

Antonia Barnett McIntosh and Samuel Holloway

How does a score mean?

A Glossary

Audiences encounter graphic scores in dialogue with their sonic realizations in “Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes)”. Presented with a multitude of ways to interpret the work, how can an audience navigate this space? Graphic notational practices marry the visual and the sonic, and test what we understand a score to be and to do. Graphic scores move beyond some of the traditional constraints of western musical notation, providing an alternative means of instructing—suggesting—provoking—codifying—documenting what might happen (or has happened) in a performance or sonic realization, creating space for negotiation and play. Like graphic scores, glossaries are a format open to interpretation. Here, we propose a selection of concepts to unpack, word by word, the language around the field, practice, practitioners, tools, and conventions of graphic notation, both in relation to Ethan and Lina’s work in this exhibition, and as this practice sits within a broader artistic and experimental context in Aotearoa and beyond.

Aleatoricism

An art practice that can be characterized by incorporating (more or less) chance and indeterminacy—at the level of composition or performance. How much is left to the performer’s discretion? How much freedom is allowed or implied in a score? What liberties can be taken? John Cage sometimes tossed coins to make decisions. How much of the composer’s ego (authorship) remains?

Alison Knowles

American visual artist known for her installations, performances, soundworks, and publications. Founding member of the Fluxus movement, known for performance happenings. Knowles’s scores consist of short, written instructions, dismantling some of the barriers to performance erected by western musical notation. With #2—*Proposition* (October, 1962), the instruction simply states: “Make a salad.” Knowles proposed that anyone could make a salad, anyone could read her score, thereby anyone could perform it. Premiered at Institute for Contemporary Arts in London.

Annea Lockwood

Aotearoa New Zealand-born American composer and academic musician who employed verbal notation as a resource throughout her work. She sometimes devised symbols for sounds, although lamented that an explanatory key is required, which adds another layer of information. In *From the River Archive* (1973), Lockwood used verbal notation to draw people into a listening activity, thought of as “enticing” rather than “instructing.” “Here, for me, the challenge lies in finding a balance between suggesting a focus and leaving the experience open, but possibly diffuse and generic.” In *Statement* (2010).

Arthur Doyle

American “free jazz soul” musician known for his sax, flute, and clarinet playing in the 1980s, as well as what he called “voice-o-phone.” All of the voice and parts of the body which make the sound of the voice, from the sacrum to the teeth, is considered the voice-o-phone. The opening of air in the trachea, the diaphragm’s press of the stomach, the nasal resonators that tickle to peak a high pitch in your headvoice—these are all part of this instrument. Maintenance, here, attends to each aspect of the voice-o-phone.

Barbara Bloom

American conceptual artist best known for her multi-media installation works. Bloom places images on stave line scoring paper, to read as music. It’s a lot about context in her installations. Creating an environment for an image, be it a colour backdrop or a piece of furniture. Constellations. (Lina and Ethan were thinking about Bloom’s work when thinking about the situations they’ve created for listening and reading scores, and how these situations influence how you encounter what you hear and see.)

Compliance

The degree to which a performer adheres to/follows/complies with a score as a set of commands/instructions/guidelines. Or not. “How much do I follow the rules, and how much can I negotiate the terms of this piece?” In scores that utilize graphic notation, the space granted to interpretation is often wider than in intricately-notated “dots-on-paper” music. Perhaps compliance really requires the performer to commit to the “intent” of a composition. Compliance, then, to the spirit.

Cornelius Cardew

English composer, founder of the Scratch Orchestra (1969–74), whose music and thought emphasized collective interpretation, improvisation, and the social function of music. Most known for his graphic score *Treatise* (1963–67), a 193-page work that employs graphic elements like lines, shapes, symbols, and other abstract forms in a deliberately non-prescriptive way. A single horizontal line runs from beginning to end, like a kind of stave or timeline.

Dialogue

A conversation written for a book, play, or film. Formal talks between opposing countries or political groups. To be entered into or engaged in. To be performed. Transmission, then, is the process of passing something from one person or place to another. It’s geographic. Can occur when feedback loops are generated by dialogue.

Encounter

What happens when humans in the constellation bump. A garden of encounters sprouts mutual learning.

Event score

Popularized by Fluxus artists in the 1960s, a type of score consisting of simple, often poetic instructions for performing actions that blur the boundary between art and everyday life. In event scores, ordinary, quotidian gestures, sometimes banal or mundane, are reframed as artistic acts.

Everywoman

Everywoman, a newspaper published bimonthly in Los Angeles from May 1970 to April 1972, republished advertisements from other publications in order to expose expectations of patriarchal society. Later published with the banner “Every woman is our sister,” this California-based periodical was founded by Movement members Ann Forfreedom and housewife Verda One. Among the recurring columns are “Manglish,” a glossary of words with sexist implications.

Experimental Music

Challenges norms, embraces the unexpected, blurs genre definitions, and often prioritizes process over product. Notably defined by Michael Nyman in *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (1974), as standing in contrast to “new music” (Neue Musik), by focusing less on craft and virtuosity, and more on open-ended exploration, unpredictability, and/or systems- or chance-driven composition.

Extended techniques

Refers to unconventional ways of playing instruments or using the voice, pushing beyond traditional methods. Once considered radical, these techniques—like using the back of a violin bow, or preparing a piano with objects—have metabolized, become standard compositional tools in contemporary music, and notating such techniques in musical scores has led to both a broadening of what is considered standard music notation, and to an opening up of the possibilities/stakes at play in score-making. To talk of “extended techniques” now is redundant, passé even.

Eye Music

Describes the use of visual elements, graphical features, in a score, which when performed are unnoticeable by the listener; the term is specifically used in reference to practice of Renaissance composers like Baude Cordier, who often incorporated shapes relating to the subject matter, for example a heart. Treated as a historical practice, a little relegated; compositionally, nowadays, many expressive instructions or performance notes are not literally “heard” in a performance, or intended to be. How a score, then an interpretation, translates to a resulting sound or performance, and then how an audience responds, cannot exist as a 1-to-1-to-1 correspondence. Therefore, do “eye music” elements do anything for/to a performer, or are they a ploy, a visual (conceptual, metaphorical) conceit, an in-joke?

Fluxus

An international, interdisciplinary art movement of the 1960s and 70s whose practitioners (a community of artists, composers, designers, and poets)

engaged in performances that privileged a process-oriented approach. With Fluxus scores, the case was made that anyone can perform a work, with the freedom—invitation—to interpret the proposition in any number of ways.

George Crumb

American composer who created an adapted notational practice using mostly conventional elements. *Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land* (1970) was composed using a variety of visual tools across thirteen movements, most famously converting usually linearly scored notation into a circular form. The piece was a mainstay of composition teaching in the 1980s–2010s, however is in fact better known for its unconventional instrumentation, which calls for electric string instruments, crystal glasses, and two suspended tam-tam gongs.

Graphic

As in, “that’s a bit graphic?”

Graphic notation

A form of musical notation that emerged in the mid-20th century, using visual symbols in place of—or alongside—traditional notation, which allowed composers to re-conceive their creative role as co-creators.

Developed partly to democratize music-making by making it accessible to those unfamiliar with conventional scores, it also gave classically trained performers greater interpretive freedom. Influenced by modernist design, advertising, and postwar visual culture, some graphic notation is intended to convey specific compositional ideas, while others are designed to inspire creative interpretation without strict guidelines. Earle Brown’s *December 1952* is a key early example, presenting an elegant array of floating lines and rectangles, as is Tom Phillips’s *Ornamentik* (1969), which balances text instructions with bright orange symbols for interpretation.

Graphic score

The thing which delivers the above.

Guided improvisation

A starting point, a place to gather; to be led in the endeavour of creating something as a collective. A mode of music-making involving improvisation within a loosely defined framework—often shaped by prompts, cues, graphic or notated material, or conceptual instructions. While not entirely free, it avoids rigid notation, allowing performers to respond in real time. It might offer a starting point, points of orientation, and/or a rough trajectory. Richard Barrett’s *Codex* series uses graphic notation and verbal cues to guide ensemble improvisation, asking players to make decisions within an evolving, dynamic structure. P.S. improvisation does not refer to free invention; it exists in the moment AND is part of an **ARTISTIC PRACTICE**.

Hairpin

An indication of dynamics: gradually getting louder, gradually getting softer. Dynamics can be thought about as volume, although music people do not generally talk about “volume” when discussing softness and loudness, which are thought more as forms of expression: an approach of how to play a certain gesture combined with an indication of a resulting sound. (“Can we add an entry for hair clip? There are a lot of hairpins in the show but only one clip on the *Wall* score. The clip is really there for the clipping sound it makes.”)

Hand

The part of the body at the end of the arm that is used for holding, moving, touching, and feeling things. Hold hands, shake hands, take someone by the hand. Made by hand. Have a hand in. Get your hands off. You’re good with your hands. Implies touch, sensitivity, interaction, indication, instruction, holding a place in time.

Hanne Darboven

German conceptual artist, best known for her large-scale minimalist installations consisting of handwritten tables of numbers. The somewhat obsessive mapping of thought and mind worlds. The use of normative organizational structures for that mapping in ways that lead normativity into absurdity or elsewhere we don’t even know how to name it.

Happenings

Putting performance in a gallery context. Wandering around, overlapping sounds, competing sounds, in a room. An intersection of performance art with a musical practice. Building out to other audiences and participants. Allan Kaprow: “something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen.”

Indeterminacy

Always present to some extent in performance, but the amount that is permitted or expected varies by context and intention. Some works build in indeterminacy while others minimize it. Graphic scores are typically less determined than conventionally notated scores.

Jennifer Walshe

Irish composer, vocalist, and artist who composed *THIS IS WHY PEOPLE O.D. ON PILLS/AND JUMP FROM THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE* (2004), a piece which asks the performer to “learn to skateboard, however primitively.” The interpreter transmits a specific experience in one’s life, and shares it with an audience. Now part of the canon.

Jenny McLeod

Mercurial Aotearoa composer of *Music for Wall* (1982), a poster work “to be played by walls,” published in Wai-te-ata Music Press’s 1984 *Anthology of New Zealand Graphic Scores*. In 2014, Wai-te-ata also published *Strange*

Terrain: A New Anthology of New Zealand Graphic Scores 1965-2012, which included work by poet Cilla McQueen and artist Michael Smither. Other notable publications include *Notations 21* (2008, edited by Teresa Sauer), a rare published compendium of graphic scores positioned as a follow-up to John Cage's 1969 collection.

John Cage

The “grand/father” of/innovator/iconoclast. Embraced chance operations and indeterminacy, challenging traditional notions of authorship and control. Cage's scores often departed from conventional notation; works like *Aria* and *Fontana Mix* exemplify his use of visual structures—overlays, colours, and abstract symbols—to provoke sound possibilities rather than fixed outcomes. *4'33"*, a scored work with no intentional sounds, brought focus to the act of listening itself, silence, ambient sound, and the performance context. Along with Alison Knowles, Cage published *Notations* (1969), featuring scores by 269 composers.

Maintenance

etymology: “main” (Fr. hand); to grasp, as in, to understand. See: Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

Marco Fusinato

Australian sound artist, engages with scores particularly through his ongoing series *Mass Black Implosion* (2007–), wherein he transforms pages of music by composers such as Cage and Cardew into complex graphic representations by drawing lines from each note to a single point.

Maryanne Amacher

American composer known for collaborations with John Cage and Merce Cunningham. In 1967, Amacher organized one of the first telematic performances. She used the term “structureborne sound” in place of “airborne sound,” emphasizing her work’s particular focus on sounding structures and bodies. Foregrounded the experience of listening as an active participation in the composition via “otoacoustic emissions,” sounds produced by the ear as they receive multiple simultaneous pure tones—a palpable phenomenon when sounds are played loudly. Amacher was apt to remind listeners that their ears weren’t being damaged—they were being the instruments. The sound that her music encourages ears to produce extends the listening capacity itself. She stated she wanted “to release this music which is produced by the listener.”

Mediation

Intervention, indirect conveyance, transmission by an intermediate mechanism or agency. The space between the work, the score, the performer, the audience. How sound and meaning are shaped as the work moves through different mediums—visual, performative, technological—with the performer at the centre of the process of realization.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

New York City-based artist known for her feminist and service-oriented artworks, which relate the idea of process in conceptual art to domestic and civic “maintenance.” After the birth of her first child, and having to balance time as an artist and mother, Ukeles wrote *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969!* proposing maintenance as a creative strategy. The score was conceived in two parts: the first, “IDEAS,” outlined four basic systems of “Development” (“pure individual creation,” “the new,” “change”) and “Maintenance” (“keep the dust off the pure individual creation, preserve the new, sustain the change”); and the second, “THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION”, is in three sections (“Personal,” “General,” and “Earth Maintenance”). Since 1977, Ukeles has been the Artist in Residence (unsalaried) of the New York City Department of Sanitation—she is the only artist to ever hold that position. See: exhibition guide for *Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes)*.

Milford Graves

American percussionist, acupuncturist, herbalist, martial artist, programmer, professor, autodidact, and pioneer of free jazz. In 1967, Graves played at John Coltrane’s funeral. For Graves, the fact of heartbeat was inherently musical (it changes pitch; it delivers rhythms; these are messages that encode within them a great deal), and diet and martial arts practice were integrated together with his voice and percussion practices. The capacity of the body to transduce musical messages from the cosmos should nourish fresh herbs, like parsley: health and presence entangle with sound-making and community-building.

Musique concrète

The compositional use of recorded real-world sound as material, including recordings of musical instruments, the human voice, and the natural environment, as well as sound created using synthesis, tape music techniques, and audio (later digital) signal processing. This practice emerged in the 1940s as sound recording technology developed. Also out of this compositional tradition arose “acousmatic music,” a technique which exploits acousmatic sound: sound that is heard without a clear identity, often intentionally obscured or appearing unconnected to the source cause. For visual documentation’s sake, a notation practice developed (a folly) around these styles of music-making, evolving out of musical notation, in that lines and patterns—representing sound events—were denoted by a timeline.

Mutuality

The quality or state of being mutual. A sharing of sentiments. Behaviour in which two or more people or groups feel the same emotion, or do the same thing to or for each other. Spaces of mutuality. A site of mutuality. Institutional collaborations. Artistic collaborations. A situation in which a financial organization is owned by its members rather than shareholders, allowing members to share any profits. An intersection of values. Circularity. Interconnectedness. A complex web of interactions. Each element plays a role

for the other/s. Lovebird connections. “It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” Martin Luther King Jr. in *Christmas Sermon* (1967).

Notation

A system of written symbols or graphics used to represent information, especially in fields like mathematics or music. A language or code which can evolve into a standardized, functional means of communication or documentation.

Notation, Musical

Any system used to visually represent music, whether as a visual record of sound or as instructions for performance. Musical notation enables preservation and transmission across time and space, evolving alongside technologies like the printing press, which allowed music to be shared beyond one’s immediate environment. Musical notation made possible the coordination of multiple voices, contributing to new possibilities of musical complexity and collaboration. “Musical notation is one of the most amazing picture-language inventions of the human animal... It didn’t come into being of a moment but is the result of centuries of experimentation. It has never been quite satisfactory for the composer’s purposes and therefore the experiment continues.” Ross Lee Finney, in *Notations* (1969). Musical notation deals in concepts of musical notes, note-taking, legibility, consistency and/or ease of communication, a directness of conversation, a goal of quicker interpretation... and their opposites, such as when working against the “ideology of communicative transparency.” Pamela Lee, in *Illegibility* (2012).

Opacity

Lack of transparency. What happens when, rather than clarify, you confuse?

Open form

Where the structure of a musical work is unfixed, often a feature of unconventionally notated/graphic scores.

Parameters

The discrete dimensions—such as pitch, rhythm, melody, and harmony—that generate a work’s sonic identity. When “reading” a graphic score, a performer may need a strategy to determine how particular visual elements correspond to individual sonic parameters, or they may take a more holistic interpretive approach. In the music of some New Complexity composers, “parametric decoupling” isolates these parameters, and asks a performer to recombine them in performance to dynamic and sometimes unpredictable effect.

Pauline Oliveros

American composer, accordionist, and central figure in the development of post-war experimental and electronic music. Oliveros's work has influenced a huge range of composers who work with the concept that the audience can play the role of composer of their own experience; they're active in the compositional process, where the boundaries of composer/performer/interpreter/audience become blurred. *Deep Listening* explores the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the conscious nature of listening. Propagated into *Sonic Meditations* (workshop for use/series of pieces, 1971), The Deep Listening Band (and self-titled album, 1988), *Ear Piece* (a piece in 13 questions, 1998), and *Deeeepp LLiisstteniing Deeeepp LLiisstteniing A Composer's Sound Practice* (publication, 2005).

Performance practice

The norms or conventions, often tacit, that guide or govern how a work is performed. Shaped by the cultural and technical context of the time the music was written, these norms can be followed, questioned, or wholly ignored. In experimental music, also the interpretive approaches performers utilize to translate notation into sound.

Performer/Interpreter

A person who interprets. A person who performs. One who makes creative decisions about how to interpret a score. A role. What role does a person play in a performance of graphic notation? Can live in the worlds of collaboration, improvisation, and an understanding of the composer's intent. In German, the common translation of a "performer" of music is an "Interpreter/Interpretin."

Phil Dadson

Aotearoa pioneer of experimental sound practices and founding member of From Scratch (1974). Dadson's diverse work includes an extensive drawing practice, ranging from more obviously "musical" scores intended for performance to more abstract representations of sound, rhythm, the environment, and bodily action.

Pitch

Vertical and horizontal dimensions (i.e. harmony vs melody), measured as semi-tones and often represented by letters A to G in English, with or without accidentals: sharp (♯), flat (♭), natural (♮) and those in between, or denoted in cents (1/100 of a semitone). It's all relative!

Reciprocity

Attending to mutuality in the mode of performing. Connection, service, delight, compassion, and awe. Creating and evolving an ecology of relationship, kinship, keeping the tribe alive, singing an epic poem.

Realization–instantiation

A performance or sounding of a score. Historically, the score has been

privileged over the sounding work due to its fixity, reflecting a broader cultural bias toward writing over speech, material over ephemeral experience. The use of indeterminate and graphic elements in scores has loosened this dynamic. Likewise, the development of audio recording technologies has allowed singular sonic instantiations of a scored work to become authoritative in their own right.

Rhythm

Horizontal dimension, the beat, how music unfolds in time and through time. It's how we experience time through music: when listening, does it feel like time has flown or gone slowly?

Rules (/Guidelines)

How a score is set up. To what extent does a score represent a provision for a set of rules, or not? The key to how a thing means. A strategy for certain interpretation prescribed by the composer or author. Sometimes this looks like performance directions or notes laid out at the beginning of a score. What do people commit to when they agree to interpret a score together? Graphic scores tend to leave more space or flexibility in terms of rules. Isn't a rule just a guide-line anyway?

Score

A mark (a blot?). A written representation of a musical work. An organized set of symbols used to capture, describe, and communicate sound. A score may function as instruction, suggestion, or documentation. Beyond music, the concept of a score extends to other disciplines: the plan in architecture, the script in theatre, the choreography in dance. Each serves as a framework for action, interpretation, and realization.

Score (2)

The object that contains the symbolic content. Traditionally written or printed on paper; now increasingly produced, distributed, and performed from digital formats.

Text

The written words in a book, magazine, or other publication. A book or a piece of writing used for the purpose of study. Written or printed material, words on the internet. To send someone a written message on a mobile phone. Traditional musical notation utilizes text to name, describe, and instruct: expressive and technical text in a musical score, sometimes abbreviated, indicates the title of the piece, the composer's name(s), beats per minute ($\text{J} = 58$), pacing (*lento*), dynamic (*mp*), technique (*sul ponticello*), lyrics. In a graphic or verbal score, text is everything. (As opposed to language), text can be used as material units of sound in music.

The condition of live performance

That no one note or phrase (even in classical music performance, from a conventionally notated score, despite virtuosity and years and years of practice) can ever be repeated exactly in the same way/context more than once.

The stave

Five lines, often with a clef, a key signature, and a time signature. Broadly speaking, represents verticality (pitch) and horizontality (time). In western convention, read from left to right. Protocols of the stave have since been instrumentalized, blown out, extracted from, and combusted.

Verbal score

Or verbal notation. Text scores, prose scores, word scores, event scores. A scorer is one who makes “scores,” “notations,” “instructions,” or “plans,” and may talk about “performance,” “realization,” or “actualization.” These modes recognize that for some kinds of communication about music words are more effective. A wonderful multitude of examples—with commentary—can be found in John Lely and James Saunders’s *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation* (2012). One such example of this type of score is the freshly composed *three stones in a row* by ABM&SH: “listen carefully!”

Visual communication

Storytelling. It’s how we communicate information and create experiences across a range of visual mediums. The transmission of ideas and concepts, a bit like the way in which this glossary will function. Messaging. The use of visual elements to convey ideas and information, which can include signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, industrial design, advertising, animation, and electronic resources.

Yoko Ono

Japanese multimedia artist, singer, songwriter, and peace activist. *RECORD OF 13 CONCERT PIECE PERFORMANCES* serves as a notational example of retrospective documentation in the mode of event scores.

Yvonne Rainer

Dancer, choreographer, filmmaker, and leading figure in postmodern dance. Made *Hand Movie* (1966) while in hospital recovering from a surgery. *Hand Movie* would become part of the series Five Easy Pieces, which affirms the tenets of her 1965 *No Manifesto*: “No to spectacle. No to virtuosity.” At the time, Rainer saw her films as experiments rather than completed artworks. Shown from all sides, the hand is treated with a sculptural approach.

This commissioned text is also published on the BLOT website.

BIOGRAPHY

BLOT (b. 2022) is an independent, artist-run, open access, online journal encompassing a variety of music, sound-based, and performance practices. BLOT creates space for critical discourse and documentation and to foster community for art practices that deal in music, sound, and performance in Aotearoa. BLOT is a platform for constructive conversations about sonic art and culture, alongside issues facing our community. Since our first issue, we have worked with over 50 contributors to publish writing and other creative work across four issues. BLOT is co-edited by Antonia Barnett McIntosh and Samuel Holloway.

Antonia Barnett McIntosh is a composer-performer, editor, and curator. She collaborates in cross-arts spaces, gently tapping on the borders between speech/music, performance/rehearsal, composition/writing, and juxtaposing the formalities of presentation with the aesthetics of failure. Antonia has presented work at the Barbican, Kings Place, Wigmore Hall, Spike Island, Café OTO; City of London Festival, Festspillene i Nord-Norge, Capital Fringe D.C., 4 Days Arnolfini, and BBC Radio 3's Hear & Now: Why Music?; and had residencies with Wellcome Collection London, Morni Hills Chandigarh, Te Kōkī-NZSM, Q-O2 Brussels, Bundanon Art Museum, and EMPAC New York.

Samuel Holloway is a composer and educator. His practice is variously concerned with ambiguous affective states such as boredom, notions of temporality in music, and the continuing potential of musical notation as a site for exploration. His work has been presented by leading artists and ensembles including Klangforum Wien (Austria), Mayumi Miyata & Tosiya Suzuki (Japan), the Hong Kong New Music Ensemble, Stephen De Pledge (Aotearoa), NZTrio, and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Holloway maintains a longstanding collaborative relationship with the collective et al. His current research activity is focused on the late “number pieces” of John Cage.

ISBN 978-1-7385852-5-0

Each year we set one question which our exhibitions and events orbit in the company of artists and audiences. Across the year, we explore what this question offers us and what artworks and their authors can weave together. In 2025, we ask “is language large enough?” You can think of this as one exhibition in four parts, as a score played across a calendar, or maybe even as a forest. Join us.

2025
Is language large enough?