arbitrarily chosen and

are selections from a single whole, the principle of its composition can be traced through to the more generalized *ausführende* (performers) series. There are nine pieces within the *ausführende* series, each differentiated by the number of performers required (e.g. *2 ausführende*, *8 ausführende*). The grid format and time structure is identical to that used for *stück 1998*, but the letter names are replaced by numerals denoting which player should make a sound during a given unit or by a dot, indicating a silent unit. So, in *5 ausführende*, where a '3' is notated, performer three makes a sound for six seconds, followed by six seconds of silence (see Figure 1). The type of sound is not specified, further reducing the 'specifics' of the score. In order to describe the register of the piece, Werder includes a generic instruction, reading: 'to itself, clear and objective. simple.' This instruction appears to imply a somewhat uncomplicated and focused manner of sound production. The main difference in the *ausführende* series is the structure of each event: Here, a sequence of individually produced sounds is realized, in contrast to the (potential) ensemble unisons in *stück 1998*.

Whilst the length of *stück 1998* was decided during its composition, the structure, length and number of pieces in the *ausführende* series was decided in advance. Werder (personal communication, 12 February 2011) comments:

> When I started writing *stück 1998* in later 1997, I didn't have any clear idea at all [as to its length]. The only decision was to keep on writing, say everyday, as a composer's activity. I remember having stopped for a while when reaching 400 pages. But I don't remember how quick I advanced. Carlo Inderhees programmed page 1451 on December 8, 1998, at Zionskirche for his project (for which I gave him some pages at random in 1998). When I reached 3000 pages, I guess in 1999, I stopped for a year or so. In the meantime I began with the pages of the *ausführende* series.

Werder continues:

> Then I wrote another 1000 pages, and decided that the *ausführende* series should have the same number—3000 or 4000. I think I wanted to have a ''round'' number (I was rather considering the page total than duration total), but it rather happened accidentally. It was a hard question in the process of *stück 1998* to write another project of that kind, but I really wanted to have a ''clearer'' or more basic structure like in the *ausführende* series for such a writing project.

So, the decision to complete *stück 1998* was circumstantial, determined by the experience of undertaking an extended writing project. This experience served as a model for the subsequent *ausführende* series, where the decision to complete was predetermined. The *ausführende* pieces display serial tendencies: The pieces have a fixed score format; they are exhaustive, both in the number of players used from one to nine and in the manner of event distribution; furthermore, the construction of each piece is systematic and ordered (Werder used chance procedures to determine if a sound was notated, and if so, who should make it).

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

Antoine Beuger also predetermines the format of some of his series. His sporadic 'colour series' (2000–) was initiated by a project where 25 artists were each asked to contribute 50 A4 pages, each comprising a unique art work, for inclusion in an edition of 50 boxes. Beuger (personal communication, 28 April 2011) comments:

> Not knowing what to do, I decided to create 50 title pages for non-existent pieces. As titles I took colour names from a Marcia Hafif catalogue. With the help of chance operations I created 50 instrumentations, which were then attributed to the titles. Seeing the result I found that these combinations (title/instrumentation) were evocative somehow. Then I had the idea, I could try to write these pieces. Funnily they also are related musically.

Some of the resulting pieces have been composed and include *cadmiumgelb* (2000), *cyaninblau* (2001), *antwerpener blau* (2002), *gebrannte siena* (2002), *carthamrosa* (2003) and *karminrot* (2005). Here, the constraint is less rigid than with Werder's *ausführende* series. The formative principles in Beuger's colour series do not determine the structure of each piece, but simply suggest a situation (a title, an instrumentation). For example, *cadmiumgelb* for double bass (see Figure 2) presents a set of instructions for making a sound, prefaced by a quote from Ad Reinhardt (1991): 'painting that is almost possible, almost does not exist, that is not quite known, not quite seen' (p. 108). In comparison, *karminrot* for speaking voice takes individual words from *The Silver Swan* (1970), a poem by Kenneth Rexroth. These are spoken individually, very quietly, at a rate of six to ten words per minute for a duration of 40–70 minutes. The eight lines of text are each assigned one of eight specified number of repetitions (3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89). So, although the two pieces are part of the same series, they are structured very differently and use different approaches to verbal notation.

Series can also be formed in a predetermined way based on the constraints of a specific project. Typically, this might involve repetition of an activity, linking the development of a series to working methods, or a constraint imposed by a performance situation. The most important project in this regard for the Wandelweiser composers was *3 Jahre—156 Musikalische Eregnisse—eine Skulptur*, initiated by composer Carlo Inderhees and artist Christoph Nicolaus. The project was realized at the Zionskirche in Berlin with a performance of a piece for a solo player every Tuesday evening at 7.30 pm from the beginning of 1997 to the end of 1999. Each of the 156 events was ten minutes in duration. The sculpture comprised 96 quartz phyllite cylinders of between 30 and 120 cm in length, arranged in parallel in two separated groups (54 stones with a diameter of 70 mm and 42 stones with a diameter of 120 mm). Nicolaus (personal communication, 6 June 2011) comments:

> While there was a different music piece from a different composer and a different player every week, there was the sculpture as a more constant element. It looked always the same, it was also changed, but very little. Every week two stones of one of the two groups were chosen by chance and were exchanged with each other.

◄ **Figure 1** Manfred Werder, 5 *ausführende* (1999), p. 23.

cadmiumgelb
for double bass

antoine beuger
2000

"painting that is almost possible, almost does not exist, that is not quite known, not quite seen"
(ad reinhardt)

hold: a natural harmonic

bow: almost standing still
(a whole bow = 10 minutes)

after about two to four minutes: standing completely still

after about 6 minutes the piece ends

For Inderhees, the extended time frame and regular structure of the project allowed him 'to experience how the perception of place and time changes over the course of three years'. The project was carefully planned, as he recalls:

> I worked on the idea for the project from 1995-6 onwards. I decided on January 1997 for the starting point and December 1999 for the end. Those were the last three years before the start of the new millennium in our calendar. For me personally it was also very important to make myself conscious of this event. (C. Inderhees, personal communication,[8] 29 June 2011)

Although Inderhees did not include his own work in the *3 Jahre* project, this linking of time and place in a composition is also evident in his series *für sich (Violoncello)*[1-24] (1997), which was completed at the same time and also performed in Berlin, at the *Sophiengemeinde*. This was conceived as part of *garonne • für sich,* a further project with Christoph Nicolaus. *für sich (Violoncello)*[1-24] consists of 24 solo pieces for cello (Figure 3 shows *für sich (Violoncello)*[2]). Inderhees (personal communication, 29 June 2011) comments:

> The concept and the realization of the structure is based on the duration of one hour, which is realized on each of 24 days, each day one hour later than the day before. My social situation (sleeping, eating, working) was affected much more by this project than by *3 Jahre—156 Musikalische Ereignisse—Eine Skulptur.* The social routine adapts itself to the given situation, much like the Liturgy of the Hours in monasteries.

Within this framework, the pieces are structured using chance procedures, as Volker Straebel (1998) explains:

> In every piece sound and silence of the same length alternate with each other, lasting one, two, three, five, ten, 15 or 30 minutes. The change from sound to silence happens therefore between one to sixty times in the course of a piece. Sound and silence form a unity. These seven durational proportions are distributed statistically among the 24 pieces and therefore will be repeated without change. Every solo piece is characterized by a unique sound: a very quietly-played multiphonic sound whose overtone structure alters slightly because of the unavoidable alteration of the bow movement and the squeeze of the finger of the left hand on the chord. That means the sound intensity is very little and the perception of the sounds is quite fragile. The coordination of proportions of duration and sound happened by chance within the numbering from 1 to 24. The pieces can be played in any succession and selection. Each piece lasts 60 minutes.

Inderhees notes the importance of series such as this in establishing a sense of time and place, particularly where the presentation of multiple realizations mark the passing of time. He comments:

> A series, for me, promotes a different type of experience than individual pieces. From around the mid-90s, I was interested in longer periods of time and continuity. I like ways of presenting (my) music that at one and the same time connect change (light, temperature, music, sculpture) and continuity (place). (C. Inderhees, personal communication, 29 June 2011)

◄ **Figure 2** Antoine Beuger, *cadmiumgelb* (2000).

für sich (Violoncello)[2]

Craig Shepard's *On Foot* (2005) is another extended series that uses the constraints of a specific project to determine its form. From July 17 to August 17 2005, he walked 250 miles in 31 days across Switzerland. He explains his working method during the project:

> Each day I composed a new piece, wrote it down, and performed it on the pocket trumpet at 6:00 pm in a public space outdoors. Each piece was named with the place and date of the performance, e.g. *Borex, le 18 juillet, 2005*. Although there are some music threads that link the 31 pieces, what binds them together is the situation in which they were created. (C. Shepard, personal communication, 3 February 2011)

The project creates a structure for compositional activity, with the regular patterns of Shepard's daily routine determining some of the compositional decisions and inscribing themselves upon the individual parts of the series. He isolates six ways in which the structure of the project directly affected the work produced in practical ways:

(1) Because I had to perform myself, all pieces were written for solo instrument.
(2) Each piece fits in the range of the trumpet.
(3) Each piece had to be performed at sight, without much practice or rehearsal.
(4) Each piece was limited by my trumpet technique.
(5) Because each piece was performed outdoors and I was interested in the interaction between sound and silence—the trumpet framing the ambient noise—each piece has periods of sound and periods of silence.
(6) Because I did not play at the performance site at all before the performance, and thus could not warm up, none of the pieces begin in the extreme register of the trumpet. (C. Shepard, personal communication, 3 February 2011).

He goes on to suggest that, although not considered in advance, the walking tempo tended to dominate the pacing of each piece as he 'found it difficult to get the beat out of my head' and that there was a development of ideas through the project which 'may be a natural result of composing 31 pieces within one month' (C. Shepard, personal communication, 3 February 2011).

The need to compose on a regular basis, coupled with the pressure of a daily concert, encouraged Shepard to work with similar musical material over the course of the project. In some of the pieces, he used patterns to compose the melodies (see Figure 4), although he observes that it was 'not clear if that was a function of needing to compose every day, and so having a system set up was a matter of necessity from the time allowed or whether I just kept doing it because it was fruitful musical ground' (C. Shepard, personal communication, 3 February 2011).

The duration of the project was the first decision made when determining its structure, as might be expected, given the practicalities of planning and executing a journey of this magnitude. The previous year, Shepard had been involved in daily performances of Manfred Werder's *stück 1998* in Zürich, performing every day for 21

◄ **Figure 3** Carlo Inderhees, *für sich (Violoncello)²* (1997).

Figure 4 Craig Shepard, *On Foot* (2005), 'Vallorbe le 23 juillet 2005'.

days at 8 am for 64 minutes on the *Seepromenade*. He notes that 'at the end, I had felt that I just gotten started' (C. Shepard, personal communication, 28 April 2011). He had also discussed the project with Carlo Inderhees, who recommended 24 or 28 days. So, the decision to undertake a walk that lasted for a longer period than that of the Zürich realization of *stück 1998* was borne of experience. The need for immersion was also clearly a factor in determining the length of the walk. Reflecting on the experience after the project, Shepard (personal communication, 28 April 2011) comments:

> I noticed on the walk that during the first week, I was still occupied with the day-to-day life I had left behind. And during the last week, I was thinking about returning to my day-to-day life. So there was a good two weeks in the middle where my thoughts were free of those considerations.

Such freedom resonates with other practices where routine is a way to create structure in daily life. Leading up to the project, Shepard had been reading about the Situationists. He had also developed

> a strong interest in monastic life (still do), especially the Cistercians and the Carthusians, and began to see monastic life through the lens of the Situationists. Through this lens, much of the Rule of St Benedict can be read as a situation which

influences thought–encouraging certain thinking and discouraging other thinking–
where all aspects of day-to-day life have meaningful influence on that thought. (C.
Shepard, personal communication, 3 February 2011)

Whilst realizing *On Foot*, '[t]he situation and daily structure of the project cleared
away distractions to creative thinking that are part of day-to-day life, opening a space
in which heightened awareness became possible' (Shepard, 2008, p. 19). The
repetition of similar activities over an extended period of time, therefore, had a
powerful impact on the nature of the work.

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In contrast to predetermined or logical conditions, circumstantial conditions may
also be used to terminate a series, and this seems to be the most common approach
taken by the Wandelweiser composers. Using circumstantial conditions tends to
result in series that remain open or have the capacity to be extended more readily.
Parts are added until a reason to terminate the series emerges, although this might
not happen; indeed, a series may possibly be conceived of as being open-ended and
part of an ongoing study that at the outset does not presuppose an end-condition.
The work continues to be made, perhaps sporadically, perhaps in parallel with other
work. Concluding the series may result from a number of factors, such as an end-
condition emerging during the working period, boredom with the routine of working
in a particular way or a perceived lack of difference between new parts. It may also
continue indefinitely. It is also more likely that such series may be reopened after
previously being considered closed as new ideas or opportunities arise. Circumstan-
tially-constrained series are more prone to variation and change than those that use
predetermined or logical conditions (although it is still possible for local variation to
emerge in these series). It is possible for circumstantially-constrained series to
develop logical termination conditions should such limits emerge in the course of
making, perhaps through testing the boundaries of a situation.

For Marcia Hafif, this testing of an idea seems to be important, with a focus on
repetition and rearticulation:

> In order to treat one concern in depth the artist may indeed repeat work, knowing
> that repetition leads to a similarity and not to the same. ... Every painting is
> complete in itself and, rather than being a variation on earlier work, is more like the
> earlier work than it is different. The desire is not to work out all the possibilities so
> much as to refine central decisions, not to search for the new and different so much
> as to move toward the one. (Hafif, 1978)

There is a narrowing of focus produced by this process of serial working,
reapplying principles or techniques relating to particular series. Although the number
of permutations of LeWitt's open cubes might be empirically determinable, in some
of Hafif's work, the subjectivity of the artist is a defining factor in deciding the limits

of the series. In her *An Extended Gray Scale* (1973), the completion of the series was determined circumstantially by the artist's perception of the work whilst the series was in progress. Hafif made a series of grey paintings exploring the possible shades between black and white:

> Instead of the usual ten gradations from black to white, I made as many as I could distinguish applying different mixtures of gray oil paint on stretched canvas 22" (56 cm.) square. When I had made quite a lot of them it became necessary to set up various systems for evaluating the differences, the process taking about ten months to do and closing itself out when there were 108 pieces, and when I could not distinguish another shade. (Weckop-Conrads, 1990)

Although *An Extended Gray Scale* was eventually completed, the focus on reapplying a principle across a series of works was designed to move the artist beyond her existing practice. She notes that the project 'would take a long time to make so that I could be involved with it continuously, and one that would lead me into considerations I could not predict' (Weckop-Conrads, 1990).

This exploratory immersion in a project or regular pattern of work may also operate in a more open-ended manner. In Antoine Beuger's *auch da* (2007–2009), a regular pattern of working was used to generate a series of melodies.[9] Beuger began in August 2007 by making a single score page per day, with each page containing ten short melodies. This pattern of working continued in the early stages of the project, before gradually becoming less regular. Beuger (personal communication, 28 May 2011) observes that

> after quite a long time of daily adding a page to *auch da*, I gradually became less regular, then more sporadic, but I still sometimes (rather seldom) do a new page. I imagine I could easily pick up a more regular pattern of writing pages at some point. Of course, the melodies would probably be different in some interesting sense.

During the first three months of the project, Beuger wrote one page per day; by November 2007, this had dropped to 15 pages in total for the entire month; none were added in December or January 2008. Activity resumed between February and July 2008, and again from December 2008 to February 2009, but during these later periods, relatively few pages were made each month.[10]

In addition to the constraint created by the structure of the project, the ten melodies on each A4 portrait page each take up no more than one line of stave, providing another way to shape and interrelate the pieces (see Figure 5). In the score, Beuger states that each melody comprises a combination of short and 'long (also very long)' tones. The dynamic is '(very) quiet'. Beuger then makes reference to a performance instruction by seventeenth century German composer Johann Jakob Froberger, which states that the music is to be 'played very slowly at one's own discretion without observing any pulse', to which Beuger adds, 'feeling one's way from tone to tone'. There

Figure 5 Antoine Beuger, *auch da* (2008), '31.05.2008'. ▶
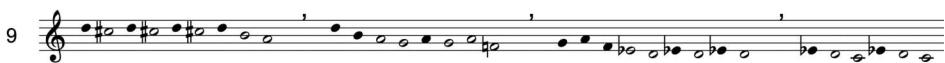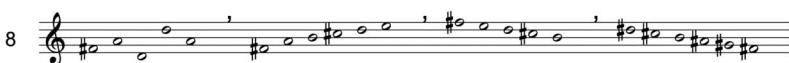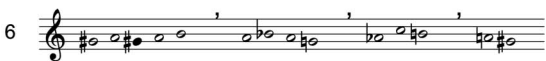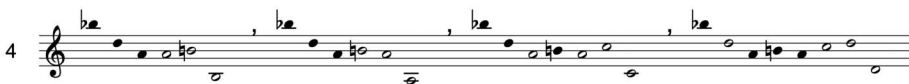
are no other instructions. The melodies recall Christian Wolff's *Exercises* (1973) with their free duration and phrasing marked only by commas. Scalic movement, arpeggios, repeated pitches and short patterns dominate the melodies, which vary greatly in length from just a few tones to extended groups of more than thirty.

   The melodies of *auch da* have two functions: As a piece of that name from which selections may be performed and as a repository of material which Beuger uses in other work.[11] For example, a selection of thirty four melodies is presented as *keine fernen mehr* (2010) for solo whistling performer ('to be whistled very quietly (to oneself)'). Here, small variations are made to the originals, such as joining repeated tones to form longer sounds or holding tones such that diads are produced. In the series *aus den liedern* (2007/2008), the melodies are set to texts by Rajzel Zychlinski (see Figure 6). They are sung, accompanied by performers who play tones selected from the melody.[12] The tones are freely chosen and played as 'free inserts/always (very) long/always very quiet' simultaneously with the singer. Beuger (personal communication, 12 May 2011) explains the compositional process for making each of the parts in *aus den liedern*:

> I first selected the text fragments. Then, for each text fragment, I would go through all the melodies, the number of tones of which would equal the number of syllables in the text, trying out (singing, imagining) each of them as a possible setting of the text. Many of them would not fit, but some of them would. Miraculously, for each text I would find a "perfect" match. I was surprised each time how well the melody fitted. It was like observing an encounter between a text and a melody, and each time I felt I would never have been able to "invent" that particular setting. All of them were much "better" than I would have been able to come up with.

   So, *auch da* is both a series itself and a generator of other series. This sketchbook approach to writing is also found in Eva-Maria Houben's *laissez vibrer – fragment eines tagebuchs* (2010–). She describes the piece as 'a work in progress ... I notated one page per day – over months, and this is my diary. A musical diary, open ended, not to be finished' (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011). This ongoing investigation through serial working appears to be central to much of Houben's work. Regarding her series *ein bogenstrich* (2002–2003), she notes that

> series consisting of many pieces often examine special questions of composing. ... Questions [in *ein bogenstrich*] are for example: how long may the sound last, if played in this way, in that way? Different ways to play with a bow or with fingers (pizz.), different relationships between sound and silence, different types of musical form, different durations of the whole piece. Important: the relation between a single sound and the whole composition. (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011)

   The series then becomes a way to frame this investigation, providing a structure that articulates the differences explored in individual pieces. *ein bogenstrich* also

Figure 6 Antoine Beuger, *aus den liedern* (2007), excerpt. ▶

Wo du nicht gehn sollst, Re - gen, dort - hin will ich mit dir gehn, ü - ber - all wer - den wir zu Hau - se sein. (45)

emphasizes the potential for provisional closure found in circumstantially-constrained series. Houben (personal communication, 16 January 2011) comments

> They do not have a real end, they stop somewhere. They are works in progress. If someone would perform *ein bogenstrich* again—and we would work together on it: perhaps the performer and/or I myself would have some idea to continue. And we could talk about it and discuss—and the next piece could appear. Or perhaps I think about this series at home—without performing. And a new piece knocks at the door. . . . The *bogenstriche* have their root in playing—that's sure. But they are— as all my series are—open for future events. And consider my whole work in this way: as a series of new tasks, new adventures, new discussions. . .

As Houben suggests, how a series might be concluded is not necessarily always a consideration for composers or artists when making their work. The series might continue indefinitely or it might retrospectively be terminated. This is evident in Carlo Inderhees's *STIMMEN* (2001–) series, about which he notes:

> My interest in this case is in repeating exactly the same concept again and again over an undefined period of time. As well as some musical decisions, on completion of each piece I decide whether it should be performed or if it will remain inaudible. When this series will be completed, I cannot say. Maybe it is already completed, maybe in three years, maybe in ten. Beginning and end of the series are simply not the focus. (C. Inderhees, personal communication, 29 June 2011)

Circumstantial conditions do, however, also lead to series being terminated. In Michael Pisaro's *harmony series* (2004–2006), an eventual distancing from the original series concept in newly added pieces led to its termination. This series is an example of how the composer initiates a process 'which can be applied to a variety of instruments or situations' (M. Pisaro, personal communication, 20 February 2011), such that alternative realizations of the generative principle can create a group of pieces. *harmony series* comprises 34 individual pieces, each of which takes a poem as a starting point, sometimes using the line structure of the poem to determine structural aspects of the music. For example, *Now [harmony series no. 5]* uses an E. E. Cummings poem as its point of reference, with the number and case of characters in each line determining how and when the two performers make sounds (see Figure 7). Musician 1 plays short sounds, with the number of lower case characters in each line determining how many sounds should be played; Musician 2 plays long sounds, determined by the number of upper case characters in each line. Some lines are played by only one player (where only lower or upper case characters are present) and some as a duo (where both cases are present). The final line contains two lower case 's', resulting in a repeated pitch, played by Musician 1.

Most of the pieces in *harmony series* involve making long sounds, separated by extended silences, and the pieces vary in length from 1 to 133 minutes, although some

Figure 7 Michael Pisaro, *Now [harmony series no. 5]* (2005). ▶

Now [harmony series no. 5]
      for two musicians playing sustained tones

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n w
O
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myGODye
s s

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<div align="right">

—e.e. cummings

</div>

Lines are played in order.
The duration of each line is at least one minute, but may be (much) longer, especially line 7.
Tone: any pure sounding pitch, any tuning of that pitch.
All tones are played very softly.
Durations: short means from 5 to 8 seconds, long means from 15 to 60 seconds.

	Musician 1	**Musician 2**
1	two short tones	pause
2	pause	one long tone
3	one short tone	pause
4	pause	one long tone
5	one short tone	two long tones
6	one short tone	pause
7	two short tones, two times, 2nd and 3rd tones are the same pitch	three long tones
8	two short tones (same pitch)	pause

<div align="right">

January, 2005

</div>

are of variable duration.[13] They are mostly for small ensembles, although *nos. 7a–c* are each for six to thirteen players and the later *no. 19* is for fourteen. Pisaro considered the series as open for almost three years, but noticed, as he began to work on *The rain of alphabets [harmony series no. 19]*,[14] that

> it became clear that the work was close to transforming the frame I had initially set (in terms of duration, of number of players, and in the ''reduction'' of the material itself). That seemed indicate to me that the particular window that had opened for those pieces was closing (at least for me). (M. Pisaro, personal communication, 28 April 2011)

Here, the possibilities for extending the series become exhausted in a different way. Potential new pieces may necessarily exist outside the terms of reference for the series; whilst retaining some links, these may not be significant enough to maintain a connection with the other pieces, leading to such pieces breaking out of the series' orbit. This could potentially result in an isolated individual piece or the start of a new series. The question remains whether further pieces could be made following this rift or whether the series closes as a result. Pisaro (personal communication, 28 April 2011) notes the provisional nature of working on continuing series and the decision-making process when closing them:

> To put it tautologically: they [series] are open until closed. As long as a concept continues to engage me (in the form of wanting to work on it) and to generate a work that has a clear relation to the other members of the series, I'm able to add pieces. (Some series, like *fields have ears* might still be open . . .) But the windows do close as well: the feeling that the ''time for doing that'' is passed.

This more intuitive approach is apparent in Jürg Frey's decision-making processes with regard to the length of his *Wen* series (1999–2007). *Wen* comprises 59 pieces for a solo performer. Each piece was initially intended to be notated on one page of A4 (see Figure 8), but there are a few exceptions. The durations of the pieces vary greatly, lasting between two minutes and over two hours. All share a similar concern with focused sound production, and Frey (personal communication, 7 April 2011) explains that the working method was generally 'an intuitive way of finding sounds, durations and silences, and then to find out how many times they could be repeated'. The sounds are placed in a time structure, separated by silence (which at times may be very long) and repeated a specific number of times. The earlier pieces in the series tend to use only one repeated sound each, sometimes with variations in its duration. Later pieces often contain more variety in the selection of sounds, marking a 'change from a more abstract focus on sound/material to a focus on melodic aspects' (J. Frey, personal communication, 7 April 2011). Frey worked on *Wen* over an eight-year period and the series came to a natural end when he had made enough pieces. He observes '*Wen* are 59 pieces, and 59 doesn't look like a distinct decision. It happened
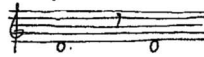
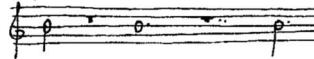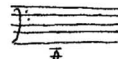**Figure 8** Jürg Frey, *Wen* (1999-2004), 'XX' (for bass clarinet). ▶
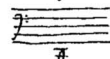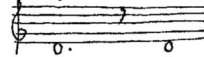
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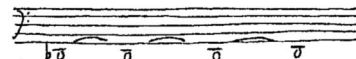2:59
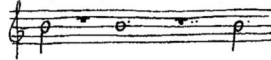
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7:14

10:02

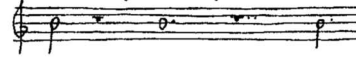13:16

14:01

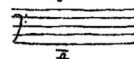15:29

16:15
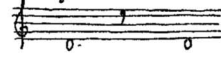
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26:31

27:17

29:18

32:06

(33:06)

more like a natural ending. Overlooking this period and this development, I thought to stop somehow or other, and after writing some extra pieces, it was 59' (J. Frey, personal communication, 1 May 2011).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Although composers and artists may conceive of their work as forming series, the perception of a series by others is determined largely by its method of presentation. Individual parts within a series may be presented together or separately. Where parts are presented within the same space, the situation may emphasize similarities and differences between individual parts. Where they are presented separately, each part may be more likely to be experienced as an individual piece that could be related to the whole in a less direct manner, dependent on the contextual information provided.

In Eva-Maria Houben's *à l'unisson* (2004), a series of seven pieces for small chamber ensembles, alternative methods of presentation are possible. She states, 'every composition is a piece for itself, may be played alone in a concert with pieces of other composers. Or you say: we will listen to different aspects of playing in unison, and so we play all the pieces, one after the other' (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011). Houben emphasizes the way in which different methods of presentation of the series affect the experience of its constituent pieces. By presenting them as separate works, the link to the central principle is less clear. Although the point of reference in all the *à l'unisson* pieces is the same—unison playing—the variety created by hearing the different pieces in succession is lost where only one piece is heard. Equally, in Houben's *each day—each night* (2010), the 'two works show two different aspects, and may be considered as two different colours of the same thing. They may be played together—in close connection; or distributed in another program with works of another composer (appearing here and there...) or may frame other pieces of mine or of another composer' (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011). Here, a connection is made between the pieces, albeit one that may be set against the intervention of elements exterior to the work.

Another possibility is to present work simultaneously. In Houben's *haikus* (2003–2004) series, a modular approach to seriality is evident (see Figure 9). This, she states, is

> quite another way to compose series: many solos may be combined and may be played as a solo, but also simultaneously with other pieces of the series. So you may perform a duo, or a trio, or.... The kind of combination is completely free, every piece lasts 45 minutes[15]. You may for example combine I with IV and XI, XIII with II, III with II and V and VI and VII and IX. You may play all of them simultaneously. (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011)

This kind of presentation alters the relationship between parts of a series and the whole, recalling LeWitt's observation that comprehension of the serial principle may be difficult when simultaneous presentation occurs. This is sometimes the case with

Figure 9 Eva-Maria Houben, *haiku II* for clarinet (2003) and haiku XIII for voice (2004), ▶ Opening Pages.
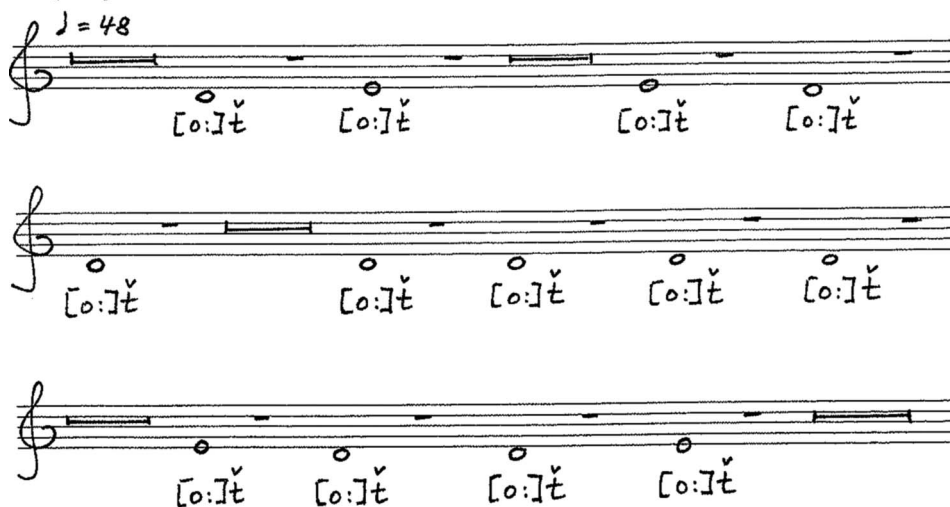
● : eine ruhige ausatmung, 7 bis 15 sekunden lang.

[0:00]

(a)
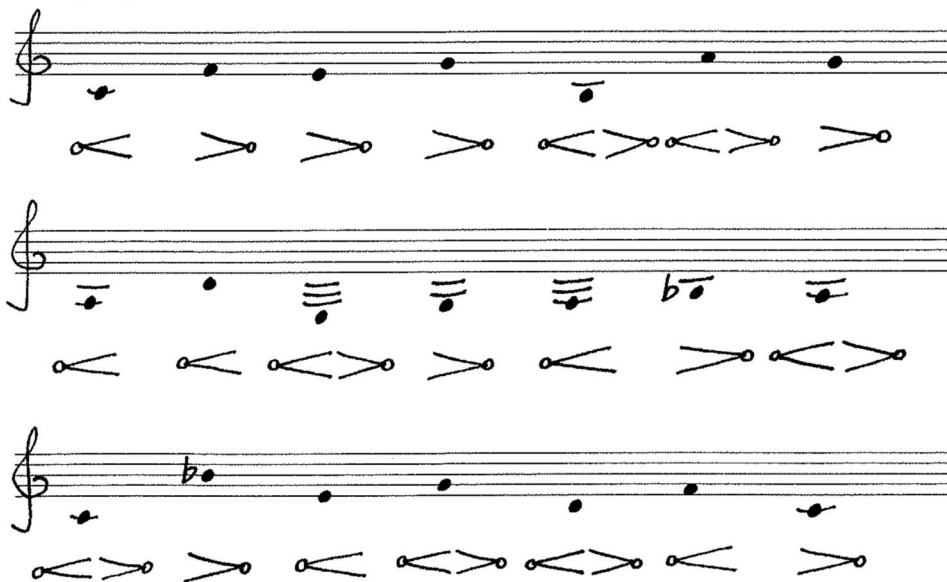
[21:00]

[0:00]

(b)

series in visual art. For example, in Dan Flavin's *two primaries and one secondary* (1968), multiples of a standard four-foot fluorescent strip light are used. The series comprises nine works in three groups. Flavin takes a serial approach to structuring these groups, with each subsequent work adding two lights to the previous work in the group, building on a basic template. Although each work has a separate identity and some have been exhibited separately,[16] witnessing the complete series in the same space allows for comparison.

Autonomy may also be deliberately reduced through such simultaneous presentation. Antoine Beuger's *landscapes of absence* (2001–2002) uses poems by Emily Dickinson as a basis for a series of nineteen pieces for voice and solo instrument, all of which use the same basic decisions: 'one poem, 100 minutes, syllabic reading, very few sounds, voice and instrument never coinciding'. In addition to the discrete performances of the pieces, Beuger intended that they could be played together. He comments on the way in which the essence of the series might emerge through simultaneous performances of all its constituent pieces:

> At the same time, unlike other series I had been working on, I wanted to envisage the option of playing all pieces simultaneously. The idea being that in such a simultaneous performance all distinct characters of the individual pieces would disappear, still, so to say "undercover" would determine the atmosphere of the amalgamated piece. This type of disappearance I would like to call "disappearing into containment": the individual pieces and characters are now contained in the amalgamation, without being presented as something by themselves. I speculated a "Dickinson-world" would emerge comparable to a late summer meadow with its specific overall sound, in which the individual occurrences are contained. (Saunders, 2004, p. 239)

Equally, for Burkhard Schlothauer, the work might also change depending on its method of presentation. In his *events* series (1998–1999), the constituent pieces can be combined with other pieces that do not form part of the series. He remarks that 'the event is thought of in an individual way. An ensemble performance is a meeting of different event chains in a common space. Not related to another in composition, related only in reception. In the ensemble pieces all the sounds in a time window are thought as a common event' (B. Schlothauer, personal communication, 13 April 2011).

Many pieces that are part of a series are, however, presented on their own, with no explicit reference to a parent series. Although the work's immediate context might suggest exterior associations, such as listener or viewer knowledge about other work by the composer or artist, this context does not necessarily manifest the work's serial principle. This can be provided in other ways—through an indicative title or supporting commentary, for example—but without such a principle, the work notionally exists in isolation, operating as a non-serial piece. So, choosing an appropriate presentational context for multipart series determines how its audience perceives this aspect of the work.

Regardless of variation in method of presentation or organizing principle, however, multipart series remain central to the way many of the Wandelweiser composers conceive of and structure their work. Whether, as for Carlo Inderhees, it is

born of a concern with connecting change and continuity, or if, as for Eva-Maria Houben, it relates to a fascination with infinite things, multipart series affect our perception of time both within and outside of our direct experience of the work. For Craig Shepard, the repetition of a constrained set of principles set against a changing context in *On Foot* highlights the impermanence of the work and its necessary associations with both other work and the world that surrounds it, whilst for both Michael Pisaro and Antoine Beuger, multipart series offer the opportunity to explore the inherent possibilities of a piece in a more thorough way. Although the practice of seriality has a long history, it maintains its relevance to current and future work where finding new ways of making things is valued. But, as Manfred Werder (personal communication, 12 February 2011) insists, such a practice must remain allied to a concern with changing our understanding of the world:

> I think it only makes sense to talk of multipart series if we differentiate between a real compositional challenge of how to conceive ''composition'' and ''practice'' *today*, and a rather historic retrospection. So, I'm interested in concepts of multipart series if such a work reveals something that we have not known before in a compositional reflection.

Notes

[1] It should be noted that the term 'serial' is used throughout to describe work presented in multipart series rather than serial procedures in music governing the ordering of musical elements within individual works. The term 'seriality' is used to denote the condition of multipart series in contrast to the system or principles of musical 'serialism'.

[2] Reference is made here to the notated work as an outcome prior to its eventual presentation, for example, through installation, publication or performance where it undergoes transformation.

[3] Hafif is a painter whose work has been important to some of the Wandelweiser composers, notably Antoine Beuger.

[4] Lippard (1978) notes that 'The square book comprised the overall graphic scheme on a grid, along with the schemes for each section—from three-part to ten- and eleven-part variations . . .—and photos and isometrics on facing pages.' (p. 24).

[5] LeWitt (1978) observes 'Although at first I thought it was not a complex project, this piece provided more problems than anticipated. Eventually all of the elements were worked out empirically and verified by Dr Erna Herrey, a mathematician and physicist and confirmed by Arthur Babakhanian of the graduate school of the Mathematics Department at the University of Illinois. The series started with three-part pieces because a cube implies three dimensions and, of course, ends with one eleven-part piece (one bar removed).' (p. 81).

[6] Many examples of this can be seen in the catalogue of works at http://www.wandelweiser.de

[7] Werder (personal communication, 12 February 2011) states 'Now, *stück 1998* itself is rather not a multipart series—it seems to me that the impacts of concepts of multipart series—have provoked in *stück 1998* a new conception of certain aspects of the score as score.' It does contain serial aspects, but is framed as a single piece, in contrast to the *ausfuhrende* series, which takes this structure and replicates it through a series of works.

[8] All personal communication with Carlo Inderhees was translated by M. J. Grant, to whom I am very grateful.

[9] This contrasts to Shepard's *On Foot* in that there was no predetermined end condition for the work, despite its regular patterning.

[10]   During this period, he produced between 2 and 8 pages per month, with the exception of May 2008 where he produced 12. Generally, pages were written in blocks spanning a few days, rather than spread out across the month.

[11]   Other pieces which use the *auch da* melodies as a source are: *lieux de passage* (2008); *aus den liedern* (2007/2008); *klanken dwalen* (2008); *un feu qui n'est pas celui du soleil* (2009); *pour être seul(e), sans réserve* (2009); *keine fernen mehr* (2010) and *ô monde sur deux tiges* (2011).

[12]   As with much of Beuger's work from this period, a notated pitch represents a range of possible frequencies spanning a tone centred on the notated pitch. So, for example, E is a pitch somewhere between F and E flat. The number of tones also varies in each piece. In *aus den liedern* for singer and accompaniment and *aus den liedern (düsseldorf* 2008) for singer and orchestra, the accompanying parts may play 'a tone or two, maybe three, or none.' In *aus den liedern (aarau* 2009) for singer and orchestra, the orchestral players may play 'a tone, or no sound, maybe two (or three …).'

[13]   Pisaro expresses variable duration in different ways: *no. 1* (15–60') and *no. 4* (45–60') specify a range; *no. 10* is open given its dependence on the length of the players' sounds; pieces *nos. 16a–c* are in multiples of one minute, and *no. 6* in multiples of ten minutes; *no. 17* is 'very long' and *no. 18* is 'long'.

[14]   *The rain of alphabets* is number 19 in the *harmony series*; it was the last to be completed.

[15]   She notes that where the series is presented as a sequence of pieces 'If 10 or more players play in free order, a presentation would last many hours, because one haiku lasts 45 minutes. If all of them play simultaneously, one performance lasts 45 minutes—as long as a solo performance.' (E-M. Houben, personal communication, 16 January 2011).

[16]   See Govan and Bell (2005, pp. 272–275).

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