

Organized Sound, Sounds Heard, and Silence

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper I argue that composer John Cage's so-called 'silent piece', *4'33"*, is music. I first defend it against the charge that it does not involve the organization of sound, which has been taken to be a necessary feature of music. I then argue that *4'33"* satisfies the only other condition that must be met for it to be music: it bears the right socio-historical connections to its predecessors within its tradition (Western art music). I argue further that one cannot understand the organized sound condition and the socio-historical condition separately and that understanding their interaction has theoretical benefits – not least of which is providing a groundwork for a more culturally inclusive philosophy of music. Finally, I consider a number of outstanding questions concerning the content of the organized sound condition for Western art music in the wake of *4'33"*.

Composer John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) is a work in three movements, lasting a total of *4'33"*, during which the performer remains silent.¹ Philosophical discussion of *4'33"* has focused on its (in)ability to satisfy the condition – taken as necessary for any instance of music – that music involves the organization of sounds (Davies 1997; Kania 2010; Levinson 2011; Dodd 2018). I begin by arguing that *4'33"* does satisfy the condition, when it is correctly specified. However, the organized sound condition, alone, will not pick out all and only instances of music. I briefly survey some candidates for additional conditions and argue that there is only one that is promising; namely, Davies's (2012) appeal to socio-historical connections that a musical work or practice bears to its forebears. I argue that *4'33"* satisfies this condition as well, thereby completing my argument that *4'33"* is music.

¹ The so-called 'Tacet' version of the score (1960) includes the instruction that the piece may be any duration, but it also states that the title of the work is its duration. So a performance lasting *5'12"* would be titled *5'12"*. This raises some interesting questions about the relationship between the score, the work, and performances of the work – e.g., is *5'12"* a different work than *4'33"* or a different version of the same work? Is the Tacet score a score for a different work than the earlier proportional notation score, which *does* specify a duration of *4'33"*? But, for present purposes, the standard description of *4'33"* as a silent work in three movements lasting *4'33"* will do.

I argue further that one cannot understand the two conditions independently – there is no interesting tradition-independent version of the organized sound constraint and no complete version of the socio-historical constraint that doesn't address how sound is organized in the given tradition. Once one does understand the interaction of the two conditions, several theoretical benefits emerge: It helps us avoid parochialism about the organization of sound and its relationship to music, pointing the way toward a more inclusive philosophy of music – one that can engage with music from any tradition on its own terms rather than shoe-horning it into a set of conceptual categories used to describe works by Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. It also clarifies the relationship between the conditions a work must meet to be an instance of a given tradition and the conditions it must meet, with respect to the organization of sound, to be a *good* instance of that tradition. This will illuminate the musical values of the tradition, particularly with respect to how innovations are introduced and why they are accepted as such, rather than as defective instances of the tradition. It will also illuminate why experimental works and works in unfamiliar traditions are so often dismissed as bad music on a first encounter but come to be accepted as good music after a more thorough engagement.

I conclude by addressing a number of questions concerning the content of the organized sound condition for Western art music that are not directly relevant to the consideration of 4'33'' but are suggested by it and other innovative works in that tradition – including (unsurprisingly) other works by Cage. I offer a roadmap for specifying the contents of tradition-specific organized sound conditions and show how this can illuminate these lingering questions for Western art music. Along the way, the organized sound condition is revealed to be a productive point of contact for research in the philosophy of music, music theory, and (ethno)musicology.

1. 4'33" and Organized Sound

Discussions of 4'33" have frequently invoked, but never fully explained, what is taken to be a necessary condition on music; namely, that it involve the organization of sound. Though the content of the organized sound condition hasn't been explicitly stated, two questions regarding the requirements it imposes seem to be relevant to the evaluation of 4'33" with respect to the condition:

1. Can a work be entirely silent? In particular, could a wholly silent work evince a sufficient amount of organization to satisfy the organized sound condition?
2. How much organization – particularly *intentionally directed* internal organization – is enough for a work to satisfy the organized sound condition?

I do not address (1) directly. Rather, I argue that 4'33" is not silent and so the answer doesn't actually bear on the question of 4'33". Regarding (2) I argue that the demands of intentional internal organization never rise to a level that disqualifies 4'33".

1.1. Is 4'33" silent?

Can a silent work – as 4'33" is often taken to be – satisfy the organized sound condition? There are two ways that a silent work might fail to meet the condition. On the first, silences are not among the primary materials that a composer/performer organizes – i.e., they aren't in the extension of 'sound' on the proper interpretation of the organized sound condition.² Rather,

² A note of caution before proceeding: The relevant sense of 'sound' is not the same notion that gets discussed in debates over the ontology of sounds (i.e., whether they are pressure waves, events that cause vibrations in a medium, dispositions of objects to vibrate in a certain way, or something else). Here 'sound' refers to the primary materials of composers and other musicians, not the referent of 'sound' in our everyday talk.

silences are devices that aid in the structuring of the primary materials of a musical work (non-silent sounds).³ If that is correct, silence cannot, by itself, be organized sound. But this view is wrong.

Take, for example, Beethoven's *Symphony, No. 5*: In my undergraduate days, I had a music professor who placed great emphasis on the fact that a proper performance of the fifth symphony must make clear that there is an initial eighth-note rest before the famous first three notes of the symphony's opening. That is, the listener must hear the silence *as occupying the first half of the first beat* – as occupying a particular place within the overarching metrical structure of the piece.⁴ This is not a matter of separating, or otherwise structuring, the primary materials of the piece (non-silent sounds). The silence is to be heard as occupying the first half of the first beat before any non-silent sounds have been heard. It is the metrical structure, then, that functions as a structural device, not the silence. But then silences are structured, in at least some musical works/performances, in just the way non-silent sounds are.

On the second way that a silent work might fail to be organized sounds, silences are among the primary materials but are not, by themselves, apt for organization. Add a silence to another and you don't have a two-part silence. You just have a longer, single silence. And so the fact that silences are part of the primary materials organized in a musical work does not vindicate

³ See Davies (197, p. 458) for an example of this line of reasoning. Levinson (2011, p. 270, n.3) also seems to endorse this idea. Kania (2010, pp. 343-344) argues that silences are among the materials organized by composers, but his examples are consistent with a structural device interpretation. However, he clearly agrees with the conclusion I will argue for here – that silences are *on a par with* (non-silent) sounds with respect to any organizational requirements on music – given his views on the possibility of silent music.

⁴ Notice that this requires some inaudible feature of the performance to mark the beginning of the musical structure. The sonic effect is largely due to the fact that, in Western classical music, the first beat of the measure is particularly stressed. (The overall pattern of stressed and unstressed beats is determined by the time signature. Interestingly, the original score for 4'33", despite being proportional notation, contained a time signature.)

4'33'': The three-movement 'structure' is not, on this view, actually a structure of three sequential silences. It is just a single (unstructured) silence.

Of course, this only follows if silences are not apt for organization *and 4'33'' is silent*. In this section, I argue that 4'33'' is *not* silent.⁵ Since no sounds are intentionally produced by the performer of 4'33'', the question of whether 4'33'' is silent hangs on whether or not 4'33'' appropriates the sounds heard during its performance. The musicological consensus – following Cage's own comments⁶ – is that there are sounds to be heard during a performance of 4'33'' and that the point of the piece was to direct listeners' attention to them (Nyman 1974, pp. 22-23; Gann 2010, p. 11). However, this does not obviously entail that these sounds are part of the performance. We need some principle for determining when, if at all, a performance of a piece appropriates ambient sounds. Dodd (2018) stands out for his sustained discussion of this issue. He offers two arguments for the view that 4'33'' does *not* appropriate ambient sounds.

Dodd's first argument relies on the principle that "a work-token comprising sounds is a performance of that work only if the sounds are performed in the sense just introduced [i.e., they are produced, combined, or somehow structured by the performers in the course of following the instructions laid out in the work's score]" (Dodd 2018, p. 636). Since the performers of 4'33'' do not produce, combine, or structure the ambient sounds heard during a performance, according to Dodd, the ambient sounds don't satisfy the principle and are not part of the performance of the

⁵ See Kania (2010) for a discussion of the first conjunct: Kania thinks that silent musical works can satisfy the organized sound condition. However, he agrees that 4'33'' is not silent. According to Kania 4'33'' is not music because it fails to meet other conditions that he thinks are necessary for music. I will have a bit more to say on this front in §3.1. I will address further questions that arise regarding the three movement structure of 4'33'' in §1.2.1.

⁶ For instance: "What they thought was silence [in 4'33''], because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement [in the premiere]. During the second, raindrops began patterning the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out" (Kostelanetz 2003, p. 70).

work. By contrast, the silences, which are causally attributable to the performers, *are* part of the work.⁷ But Dodd's principle is faulty. Sounds do not need to be 'produced, combined, or somehow structured by the performers' for them to count as part of the work performed – at least not as Dodd understands the requirement:⁸

Suppose that the composer has written a piece for solo cello, in traditional notation and style. However, the composer has also specified that a microphone be placed outside the concert hall, with the sounds it picks up being played over speakers in the hall. These external ambient sounds would undoubtedly count as part of the work – after all, the composer included instructions for the placement, etc. of the microphone in the score – though they are not produced by the performers, the composer, or even the sound engineer.⁹ Nor are they manipulated in any way to combine or impose structure upon them. The exterior sounds are merely made audible by way of the microphone and PA system.

In light of this, we could modify Dodd's principle to state that the performers/composer must produce, combine, structure, *or otherwise make audible* – by following instructions in the score, for notated works – those sounds (and silences) that count as part of the performance of the work. But this won't rule out *4'33''*: One way to make ambient noises audible is to put the audience in a situation in which they are expected to be quiet while the performers, who are expected to make sounds (which would ordinarily mask the ambient sounds), also remain quiet.

⁷ Dodd is explicit about the causal attribution of silences to performers (2018, p. 633). Sorensen has persuasively argued that silences, generally, are causally attributable to sources (2008, p. 285).

⁸ One quick compliant: Plenty of 20th and 21st century musical works include pre-recorded audio for playback with live accompaniment. These sounds are undoubtedly part of the performance, but they are not produced, etc. by the performers. However a quick modification to the principle to include the composer – who does ordinarily produce, structure, or combine these sounds – along with the performer will fix this problem, so I won't dwell on it here.

⁹ The sounds played over the PA system are transmitted, not produced.

But this modified version of the principle cannot be right: not every sound heard during a rest of conventional music counts as part of the performance, as the principle implies.

There is a key difference between the silences of 4'33" and those of rests in conventional works, though. As the musicological consensus has it, 4'33" directs the listener's attention to the ambient sounds in a way that a rest in a conventional work does not; namely, the silence of the performer exploits conventional concert etiquette such that the audience's attention is directed to the ambient sounds (more on this below). Such direction of attention *is* sufficient for appropriating ambient sounds.

To illustrate, consider a piece that is to be played in a space where a sustained, pitched, background noise will be heard (e.g., the hum of an air conditioner). The score directs the performer to transpose the traditionally notated phrases within the score so that they harmonize with the background noise in particular, indicated ways. The resulting pitch relations draw the audience's attention, thereby including the background sound into the scope of the attended sounds, treating it as a drone. But then the background sound is part of the performance, though the performer does not produce it or structure it and, insofar as she combines it with the other sounds of the piece, she does so by directing the audience's attention to it.¹⁰

This suggests that we should modify Dodd's principle to state that performers/composer must produce, combine, structure, *or otherwise direct listeners' attention to* – by following

¹⁰ One might think that the directing of attention satisfies the 'somehow structure' component of Dodd's original principle. However, Dodd either disagrees or he thinks that it is not the sort of structure that is relevant to his principle for determining which sounds are part of a performance of a work. He doesn't dispute that 4'33" directs attention to ambient sounds, but he doesn't think that this is sufficient for appropriation. I think that directing attention to sounds *does* impose structure on them (see §1.2.1) and is sufficient for appropriation. If this can be folded into an interpretation of Dodd's original principle, then we can understand the foregoing as clarifications to, rather than revisions of, that principle.

instructions in the score, for notated works – those sounds (and silences) that are part of the performance of the work. But, again, performances of *4'33"* satisfy this principle.¹¹

Perhaps one could seize on the phrase “following the specifications of the composer’s score” to argue that the ambient noises heard during a performance of *4'33"* don’t satisfy the principle and, hence, are not part of the performance. After all, the score for the ambient drone piece *explicitly* calls for actions that direct the listeners’ attention to the appropriated sound. Cage’s score for *4'33"* gives no such explicit direction. However, many aspects of a musical performance are not *explicitly* indicated by the work’s composer without impacting whether or not we take the realization of these features to be features of the performance of the work. If, for instance, the composer leaves instrumentation open and offers no explicit directions for choosing which instruments will be used, it does not follow that the particular timbres of the instruments actually used are not part of the attributes of the performance of the work.¹²

Granted, *other* aspects of the sounds of the work (e.g., pitch) might be explicitly specified by the indeterminate score, but they needn’t be. Many works of graphic notation specify neither the instrumentation nor how the notations are to be translated into sonic attributes – Cornelius Cardew’s *Treatise* (1963-1967) being, perhaps, the most famous (and monumental) example (see fig. 1). Nevertheless, the sounds resulting from musicians’ engagement with the score in a performance setting are considered a part of performances *of that work*. Whatever conventions

¹¹ I’ll address the concern that the performers must do more to *organize* the appropriated sounds in §1.2. The point here is just that the directing the listener’s attention is sufficient to appropriate sounds.

¹² This holds for other art forms as well. Consider Marcel Duchamp’s *To Be Looked At, With One Eye, Close To, For Close to an Hour* (also known as the Small Glass), a painting on glass. If one follows the instructions given in the title, the objects on the other side of the window frame seem to be incorporated into the work. That this was Duchamp’s intention seems strongly suggested by references to Leonardo’s work on perspective both in Duchamp’s painting and his writings (Shambroom 2000). But there is nothing *explicitly* indicating that we are to attend to the objects on the other side of the glass as part of the viewing experience.

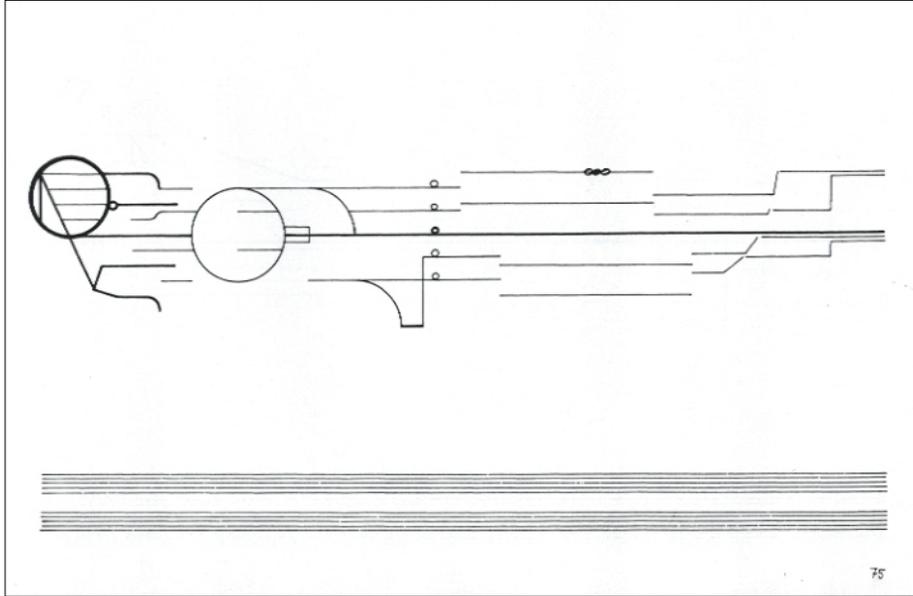


Figure 1. A page from Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (1963-1967). No instructions are given for interpreting the graphics appearing on the page. The two staves at the bottom of the page are provided so that the performer may notate their interpretation.

obtain for interpreting graphic scores will be the sole source of guidance for the performance of *Treatise*, and this guidance will be *implicit*. Given the fact that the resulting sounds are considered a part of the performance of the work, Dodd's principle will have to allow such implicit guidance. In the case of *4'33"*, then, the performer's silence – given the conventions of the concert etiquette – is enough to appropriate ambient noises on a properly modified version of Dodd's principle.

Dodd's second argument is that interpreting *4'33"* as silent better realizes Cage's artistic intentions than interpreting it as appropriating ambient noises, so we should interpret *4'33"* as silent. But why does Dodd think that the silent interpretation better realizes Cage's intentions? Consider the following comment from Cage:

I saw art not as something that consisted of communication from the artist to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And in their being themselves to open the minds of the people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered. To widen their experience, particularly to undermine the making of value judgments.
(Kostelanetz 2003, p. 44)

Dodd – like many other commentators on *4'33''* – takes this to indicate that Cage's intention was to get his listeners to appreciate ambient noises *as they are*. So far, so good. He goes on to argue that appropriating these sounds to the work would interfere with Cage's intentions because it would make it impossible for listeners to experience sounds *as they are* rather than as part of an artistic enterprise (2018, p. 636). This echoes similar comments from Davies (1997, p.453). And this is where the problems begin.

The idea is that, in hearing the sounds as part of the work, one listens to them for how they function within that work rather than listening to the sounds as they are (independently of their relationships to other sounds or any artistic purpose), as Cage intends.¹³ But Cage was not merely trying to get listeners to drop this sort of hearing-as-part-of-a-musical-enterprise with respect to the ambient noises heard in *4'33''*. He wanted audiences to drop this attitude with respect to *all* sounds, including traditional musical sounds. His intention was to establish a 'new listening' that is guided neither by our preconceptions about music, its history, and theory nor by the standard way of listening to ambient sounds, where we are focused on what these sounds

¹³ I will argue that Dodd overlooks a key aspect of Cage's intention, but Dodd's argument is vulnerable on another point as well: I see no obvious reason to think that appropriated sounds are necessarily experienced as part of the work by the audience. If sounds can be appropriated without the fact of their appropriation being transparent to the audience, then appropriation does not entail that the appropriated sounds will be listened to as part of an artistic enterprise, as Dodd's argument requires.

reveal about their sources rather than how they sound (if we attend to them at all). This is why Cage said that his goal, from *4'33"* onward, was to write music the performance of which did not interrupt (but was appropriated by) *and* was not interrupted by (but appropriated) ambient sounds (Kostelanetz 2003, p. 86).¹⁴

If successful, then Cage has found a way to make works for which hearing a sound as part of the work does not interfere with the ability to hear it as it is (because the work is not heard as an artistic enterprise, in the relevant sense). But if this is his intention, then it does no harm to appropriate ambient sounds to *4'33"*. Rather, it helps it along: The traditional staging of the work – musician on stage with an instrument – holds the audience in expectation of a traditional musical performance. The performer might make a sound at any time. And so the audience remains attentive to the sonic environment. As no expected sounds are performed, this attention is transferred to ambient sounds.¹⁵ But ambient sounds are not amenable to treatment as instances of traditional concert music. They are not subject to the expectations of the listeners' historically conditioned ears. Nor is the audience in a circumstance amenable to interacting with the sources of these sounds, which ordinarily guides our attention to ambient sounds. So the audience is led to listen to the sounds without expectations, as they are. If the performance successfully brings about this kind of attention to ambient sounds, then a new form of listening

¹⁴ Cage's so-called 'number pieces' are a good example of this. These works feature long stretches of silence and soft, generally sustained tones produced by the performers. Listening to these works in Cage's proposed way – with the work appropriating and being appropriated by the ambient noises all of which are equally worthy of attention – is a far richer and more radical listening experience than reverting to the traditional listening practices that Cage hoped to overturn. Without this insight the slide back into tradition is very tempting: It is perfectly possible to listen to these works as though they include only the sounds produced by the performers.

¹⁵ Ravasio (2019, p. 399) makes similar observations. However, Ravasio – who accepts Dodd's arguments that *4'33"* does not include sounds – uses this observation to very different purposes than I; namely, to argue that *4'33"* is not music but an instance of what he calls "parasitic conceptual art" – art that is dependent on another art form while not being an instance of that art form.

has been brought into the concert hall, one that is applied to ambient sounds and could be applied – as Cage hoped it would with respect to his post-4'33" works – to sounds produced by performers.¹⁶

This interpretation does a better job of capturing Cage's intentions than Dodd's, on which 4'33" is a work of conceptual art *about music* (2018, p. 638). We can see why by highlighting another aspect of Cage's thought, which Dodd has overlooked:

New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shape of words. Just attention to the activity of sounds. (Cage 1961, p. 10)

Given his eschewal of art-as-communication, it is contrary to Cage's intentions to interpret his work as being about anything, including music. If we should interpret the work in the way that best fits Cage's intentions, as Dodd suggests, then we should adopt my interpretation over his: 4'33" does contain sounds other than silences.

To summarize: On the proper understanding of what it takes for a sound to be included in a performance of a work, 4'33" is not silent. And a principle of charity with respect to the composer's intentions poses no difficulty for this result. In fact, it demands it. While this doesn't directly answer the question of the possibility of a wholly silent musical work, it does show that – despite first appearances – the answer has no bearing on discussions of 4'33".

¹⁶ The subsequent notoriety of the piece or changes in performance norms might interfere with the ability of the staging to direct the listeners attention appropriately – indeed, it arguably has. But changes in performance practice and audience expectations will impact the experience of *any* non-contemporary work. This, in turn, impacts the audience's ability to access the composer's intentions. The problem is not a problem for Cage, specifically. Furthermore, it doesn't matter, for present purposes, if Cage was successful in realizing his intentions. The point is to show that attributing ambient noises to 4'33" accords with those intentions. And to understand Cage's intentions with respect to 4'33" and how he sought to realize them, we must take the musical culture as it was in 1952.

1.2. Are the Sounds of 4'33" Sufficiently Organized?

The preceding section established that 4'33" is not silent. It appropriates ambient sounds. There remains the question of whether these appropriated sounds – the only sounds belonging to a performance of 4'33" – can satisfy the organized sound condition. According to Dodd, for instance, mere appropriation falls short of the requisite organization: "Organizing sounds is a matter of either producing a structured sound sequence (as performers of traditional works of music do), or else giving some structure to the appropriated sounds[...]" (2018, p. 637). In what follows I will argue that 4'33" involves more than mere appropriation.

1.2.1. Causal dependence of sounds on performer actions

To illustrate the point that mere appropriation is not enough to satisfy the organized sound condition, Dodd imagines a piece, *Simple Imaginary Landscape*, in which a single performer turns on a radio that is automatically set to some station and volume setting.¹⁷ After a specified duration, she turns it off. According to Dodd, the sounds emitted by the radio are appropriated, but merely turning on the radio for a given duration does not amount to giving structure to the appropriated sounds. Therefore, *Simple Imaginary Landscape* doesn't satisfy the organized sound condition and is not music. He goes on to claim that, even if it appropriates ambient sounds (which Dodd denies), 4'33" fails to organize these sounds for exactly the same reasons that *Simple Imaginary Landscape* does; namely, the appropriated sounds are given no structure by the performer. So, again, 4'33" is not music.

¹⁷ This is a simplified version of Cage's *Imaginary Landscape, No.4*, composed the year before 4'33", which Dodd *does* think satisfies the organized sound condition. More on *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* below.

But Dodd overlooks a crucial difference between his *Simple Imaginary Landscape* and *4'33"*: *4'33"* is a work in three movements, which are marked by actions of the performer. (We may take as canonical – as subsequent performers have – David Tudor’s premiere performance of *4'33"*, in which he marked the movements by noiselessly opening and closing the keyboard cover of the piano.¹⁸) The actions of the performer thereby impose an internal temporal structure on the appropriated sounds – organizing them into three distinct units (movements). This scuttles the analogy with *Simple Imaginary Landscape*, on which Dodd’s argument relies, and shows that there is more organization in a performance of *4'33"* than mere appropriation of sounds. One might worry, though, that these gestures are not sufficient as they impose no *audible* organization on the appropriated sounds. But this can’t be Dodd’s position.

Consider Cage’s *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* (1951), which both Dodd and Davies – the primary proponents of the view that *4'33"* is not organized sound – accept as satisfying the organized sound condition (Davies 1997, p. 458; Dodd 2018, p. 637).¹⁹ This work is written for 12 radios, each operated by two performers. The score gives indications for volume, tuning, and tone (equalization) settings for each radio over the duration of the piece. However, this durational structure is not directly audible. It can only be heard through the impact of the setting changes on the appropriated sounds. But any audible change could equally well be the result of a change in radio settings or a change in what is being broadcast (e.g., a recording of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*), and adjustments to radio settings during a silence will make no audible

¹⁸ Such gestures have been standard in performances of *4'33"*. Indeed, Nyman suggests that the need for such gestures is implied by the durational structure given in the score – if the performer is to remain silent, then these durations must be indicated by some other means (gestures) (1974, p. 22). This, of course, presupposes that structure need not be audibly marked but must be perceivably marked, but it is a presupposition performers of *4'33"* seem to share.

¹⁹ One could, of course, deny that *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* is organized sound. Ultimately, I think this response fails: there is good reason to think that it *does* satisfy the condition (and is music) – see §2.3.

difference. Insofar as the imposed durational structure is made evident, it is made evident by the performer's visible gestures, just as with *4'33''*.²⁰ Therefore, the organized sound condition can't require that the organization imposed on appropriated materials be audible. Perhaps there is some other requirement that *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* satisfies but *4'33''* does not.

Davies offers one possibility: For appropriated sounds to count as adequately organized, they must exclude some sounds that could be heard in the performance environment during the performance. Davies further reasons that, since *all* ambient noises are appropriated in *4'33''*, no sounds that could be heard in the performance environment are excluded. Therefore, *4'33''* doesn't satisfy the organized sound condition (1997, p. 458-459). However, as Kania convincingly argues, *4'33''* does meet Davies's condition: intentional sounds produced by the performer are excluded (2010, pp. 346-347). So this condition won't secure the conclusion that *4'33''* is not organized sound.

Another possibility is that at least one sound needs to be produced by a performer (i.e., not appropriated). But, again, *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* serves as a counter-example. The sounds of the piece are just those sounds that are broadcast over the twelve radios during the performance. These sounds are not produced by the performers. So the performers don't need to produce any sounds to satisfy the organized sound condition.

If merely appropriating sounds is not enough to satisfy the organized sound condition, but the performer needn't produce any sounds, then, minimally, some action of the performer (e.g., the manipulations of radio settings in *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*) must – at least potentially –

²⁰ This should come as no surprise given my comments regarding the opening of Beethoven's *Symphony, No. 5* (particularly in n.4). I will address concerns that *some (potential) causal impact* on the sounds is required, whether evident or not, below.

impact/impart structure to the appropriated sounds (where these are the only sounds belonging to the performance). But as we've seen (§1.1), the actions of the performer during a performance of 4'33" *do* impact the way that sounds are experienced by exploiting the audience's knowledge of standard performance etiquette to direct their attention to the ambient sounds. So 4'33" seems to satisfy this requirement.

Granted, we can draw a distinction between manipulations of the physical features of sounds and attentional effects. Perhaps a work that meets the organized sound condition while including only appropriated sounds in its performances must involve at least some intentional (potential) modification of the physical basis of at least one of the appropriated sounds. After all, one salient difference between 4'33" and *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* is that the latter includes instructions for adjustment to the tuning, volume, and equalization settings on the radios by which the sounds are appropriated. These adjustments impact the qualities of the appropriated sounds. But in the case of 4'33", the performers' actions do not modify the physical basis of the sounds heard during the course of the performance. If one wants to drive a wedge between 4'33" and *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* with respect to the organized sound condition, this is the place to do it.

Notice that we are considering a requirement that there be some intentional *potential* modification of the appropriated sounds. The qualification, 'potential', is needed because, in a given performance, the adjustments to the radios indicated in the score of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* might have no effect, given what (if anything) is being broadcast on the relevant stations at that time. Indeed, a performance of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* might be entirely silent, and yet

it satisfies the organized sound condition.²¹ But *4'33"* does not rule out such potential impacts. A performer could mark the beginning of each movement by opening a door in the performance space and the endings by closing the door. This will remove an impediment to external ambient noises that would be heard during the performance, thereby potentially modifying the physical basis of the sounds heard by the audience.²² And so *4'33"* satisfies the requirement that the performer's actions (potentially) modify the physical basis of the appropriated sounds.

Of course, a correct performance of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* must include the radio adjustments whereas a correct performance of *4'33"* needn't include the door opening/closing.²³ If that is the relevant difference between the two pieces, then a piece, *4'33" with Open Door*, that is just like *4'33"* except that it requires the door opening/closing, will satisfy the organized sound condition. I doubt that those who think that *4'33"* does not satisfy the condition will think that *4'33" with Open Door* does. If that is right, they must have a more stringent requirement on

²¹ A silent performance of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* would not necessarily appropriate ambient noises. If the performers can be seen manipulating the radios but no sound is heard, the ordinary response will be to strain to hear any sound coming from the radios, not to listen to ambient noises. This raises questions concerning the status of a silent performance of a work that is not necessarily silent. Is the performance a performance of a musical work that is itself not a musical performance? Does the possibility of a silent performance damage the work's claim to being a musical work? (See §3.)

²² Whether or not you identify sounds with sound waves, the modification of sound waves is all we can require without ruling out *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*. The manipulations of the radios impact the sound waves emanating from them, not the physical basis of the sounds at their sources. If you worry that the removal of the impediments to sound waves shouldn't count as a relevant modification, change the performance thus: at the beginning of the piece all external doors should be open. Each movements is then to begin with the closing of a door. (And notice that a regular old performance of *4'33"* will, unless performed outdoors, introduce some modification of the ambient noises from outside the performance venue.)

²³ This cannot simply be a matter of the score explicitly calling for the actions generating the potential modification. Including explicit instructions in the score is just one way of making the actions required. We can easily imagine that the score to *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* included no explicit instructions for realizing the notations. Rather, this information was passed on from performer to performer by demonstration (without explicit verbal instruction). Surely, this wouldn't make a difference as to whether or not *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* satisfies the organized sound condition. An appeal to an *implicit* direction to modify the appropriated sounds won't help either. Implicit instructions are a matter of performance practice, which takes us into the realm of socio-historical factors obtaining in particular musical traditions. The organized sound condition cannot include tradition-bound, implicit requirements without losing its generality (though implicit instructions might result in organization relevant to the satisfaction of the organized sound condition). See §2 for more on the interaction of the organized sound condition and socio-historical factors.

the (potential) modification of sounds in mind – one that opening/closing doors does not meet. But then they owe us an explanation (and defense) of these more stringent requirements.



Figure 2. *Bottle Rack*, by Marcel Duchamp (1914/1959)

Furthermore, there is reason to think that (potential) modifications of the physical basis of appropriated sounds are not necessary *in any form* – even when these are the performance’s only sounds. Compare with a case of appropriation in the visual arts: Duchamp’s ‘unassisted readymades’. These are works, such as ‘Bottle Rack’ (fig. 2), that underwent no internal modifications to their physical structure.²⁴ Any organization involved was merely a matter of choosing how they would be presented within a gallery setting. And yet these works are widely

²⁴ While it is true that Duchamp signed some of these readymades, an artist’s signature is not considered an aesthetic feature of the work (or a modification of any of the aesthetic features). Also notice that Duchamp’s appropriations precede Cage’s by about forty years and that there has long been a fruitful cross-influence between music and the visual arts.

accepted as instances of visual art.²⁵ So, assuming – plausibly – that visual art involves similar organizational requirements with respect to its physical materials, parity of reasoning suggests that musical appropriations do not require (potential) modifications of the physical structure of elements of the work to satisfy the organized sound condition.

Therefore, the performer’s modifying the physical basis of the appropriated sounds is not necessary for those sounds to satisfy the organized sound condition, even where those are the only sounds of the piece. So this cannot be the basis of any difference in *4’33’’* and *Imaginary Landscape, No.4*’s abilities to satisfy the organized sound condition.

1.2.2. How intentional is the organization?

Those who think that *4’33’’* is not music might respond by accepting the foregoing while objecting that, in a performance of *4’33’’*, the performer’s actions do not give rise to an organization of sounds that is *sufficiently concretely intended* by the composer/performer. For instance, while the performer is responsible for the sounds heard during *4’33’’* being heard as they are (in virtue of directing listeners’ attention to them), the performer is not intending any particular sound(s) to be heard – let alone to be heard as standing in any particular relation to any others. The sounds may well be organized, but not (primarily) by the performer. To illustrate, contrast *4’33’’* with Duchamp’s readymades. When Duchamp selects a readymade, he knows exactly what form the appropriated work will take – namely, the form it already has when he

²⁵ The widespread acceptance of the readymades as visual art is a primary motivating factor for institutional theories of art, on which Duchamp’s act of selecting the readymade is sufficient to make it art. See (Goldsmith 1983) for a discussion of the institutional theory of art and Duchamp’s readymades. An interesting question for further exploration is why such innovations in the visual arts have been more readily accepted by audiences and critics than their musical counterparts.

selects it. But in *4'33''* neither Cage nor the performer knows precisely what form the appropriated sounds will take.

To answer this worry, we can turn once more to *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*. Cage says, with respect to the sounds resulting from the manipulations of the radio settings, “whatever happens [is] acceptable (station, static, silence)” (Cage 1961, p. 58). Insofar as there is any intentional organization of the resulting sounds on the part of Cage, it is several steps removed from explicit choice.²⁶ Similarly, the performers do not know what sounds will result from their actions. Any sound could be transmitted over the airwaves. Any sound could work its way into the piece. A performance of the work could even be completely silent. And so there is nothing that the performers are intending to do with respect to the sounds themselves. Rather, they aim at executing the instructions and letting what happens happen.²⁷

But, again, *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* is widely – and correctly (see §2.3) – accepted as satisfying the organized sound condition. Therefore the condition cannot require direct intentional organization (including the production and modification) of any attributes of sounds – pitch, timbre (sound quality), intensity (loudness), and duration. Duration is the only attribute that might give us pause here, but the intentional durational structure is specified for adjustments to the radio settings, not for the appropriated sounds themselves. The durational structure is, therefore, more like the three movement structure of *4'33''* than it is like traditional rhythmic notation.

²⁶ What Levinson says about *4'33''* in this regard applies equally well to *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*: “Cage has in effect organized for listening, at a very abstract level, the anticipated but unpredictable sounds that will occur at any performance of his piece” (2011, 270, n.3).

²⁷ In works of only slightly later vintage – e.g., *Variations I* (1958) – Cage would use non-traditional and indeterminate notations to (attempt to) get similar results with traditional instruments.

Notice, too, that the sounds that are heard are dependent on the time and location of the performance and how that interacts with the specifications for tuning, equalization, and volume appearing in the score. If no signal is picked up from any radio station in the performance venue, then all that will be transmitted is static, regardless of the performers' adjustments to the tuning dials. If the radio picks up silence, then adjustments to the equalization and volume will make no difference to any attribute of sound. This affords the performers some small amount of control over the sounds that will be heard – a control deriving from their choice of the performance location and time – though they will still be at the mercy of the station managers, who get to decide what will broadcast by those stations that are actually be received at that time and place.

Performers of *4'33"* are granted a similar amount of control owing to their selection of performance venue and time.²⁸ In fact, performers of *4'33"* arguably have *more* control over the sorts of sounds that will be heard during the performance, there being no station managers to consider. It looks as though *4'33"* is at least as well positioned as *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* with respect to requirements on intentional organization.

In sum: Both pieces exhibit a directly intentional durational structure imposed on appropriated sounds. Both exhibit a highly indirect intentional control of (the attributes of) the appropriated sounds. Furthermore, the direct intentional durational structure of both pieces concerns the durations of groupings of appropriated sounds, not the appropriated sounds, themselves. These are the only aspects of the pieces that are relevant to their ability to satisfy the

²⁸ See also Kania (2010, p. 346). Of course, it might not be the performer who selects the venue and time of the performance, though it typically will be in the experimental music community. Even when it is not, the performer at least exercises control over precisely when to start the piece – and so may wait to avoid including some particular ambient sound in the performance or immediately begin to ensure that some ambient noise is included in the performance. In this regard the performer of *4'33"* has more control than performers of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*, who will not know what sounds are being broadcast until they turn on their radios.

organized sound condition. *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* satisfies the condition. Therefore, 4'33" does too.

2. Beyond Organized Sound: Completing the Defense of 4'33" as Music

The arguments thus far show that 4'33" satisfies the organized sound condition. But there is reason to think that there are further criteria that instances of music need to satisfy.

2.1. Augmenting the Organized Sound Constraint

The content of the organized sound condition is extremely liberal: It does not require more intentional organization than that which is found in 4'33". And, given the tremendous variety within musical traditions of the world, it is far from certain that we can require even this much without ruling out some music.²⁹ But a version of the organized sound condition that is liberal enough to apply to all instances of music will also be satisfied by much non-music. To use a well-worn example, Morse code will satisfy such a general organized sound condition. Hence the need for additional criteria in a definition of 'music'.

Levinson (2011) augments the organized sound condition with an appeal to the purpose of the putative musical performance – namely, that it needs to be intended for the enrichment or intensification of experience (2011, pp. 270-273). Levinson's proposed purpose is not applicable to all music, though. Satie's furniture music, for instance, is intended to function as unobtrusive background noise. If this enriches or intensifies experience, it is not through the usual channels and certainly not by "active engagement (e.g., listening, dancing, performing) with sounds

²⁹ See Davies (2012), especially section 5.

regarded primarily, or in significant measure, as sounds” as the rest of Levinson’s definition requires (2011, p. 273). Indeed, furniture music is intended for *inactive* engagement, if it is intended for engagement at all.³⁰

Similarly, in the Chinese literati *qin* tradition, the goal of playing the *qin* – a long, seven-string plucked zither, played in private or, occasionally, for a very small audience – is to promote one’s moral development, enlightenment, and/or transcendence (according to either Buddhist or Taoist doctrine). It is a stretch to include this under the enrichment/intensification of experience. Even if we allow it as such, this purpose is not pursued by active engagement with sounds regarded primarily/in significant measure as sounds:

[...] the literati maintained that it was more important to discern and contemplate the inner meaning and significance of music than to cultivate the outer manifestations of musical sound; the act of playing and the resulting musical sound were but vehicles toward these loftier ends. (Yung 2017, p. 509)³¹

The world’s musical traditions are simply too varied with respect to the function music plays within them, and the ways sound is used to perform those functions, to reasonably expect that there will be some variation on Levinson’s functional condition that will, in conjunction with an organized sound condition, pick out all and only music.

We see a similar problem with an additional constraint proposed by Kania: that the sounds of a musical work must either contain or be listened to for musical qualities (2010, p.

³⁰ Davies makes the analogous point with respect to *Tafelmusik* (2012, pp.563-537). See also Kania (2011, p. 10).

³¹ The fact that *qin* performance is primarily a private affair means it lacks another feature Levinson thinks central to music: public character. This tradition also gives credence to claims that gestures (in terms of both their visual and tactile components) are an integral part of the experience of music (Yung 2017, pp. 521-526).

348).³² The problem lies in the interpretation of ‘musical qualities’. Avant garde and experimental artists explicitly seek to introduce innovations, which traditional-minded listeners often reject as ‘noise’. If we are taking a traditionalist stance on ‘musical qualities’, this will illicitly rule out such innovations, which are frequently accepted as music by subsequent generations of traditionalists. As McKeown-Green puts it, Kania’s definition is not ‘future-proof’ (2014, p. 395). But it also risks ruling out current musical traditions if those traditions include sounds not captured by or to be listened to for musical qualities as understood by the traditionalist. And if we take a broader stance that doesn’t rule out these innovations/traditions, the condition will capture things that are not music – e.g., Morse code, given a sufficiently broad understanding of ‘rhythm’ as a musical quality (Davies 2012, p. 538). For these reasons, I think Kania’s condition should be rejected.

Davies (2012) is on surer footing. He augments the organized sound condition with a socio-historical constraint on which a piece/performance must bear the right sorts of cultural and historical connections to at least some musical tradition to count as music. The socio-historical constraint clearly avoids the problem – seen in the purportedly tradition-neutral requirement of Levinson – of ruling out entire musical traditions from the extension of ‘music’.³³ It also allows us – when properly formulated – to evade the problem of innovation encountered by Kania’s definition (see below).

³² While Kania thinks that 4’33” does appropriate ambient sounds, he thinks that it fails to meet this condition, which is clearly at odds with Cage’s project of promoting a new form of listening.

³³ Kania sees his definition as fixing a different failing of Levinson’s definition of music; namely, that it doesn’t distinguish sound art from music. A socio-historical condition offers a solution to this worry that doesn’t run into the problems cited for Kania’s proposal: practitioners of sound art are connected to a different historical tradition (rooted in the visual arts) and social institutions (art galleries, etc.) than are experimental composers (rooted, as they are, in the Western art music tradition and primarily interacting with institutions such as conservatories and concert halls). Adding this socio-historical condition would certainly be amenable to Levinson, given his adherence to a historical theory of art (2011).

What exactly the relevant socio-historical factors are and how they are to be balanced against one another is a difficult question. So, too, is the question of how a musical tradition is established in the first place. But perhaps an appeal to organized sound can help here. We might say, for instance, that a tradition forms when there comes to be a social practice of organizing sounds but not primarily for conveying semantic content. The point is not to offer an unassailable version of the socio-historical constraint, but merely to show that it is plausible and flexible enough to meet the obvious challenges when combined with the organized sound condition.

Davies draws out an important feature of the socio-historical constraint:

But by contextualizing music historically, we may be able to see the presently diverse array of possibilities as emerging in a regular fashion [...] One can see this as change and development in the "language" that the composer had at his or her disposal at any given moment. Awareness of the direction of historical musical change might also allow us to generate more context-sensitive and perspicuous generative principles of musical construction. In effect, rather than trying to define music per se, we might do better by defining it as what could be created as music at a given time in a given tradition (Davies 2012, p. 547).

When we focus – as Davies urges – on the organizational principles available to a tradition at a given time, we narrow the scope of the organized sound condition to a manageable extent. Rather than concerning ourselves with a general organized sound condition, we can focus on a more robust organized sound condition that need only apply to, and be conditioned by, instances of the

tradition in question. Being explicit about the narrowed scope and tradition-boundedness of such a robust organized sound condition has significant theoretical payoffs.³⁴

It helps us avoid cultural chauvinism: mistakenly taking our own tradition-bound interpretation of the organized sound condition as a tradition-independent interpretation of the condition and applying it to traditions for which it is irrelevant. Similarly, it helps us avoid parochialism: applying too narrow a conception of organized sound, based on the instances of music in a tradition with which one is familiar/comfortable, to instances that are properly part of the tradition but outside the basis of the too narrow conception of organized sound.

Parochialism is often linked to a confusion – encouraged by colloquial talk (‘That’s not music!’) – of evaluative standards for the organization of sounds with the conditions for membership within a particular tradition. Of course the identification of instances of a work in a particular tradition is closely connected to the evaluation of those works (as members of that tradition). Careful attention to the tradition-bound organized sound condition can help us to disentangle those requirements related to the identification of works as instances of the tradition and those further requirements that distinguish good instances of the tradition from the bad or mediocre – at least for those aspects of evaluation based on objective reasons related to how the work fulfills the requirements for being an instance of the tradition and how it relates to prior work in that tradition. By understanding changes to a tradition’s organized sound condition over time, we can learn about the musical values of that tradition, which can be inferred from answers

³⁴ A general definition of music would then require that the work/performance satisfy some tradition-bound organized sound + socio-historical condition and, perhaps that it satisfies additional clauses intended to address the sorts of issues raised above – e.g., how musical traditions are initiated. Note that – as with the organized sound condition – there will be tradition-specific content to the (tradition-bound) socio-historical condition.

to questions such as: Which deviations from tradition are accepted as innovations and which are rejected as bad music?

This helps us answer the concern that the organized sound + socio-historical condition approach is unable to accommodate future musical innovations because the acceptance of such innovations is highly conditioned by arbitrary cultural/historical forces.³⁵ On my way of filling in the details of the interaction between the organized sound condition and the socio-historical condition, there is no need to appeal to *arbitrary* cultural or historical forces.³⁶ Rather, we identify an aspect of the musical culture – how it handles innovations in the organized sound condition for that tradition – and assess putative changes to the tradition (including future innovations) in light of their conformity to that aspect of the culture. The focus on specific musical traditions makes this far more tractable: we are more likely to find clear social and cultural factors influencing the development and acceptance of music at the level of specific traditions than we are to find general, cross-culturally robust, factors – as should be clear from

³⁵ Kania levels this objection – adapted from McKeown-Green’s objection to Kania’s definition of ‘music’ (see above) – against Davies’s approach (Kania 2020, p. 304). McKeown-Green does not think his original complaint applies to such views, given their appeal to socio-historical factors takes us beyond the mere appeal to intuitions in the formulation of a definition of ‘music’ against which he objects (2014, p. 403, n.22).

³⁶ Kania uses the acceptance of twelve tone serialism as an example of such an arbitrary culture force, citing the influence of World War II on musical practice (2020, p. 303). But, while World War II certainly had an effect on the *reception* of serialism in certain musical institutions – in terms of the scope of its influence – it did not have an effect on *the fact that it was a bona fide part of (Western art) music*. My contention is that serialism is (and was at its inception) music due to the nature of the sonic innovations introduced and the continuity of these innovations with prior innovations within Western musical practice (see §2.2), independently of facts about its reception.

the discussion of *qin* music.³⁷ In the next section I will illustrate how such an account of innovation within a tradition can be developed and applied in the case of Western art music.

In addition to its theoretical usefulness, I suspect that any further constraint augmenting the organized sound condition will, in fact, be subsumed under the socio-historical constraint. As with the organized sound condition, there are tradition-specific socio-historical constraints that determine how the general requirement that the work/performance bear the right sort of socio-historical connections to *some* tradition is to be satisfied for a particular tradition. These will include the conditions under which innovations are accepted as such by the tradition and (perhaps) the functions musical performances/works perform within the tradition (e.g., disinterested appreciation, improvement of the character, etc.). Putatively general constraints (e.g., Levinson's functional condition) will only seem plausible *as general constraints* if we are not adequately attending to the great variety in musical cultures (due to chauvinism or parochialism).

The arguments of §1 can now be seen as arguments that the organized sound condition *for Western art music* will be satisfied by 4'33".³⁸ But versions of the organized sound condition for *other* traditions – or even more restricted subsets of Western art music – will not need to include 4'33". This does a lot to explain reactions to 4'33". Those that reject its status as music

³⁷ Given what he says about jazz, McKeown-Green might demur. After acknowledging that a proposal along these lines would be future-proof, he expresses doubt that a sufficient regularity in innovations could be identified to formulate such a definition for 'jazz' (2014, p. 398). I don't share his skepticism (nor does Davies – see above quotation). Even if the result of my approach isn't entirely future proof – e.g., because not all the innovations sanctioned by the tradition will be taken up, perhaps conditioning which future innovations were subsequently available – the resulting definition would not be useless. Current practitioners of a tradition could use it to decide what innovations they want to pursue or to determine if innovations they are interested in pursuing are likely to be accepted into the tradition, given its current state. This is another benefit of focusing on particular traditions: it brings us closer to such practical concerns than does a general definition of music and so has applications for which extensional adequacy (and, particularly, future-proofness) are not necessary.

³⁸ This, of course, means that it satisfies a version of the condition that is general enough to apply to all music. But such a general organized condition is not particularly interesting – or so I have argued.

either apply a narrower conception of organized sound than they ought – e.g., parochialists who reject the innovations of experimental composers – or they believe that 4'33" doesn't have the right socio-historical connection to the Western art music tradition – e.g., they think Cage was a fraud.

The first group is guilty of over-generalizing a too-narrow interpretation of the organized sound condition or of confusing evaluative standards (perhaps also over-generalized) for membership conditions. Both are clearly mistakes, provided that the correct interpretation of the (membership determining) organized sound condition for Western art music is as I have claimed it to be. If, however, Cage's innovations don't bear the right socio-historical connections to the Western art music tradition to count as innovations within that tradition, then my charge of over-generalization will fail. If that is correct, we cannot appeal to innovations introduced in *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* to vindicate 4'33". Neither piece will count as Western art music. This just is the second objection, above – that 4'33" doesn't satisfy the socio-historical constraint. In the remainder of §2, I will argue that 4'33" – and the innovations leading up to it – *do* bear the right socio-historical connections to the Western art music tradition.

2.2. *Precedents*

So how are innovations in the scope of 'organized sounds' introduced in the Western art music tradition?³⁹ Arnold Schoenberg, with whom Cage studied, provides an excellent illustration.

³⁹ There can, of course, be other, tradition-specific requirements imposed by the socio-historical constraint – e.g. that the composer/performer be recognized as a practitioner of the tradition by the institutions of that tradition (see n.33) or that the work satisfy some tradition-specific functional constraint. Given the widespread acceptance of Cage's earlier works, such as the *Sonatas and Interlude for Prepared Piano*, by the institutions of Western art music, it is indisputable that Cage satisfies any such requirement for Western art music. I will, therefore, focus on the status of his more controversial innovations with respect to that tradition.

Schoenberg's (1911) *Harmonielehre* (*Theory of Harmony*) articulates a view of the evolution of harmony in Western art music that enriches our understanding of his own twelve-tone music. Schoenberg sees the increasing complexity of Western harmony as an attempt to approximate successively higher overtone relations in twelve-tone equal temperament. He sees this project as reaching its culmination with impressionist composers, such as Debussy – twelve tone equal temperament is not fine-grained enough to approximate overtones higher than those implied by impressionist harmonies.

The overtone series, which led our ear to it, still contains many problems that will have to be faced. And if for the time being we still manage to escape those problems, it is due to little else than a compromise between the natural intervals and our inability to use them – that compromise which we call the tempered system, which amounts to an indefinitely extended truce. This reduction of the natural relations to manageable ones cannot permanently impede the evolution of music; and the ear will have to attack the problems, *because it is so disposed*. (Schoenberg 1911, p. 25).

Schoenberg goes on to propose more finely divided equal-tempered scales and also non-tempered scales (scales conforming to the intervals found in the overtone series). But he claims that, at the time he was writing, the available instruments were insufficient for the performance of music written in such systems.⁴⁰ Schoenberg's response to this situation was to abandon the approximation of overtone relations and to fully embrace twelve-tone equal temperament. This required abandoning the hierarchical relations among pitches found in tonal harmony (and the

⁴⁰ Schoenberg was, in fact, wrong about the limitations of the instruments then available, as the microtonal (mostly quarter tone) works of Ives and Habba from the 1910s and 1920s attest. Even more dramatic results, in a wider variety of tunings and temperaments, would be generated on traditional instruments by composers of subsequent generations like Ben Johnston and James Tenney.

overtone series). But Western harmony had been the primary basis of large-scale structural organization of musical works. So Schoenberg needed new organizational principles.

His solution was the twelve-tone row – an ordered list in which each of the twelve equal tempered pitch classes (a pitch and all its octave transpositions) appears once. Local organization of the work was based on the various forms of the row: the prime (original) form, its retrograde (reverse), its inversion⁴¹, its retrograde inversion, and the transpositions of each. While working through a row form, the composer cannot return to a pitch class in the row, after leaving it, until all the other 11 pitch classes have been used. However, multiple forms of the row can be used at any given time. Large-scale musical structure was based on relationships between the row forms used in the work.

Whatever one's feelings about Schoenberg's serial music with respect to *other* aspects of aesthetic evaluation, the integrity of the approach and the cleverness with which Schoenberg addressed the "problems" posed by the overtone series and the supposed limitations of our instruments cannot be denied. And these are precisely the features that we value with respect to innovations introduced into the form. Furthermore, Schoenberg's achievements are widely accepted as *musical* achievements by the institutions of Western art music (concert halls, symphony orchestras, conservatories, etc.). Indeed his serial approach came to dominate avant

⁴¹ The inversion is derived by reversing the direction of the intervals between notes – e.g., a C is a minor third (three equal tempered half steps) above the A immediately below it, the inversion of a melodic interval from A to C would be from A to the note a minor third below it, F#. But note that this just gives you the pitch class. Any octave transposition of F# (or A or C) can be used when it appears in the row.

garde and academic composition in the United States for much of the 20th century. Schoenberg himself taught at UCLA and USC, where Cage studied with him.⁴²

Nor is this pattern of reasoning, with respect to innovative approaches to organizing sound, unique to Schoenberg. Similar experiments were being conducted by Charles Seeger and Carl Ruggles – approximate contemporaries of Schoenberg – in their formulation of ‘dissonant counterpoint’. But one can also see this sort of reasoning in earlier Western music. We see it, for instance, in the shift from the modal polyphony of the Renaissance to the major/minor tonality and the use of harmony as a structural principle in Western music in the 18th century – formalized by Rameau in his *Traite de L’Harmonie (Treatise on Harmony)* published in 1722 – and in the elaborations of the sonata-allegro form of the classical symphony by Beethoven and his followers in the romantic era. In all these cases, new ways of organizing music were introduced to accommodate shifts in the permissible materials of the tradition at the time of the innovations (and, in some cases, to perceived dead ends with respect to traditional methods/materials).

Furthermore, the emancipation of dissonance advanced by Schoenberg led to further innovations with respect to the sounds permitted within the musical context. The music of the 20th century French-American composer Edgard Varèse provides a notable example of this. Varèse introduced a number of new (non-tonal) sonorities and unusual sounds in his work (including, famously, a siren in his *Ameriques* (1921)), which had a profound influence on

⁴² The point of referencing facts about the reception of serialism, here, is to illustrate that the innovations received uptake, which provides further evidence that Schoenberg was making his innovations in a tradition-sanctioned manner. It is not that any of the particular historical contingencies that influenced this reception need to be accounted for in a definition of ‘music’ to secure serialism’s status as music.

Cage's early percussion music.⁴³ Other influences in this regard include Henry Cowell's music and his text, *New Musical Resources* (1930), which introduced a number of so-called extended techniques: non-traditional techniques applied to traditional musical instruments to create unusual sounds. Cowell's experiments with inside-the-piano techniques, as heard in his *Banshee* (1925), were an influence on Cage's own *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* (1946-1948), a tour de force of extended technique composition calling for pencil erasers, nuts, bolts, and weather stripping to be inserted between the strings of the piano, turning the instrument into a one-player percussion orchestra. This laid the groundwork for Cage's further incorporation of non-traditional sounds – e.g., his use of sounds appropriated from radio broadcasts in *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*.

2.3. Cage's Innovations

Cage's use of these expanded sonic resources influenced the development of his attitudes towards musical organization:

I wanted to find a way of making music that was free of the theory of harmony, of tonality; and so I had to find a way of composing with noise. And I came to the

⁴³ Interestingly, the use of 'organized sound' in connection with music seems to originate with Varèse and was used defensively, to respond to parochial judgments of musical traditionalists:

Although this new music is being gradually accepted, there are still people who, while admitting that it is "interesting," say, "but is it music?" It is a question I am only too familiar with. Until quite recently I used to hear it so often in regard to my own works, that, as far back as the twenties, I decided to call my music "organized sound" and myself not a musician, but "a worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities." Indeed, to stubbornly conditioned ears, anything new in music has always been called noise. But after all what is music but organized noises? (Varèse and Wen-chung 1966, p.18)

In an early lecture, 'The Future of Music: Credo' (1937), Cage echoes Varèse's sentiments (and defensive posture): "If the word 'music' is sacred and reserved for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instruments, we can substitute a more meaningful term: organized sound" (Cage 1961, p. 3).

conclusion that the important aspect, or as we would say in the twelve-tone language, the important parameter of sound, is not frequency but rather duration, because duration is open to noise, as well as to what has been called musical. When you take such a point of view, you can shift your allegiance, as it were to Varèse[...] (Kostelanetz 2003, p. 54).

Cage's desire to incorporate noises into his music led him to seek new structuring principles, based in duration, that could accommodate both pitched and unpitched sounds. This carries forward the innovations introduced by Varèse with an approach that mirrors Schoenberg's systematic introduction of new structuring principles in his twelve-tone method.⁴⁴

Notice that Cage's search for organizing principles was a search for organization in terms of one or another of the aspects of sounds (pitch, duration, timbre, intensity). In this, he is wholly within the mainstream of Western art music. He is simply reacting to the dominant practice of using pitch – and particularly harmony – as the primary basis of organization in that tradition. Due to his interest in noise, he chooses duration as the primary basis of organization. (Schoenberg's serial music, by contrast, rejects traditional harmony but is still organized on the basis of pitch.)

The duration-based approach to musical organization was already manifest in Cage's primarily percussion-based works of the 1940s. Importantly, Cage would link his focus on the durational aspect of sound with his interest in silence as well:

I thought, if I'm not going to have tonality in my music, I'll need something to make an alternative structure; and that was rhythm. I examined the nature of sound, which has

⁴⁴ It is interesting, given the general liberatory thrust of his work, that Cage uncritically accepts the idea of "the important parameter of sound". Some works – e.g., the *Variations* series (1958-1965) – pull away from this, but Cage never entirely abandoned his reliance on duration as the structural foundation of his works.

pitch, duration, overtone, and amplitude. Then I examined silence; and of those four things, silence had only duration. (Kostelanetz 2003, p. 64).

In *4'33''* this manifests as a work whose only directly intentionally organized features are durations. However, this durational approach is not the only innovation introduced by Cage in the lead up to *4'33''*. In the mid-1940s, Cage began a deep engagement with Zen Buddhism, which would lead to significant changes in his compositional outlook. The progression of his thought is captured in his lecture 'Composition as Process' (1958):

Drawing a straight line between this situation and that presented by the later work, the deduction might be made that there is a tendency in my composition means away from ideas of order towards no ideas of order. And though when examined the history would probably not read as a straight line, recent works, beginning with *Music of Changes* [Cage's first work using chance procedures, composed in 1951 for solo piano], support the accuracy of this deduction[...] For what happened [in *Music of Changes*] came about only through the tossing of coins. It became clear, therefore, I repeat, that structure was not necessary. (Cage 1961, p. 20- 22)

Here Cage describes a turn away from organization in his music. In particular, Cage was turning away from a robust view of direct intentional internal organization of his works, introducing non-intentional means of selecting materials at some level or other.⁴⁵ In *Music of Changes*, Cage generated tables, each containing 64 options (corresponding to hexagrams of the *i Ching*), for the number of events occurring in a given structural unit (one chart), tempo of the

⁴⁵ This is, I think, the most plausible interpretation of Cage's comments, and on this interpretation I think that Cage is accurately describing the trajectory of his artistic project: a successive letting go of direct intentional control of his materials at increasingly higher levels of the organizational hierarchy.

given structural unit (one chart), durations of individual events (eight charts), sounds (eight charts), and dynamics (eight charts). Cage determined which of the 64 elements on a given chart was selected, at a given point in the compositional process, by flipping three coins six times to generate a six-line hexagram according to instructions in the *i Ching*. (There are 64 hexagrams, each of which is assigned to one of the 64 positions on the chart.) 32 of the elements on each of the eight sound charts are silences. For the eight-chart parameters, coin tosses determined which chart was used for a given structural unit (Cage 1961, p.58). The determinations resulting from all these coin flips were then transcribed into the score, in standard notation.

The description should make clear: There is a highest level of organization that is intentionally chosen by the composer. This organization is only organization in terms of duration. (Even here the intention is somewhat undercut by the use of chance procedures to determine tempos.) Within each unit, the elements (sounds and silences) are organized using chance procedures. The specific values for the sonic parameters (duration, pitch, timbre, loudness) were not directly intentionally chosen. They were determined by procedures chosen by the composer, the outcomes of which are highly unpredictable, given the diversity of elements on the charts to which the procedures are applied.

What goes on each chart *is* intentionally chosen to generate certain effects (e.g., density of sound is controlled by making half the sound elements silences, all twelve pitch classes of the equal-tempered chromatic scale are more or less equally represented). Furthermore, the resulting score is traditionally notated and is engaged with by the performer just as any other piece of traditional notation would be – by following the specifications so as to produce the sounds/perform the actions as indicated. So, while *Music of Changes* involves indirect intentional

organization of sounds on the part of the composer, it retains the usual amount of direct intentional internal organization of sounds on the part of the performer. There is a particular sonic structure indicated in the score that the performer intends to accurately render.

It is worth noting that both the highly systematized approaches to composition and the use of chance procedures evident in *Music of Changes* have precedents within Western art music and so are not disqualifying *viz.* the socio-historical constraint. Regarding systematized approaches, we can cite Schoenberg's serialism and the total serialism of the mid-20th century (e.g., Pierre Boulez's *Structure 1A* (1951)), which applies the serial principles developed by Schoenberg to deal with pitch to other musical parameters as well (duration, intensity, timbre, articulation). Regarding chance procedures, we can point to the musical dice games of the 19th century in which precomposed materials were pieced together according to the results of dice rolls, which bear an obvious resemblance to Cage's use of coin flips and charts of musical indications.

The compositional procedures for *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*. (also from 1951), are almost identical to those used for *Music of Changes*, with modifications to accommodate the fact that this work is written for 12 radios rather than solo piano. The sound charts contain indications for the radio settings to be used in the 32-non-silent places rather than containing single pitches and aggregates. Though Cage is still responsible for creating the charts, the performances derived therefrom are highly variable and depend on the quality of the reception, which stations carry programming in the vicinity of the performance, and what they happen to be airing during the performance. As a result a performance might contain static, silence, speaking, a symphony, or any other sounds on any of the active radios at a given moment. The timbre and loudness of any

sounds heard are impacted, but not wholly determined, by indicated adjustments to the equalizer and volume dials. In contrast to *Music of Changes*, the performers of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* do not aim at producing particular sounds indicated in the score. Rather, they perform actions that do not directly determine which sounds result (see §1.3.2). So there is only indirect intentional organization of the sounds by the performers.

This demonstrates a progressive relinquishing of control over the internal organization of the work – from the works of the 1940s to *Music of Changes* to *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* – coupled with a retention of Cage’s use of duration as the primary means of intentional organization. *4’33”* is the logical next step in this progression. The thinking that leads from *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* to *4’33”* is no more radical a departure from precedent than is that which leads from *Music of Changes* to *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*. And neither is any more radical a departure from the thinking leading to *Music of Changes* from its predecessors. Yet no one has denied that *Music of Changes* is (Western art) music – nor should they. So it looks like *4’33”* and *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* are on solid footing with respect to socio-historical constraints on admissible innovations in the Western art music tradition. Therefore, the innovations to the organized sound condition for Western art music introduced by *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* are legitimate. But we already saw that, if *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* satisfies the organized sound condition, so does *4’33”*. Since the organized sound condition and the socio-historical constraint are the only plausible constraints that must be met for a work to be a piece of music, *4’33”* is music.

3. Unfinished Business for the Organized Sound Condition for Western Art Music

Following Davies, I have suggested that specifications of the content of the organized sound constraint ought to be relativized to a particular musical tradition and time. The discussion of *4'33"* offers an illustrative example of how innovations can alter the content of the condition, for a given tradition, over time. In the case of *4'33"* the tradition is Western art music. Of course, the history of Western art music did not stop in 1952, with the composition of *4'33"*. Other innovative works have raised different questions about the content of the organized sound condition. Unsurprisingly, Cage composed many such works. So there remains work to be done if we are to articulate the current content of the organized sound condition for Western art music.

3.1. *Western art music since 1952*

Take, for instance, the score to Cage's *0'00"* (1962), which reads: "In a situation provided with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action." (See figure 3 for the full score, which adds a few restrictions on the disciplined action.) No specification of the sound (or even number of sounds) to be produced is provided. Intensity is given some indirect intentional organization, via "maximum amplification (no feedback)", akin to that seen in a given durational unit of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4*. But notice that Cage provides no directions regarding internal structure – even for intensity – though some internal structure might be evident (depending on the 'disciplined action' performed and whether or not it includes interruptions). This contrasts with *4'33"* in that *4'33"* contains an intentional internal durational structure (i.e.,

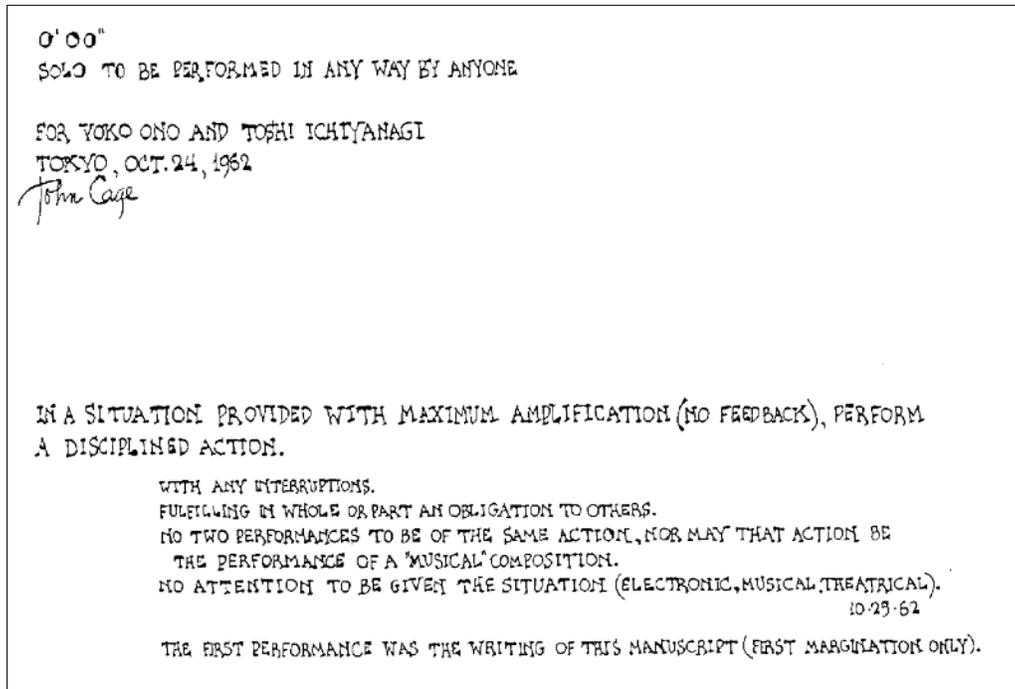


Figure 3. Score to John Cage's *0'00''*.

the durations of its three movements).⁴⁶ If *0'00''* is a musical work, there needn't be *any* intentional internal structure indicated by the composer.

Of course, the performer of *0'00''* selects the disciplined action and, in doing so, will – provided it is a complex action – introduce some intentionally organized internal structure, though it won't necessarily be audible structure. So perhaps the composer and performer are on different footing with respect to the internal organization requirement. Or perhaps performances of the work are musical performances though the work, itself, is not music because the score provides no internal structure but the performances do. To answer these questions, we have to trace the context leading up to the composition of *0'00''* to see what Cage (and other experimental composers) were up to in the ten years since the composition of *4'33''*. Were there any innovations that bear on the question of the requirement of internal structure provided by the

⁴⁶ Significantly, the alternate title of *0'00''* is *4'33''* (*No. 2*).

composer? Or is the fact that directly intentional internal structure (such as the three movements of 4'33'') needn't be audible enough to justify classifying a work lacking any composer-imposed internal durational structure as organized sound, in the relevant sense?

There are also questions concerning the present content of the organized sound condition for Western art music that did not need to be addressed in the consideration of 4'33'' but were suggested by it. Most conspicuously, I did not answer the question of whether or not a musical work can be wholly silent. Given that internal structure needn't be audible, this question comes apart from the question of internal organization itself. And, given the changeability of the organized sound condition over time, we have to clarify the question. We can ask if a musical work can be wholly silent, given the current content of the organized sound condition (for Western art music) or we can ask if a wholly silent work could, at the present time, be accepted as an innovation leading to a change in the organized sound condition allowing wholly silent works.⁴⁷

Consider, for instance, a variant of 4'33'' – 4'33'' *in Space* – which is just like 4'33'' except that it is to be performed in space such that no ambient sounds are present.⁴⁸ Performances of the work *will* be truly silent. Nevertheless the work does organize its silences into three distinct movements. Whether or not this is sufficient to satisfy the organized sound condition is an open question, though I think the burden is on those who think it cannot, given

⁴⁷ We could also ask if it ever could be the case, for Western art music, that the organized sound condition would have content allowing a wholly silent work. Given how close we have come, with 4'33'' and (perhaps) subsequent works, and the general approach to innovations in the Western art music tradition, the answer seems almost certainly to be 'yes'.

⁴⁸ Cage would deny the possibility – at least if this is a work performed for audience – because he associates sounds with auditory sensations, including those arising from internal bodily process such as the circulation of one's blood (Kostelanetz 2003, p. 244). Set that aside for the sake of argument and think only of the standard view on which sounds are, or are transmitted by, pressure waves, which cannot occur in the vacuum of outer space.

the fact that silences are part of the materials organized by composers – on an equal footing with (non-silent) sounds (see §1.1) – and the fact that the intentional internal organization need not be audibly demarcated.

Now consider Kania's *Composition 2009 #3* – designed to provide an example of a truly silent work. (Kania agrees that 4'33" is not silent.) The score reads, in full: "Indicate a length of silence, using the usual cues with which you would signal the beginning & end of a single movement, song, etc. (The content of this work is the silence you frame, not any ambient noise.)" (Kania 2010, p. 351). If Kania is correct, his piece is music and so the organized sound condition cannot require even inaudible internal organization by performer or composer (unlike 4'33" and 0'00"). Whether or not he is correct will depend on how one connects his composition to the Western art music tradition in light of the socio-historical constraint.⁴⁹

And still other questions remain. To give a few: If internal organization is required, must it be *intentional* – e.g., does Dodd's *Simple Imaginary Landscape* satisfy the organized sound condition (despite Dodd's claims to the contrary), given innovations in experimental music since Cage? Does internal organization require some kind of perceivability – e.g., would it undermine 4'33"'s status as music if the performer didn't visibly mark the boundaries between movements? Does it require *knowability* of the internal organization? Can we ever have *unintentional* external organization delimiting the boundaries of the piece? Can attentive listening provide the requisite

⁴⁹ Kania appeals to the institutional theory of art to support his claim to be a composer of musical works (2010, p. 350), and hence to be able to ensure *Composition 2009 #3*'s status as music. I don't dispute Kania's claim to composer status, but I do not think his possession of that status makes his intention that a given work he composes be (Western art) music decisive. For instance, one might object that, because the work was composed by Kania to provide an example of silent music for a lecture-demonstration – an unusual context and motivation for the introduction of a new work/innovation – it fails to satisfy the conditions for acceptance into the Western art music tradition. (Compare with the motivations for the innovations introduced by Schoenberg and Cage.)

organization (see n.52, below)? How does the organized sound condition interact with Cage's eventual definition of music as 'sounds heard'?

To answer these questions – and similar questions for other musical traditions – we will need some tools for unpacking the organized sound condition at a given time for a tradition. The simpler aspect of the condition, which sounds are permitted, can usually be sorted out by seeing which musical instruments are employed within the tradition and what the traditional techniques for performing on these instruments are. In this respect Western art music is extremely permissive: We have already referenced extended techniques (the production of unusual sounds by unusual techniques applied to traditional instruments), but Western art music has also incorporated pre-recorded sound and digital sound synthesis. In this situation, any sound that can be produced or recorded can be used. However, there may still be restrictions on *how* these sounds can be used.

3.2. Specifying the content of the organizational aspect of the organized sound condition

Figure 4 offers a schematic of the types of organization possible in a musical work. For each branch on the diagram, we can ask whether or not the sort of organization represented by that branch is a requirement of the organized sound condition, as currently constituted. The first branches correspond to the hierarchical level of the relevant organization: external organization (the offsetting of the experience of the musical materials from other (auditory) experience) is at the highest level and nested levels of internal organization (the structural organization of the musical materials *within* the piece/performance) are at lower levels.

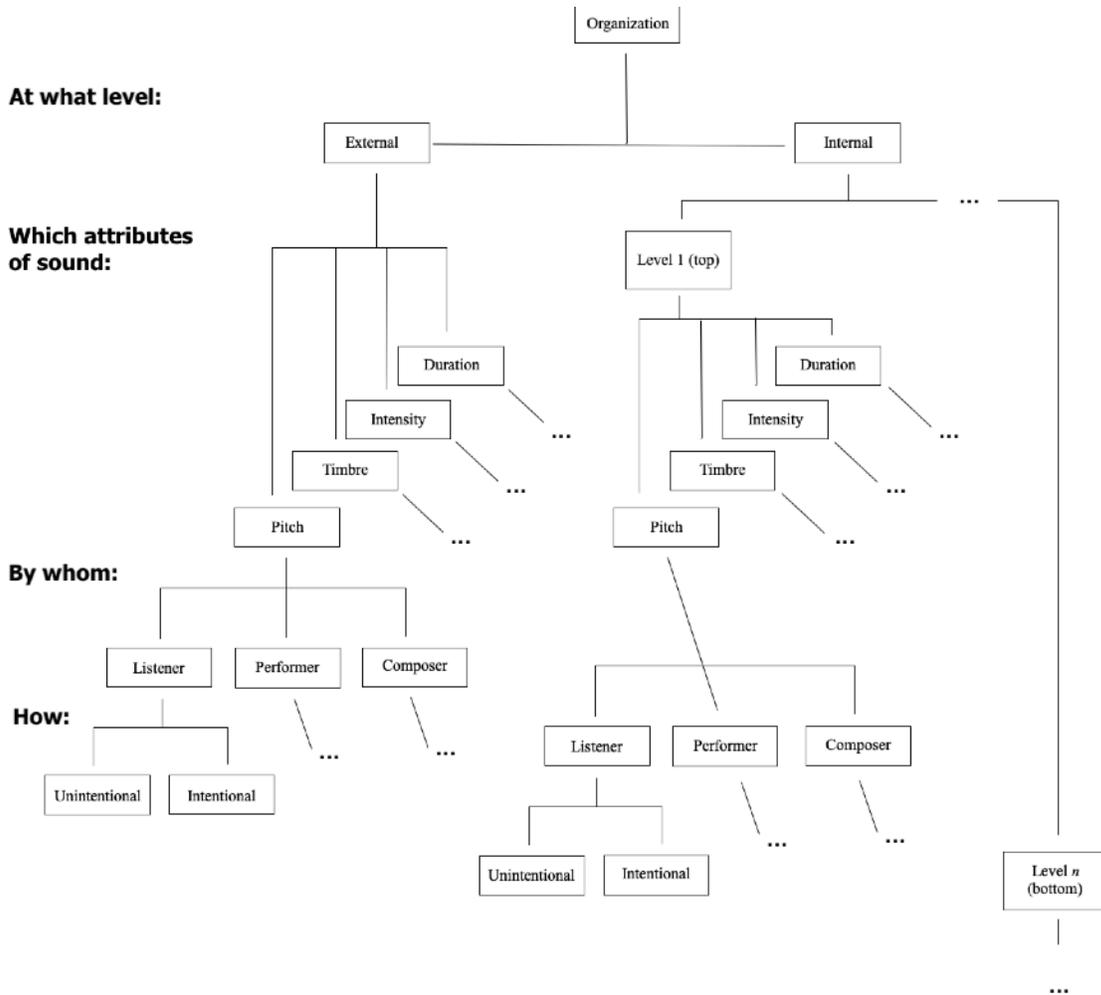


Figure 4. Diagram of possible interpretations of ‘organized sound’. Ellipses at the end of a line indicate a replication of the same-level substructure of the next element to the left. Ellipses breaking a line indicate an indeterminate number intervening branches with the same lower level structure as the branch to the left.

An example of nested internal hierarchical organization can be seen in the harmonic organization of Western classical and romantic music, against which Schoenberg was reacting. Take the traditional symphony – a four movement work. The harmonic relations of the keys of the movements is one aspect of the internal organization of the work (typically, the first and last movement are in the same key and the second and third are in closely related keys). At the next level down, we get internal harmonic organization within a movement. For instance, the opening

movement is usually divided into a two-part exposition, the first part in the tonic key, the second in the dominant key (a fifth above the tonic). This is followed by the development, which begins on the dominant key but moves through several different key areas before returning to the tonic for the recapitulation – a return to the exposition but now with both parts in the tonic key. At a lower level – say at the level of one part of the exposition – we have more localized harmonic organization supporting the theme of that portion of the exposition.

Within each hierarchical level of organization, there are various materials that can be organized, corresponding to the aspects of sound: pitch, timbre, intensity, and duration. The harmonic organization just discussed is one dimension of organization by pitch. Melody is another. Timbre is typically organized by assigning instruments to specific pitches/melodic lines. The organization of each of these parameters may be provided by the composer (if there is one), the performer(s), or even – potentially – the listener, as indicated in the next level down from the aspects of sound organized in fig. 4. For each of these potential organizers, the relevant organization may be intentional (as it was for Beethoven in notating his *Symphony, No. 5*) or it may be unintentional (as it was for Cage with respect to the attributes of the ambient sounds appropriated in a performance of *4'33''*). The discussion of *4'33''* has shown that intention comes in degrees – the performer of *4'33''* might exert some degree of control in the selection of the venue and time of the performance, though this falls far short of the sort of control evinced by Beethoven's notational choices. So, we might want to think of the distinct boxes for 'intentional' and 'unintentional' as marking extremes on a continuum, though nothing will hang on that here.

In specifying the content of the organized sound condition for Western art music – or any other tradition – we can begin at the top of the diagram and move downward for each hierarchical level of organization, asking if organization at that level is required by the body of works under consideration as representative samples of the tradition and, if so, of which aspects of sound (or what number of aspects), by whom, and whether the organization must be intentional (and to what degree). This is, essentially, the procedure I have followed in answering the questions posed about the organized sound condition and their implications for *4'33''* in §1. I will now briefly recapitulate these results, in the terms introduced in this section, to illustrate (in outline) the systematic examination of a socio-historically situated organized sound condition I am recommending here. This sets up a discussion about the content of the organized sound condition for Western art music in the wake of *4'33''* which occupies the remainder of the section.

Concerning the requirement for external organization – the setting apart of a work's sounds from sounds not included in the performance – the discussion of *4'33''* has shown that the performer's actions can organize sounds that she does not (intentionally) produce – e.g., ambient noises.⁵⁰ In *4'33''* these sounds are set apart from any that the performer intentionally produces, which are not a part of the work.⁵¹ Therefore, with respect to external organization, the organized sound condition can require, at most, that the performer set apart the sounds of the work by some attention-directing act of framing.

⁵⁰ *4'33''* does not seem to impose any requirements on external organization by the listener.

⁵¹ See discussion of Kania's argument against Davies's claim that *4'33''* doesn't exclude, and therefore doesn't organize, any sounds (§1.2.1).

With respect to a requirement for external organization on the part of the composer: Typically, in Western art music, the score delimits which sounds count as part of the work; the sounds resulting from the indicated actions of the score are set apart from those not resulting from the indicated actions. Those sonic attributes that are determined by the indicated actions are intentionally set apart from those (attributes of) sounds not resulting from the indicated actions; those left indeterminate by the indicated actions, but nevertheless resulting from them (e.g., when a composer gives no indications regarding volume), are unintentionally set apart. The discussion of *4'33''* (and Cardew's *Treatise*) has shown that we need a fairly liberal understanding of 'the sounds resulting from the indicated actions' – one that includes sounds to which the audience's attention is directed by the performer.

Once we turn to internal organization, the assessment of the organized sound condition in light of *4'33''*'s innovations closely tracks the discussion of §1. There we saw that, at best we can require direct intentional organization, by the composer, of duration – though not necessarily the durations of individual sounds, themselves, but rather the durations of actions of the performer by which the sounds are produced or framed. No other elements are subject to this requirement (if there is such a requirement). Nor are they subject to a requirement that they be directly intentionally organized by the performer. (Recall the contrast between *Music of Changes* and *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* in this regard.) The performer of *Imaginary Landscape, No. 4* or *4'33''* is not structuring any attributes of the sounds *within* each of the directly intentionally

organized durations. That is left to chance. So there is a lower hierarchical level at which none of the attributes of the sounds are being intentionally organized.⁵²

Therefore, the most stringent form of the organized sound condition for Western art music, in the wake of *4'33"*, can require external organization by both composer and performer and intentional internal durational organization by both composer and performer. It might also require unintentional – or indirectly intentional – organization of other sonic attributes at lower hierarchical levels of internal structure. If the requirement is for indirectly intentional organization, it remains an open question how indirect this can be (though it will need to be pretty indirect). And what of innovations introduced since *4'33"*?

If, for example, *0'00"* satisfies the historical constraint – and I see no reason why it can't – and thereby counts as introducing a revision in the organized sound condition for Western art music, then the condition will not require intentional internal organization, by the composer, of any sonic parameter. It might still require indirect intentional external organization of intensity, given the call for "maximum amplification". No other attributes of sound are in any way intentionally externally organized by the composer, though the score will call for actions that produce sounds and thereby provide (unintentional) external structure. So, the condition could still require unintentional external organization by the composer. *0'00"* does not challenge a requirement on intentional organization (internal or external) by the performer.⁵³

⁵² Again, no requirement for internal organization by the listener is imposed by *4'33"*. But we can easily imagine how a listener could bring about such organization of ambient sounds: The listener could impose intentional internal organization on the sound by actively shifting their attention to different sounds or to different features of sounds. For instance, the listener might choose to attend to the sounds of the birds outside her window for thirty seconds, then to the sound of the refrigerator motor humming in the background for twenty seconds, and finally to the muffled sound of her neighbor's television for one minute.

⁵³ So accepting *0'00"* won't settle the question of whether Dodd's *Simple Imaginary Landscape* satisfies the organized sound condition.

A similar analysis can be offered for other putative innovative works of Western art music. Perhaps once we have done this, we will find that the most stringent version of the organized sound condition for Western art music is no more demanding than Cage's (post-4'33'') claim that "*sounds one hears are music*" (Cage 1967, p. 163). On the most liberal interpretation of this statement, absolutely any sound heard counts as music, and the mere fact of hearing is sufficient to impart the requisite organization (which is, in this case, merely external organization by the listener): hearing the sounds sets them apart from sounds not heard.⁵⁴ This is, moreover, an example of *unintentional* external organization by the listener: any sound heard is music regardless of the listener's intention. More likely, Cage had in mind the view that music just is those sounds that one listens to attentively. In this case, sounds are externally organized in virtue of being *attended* to by the listener and nothing more. On this view, one could choose to attend, for some duration, to as many sounds heard in that duration as one can and, in doing so, impart the necessary external organization for the sounds heard to count as music.⁵⁵ Alternatively, sounds might be selected for attention due to some feature of the sounds themselves – e.g., one might choose to attend to all the quiet sounds in one's environment for a particular duration. The remaining features of the sounds attended to would be unintentionally organized.

The point is that we can only answer these questions in light of the innovations introduced into the Western art music tradition since 4'33''. If these innovations bear the right socio-historical connections to that tradition, then they will count as introducing a revision in the

⁵⁴ Assuming the statement is to be reconciled with the organized sound condition.

⁵⁵ One might think that, since 4'33'' includes the ambient sounds heard during its performance, the claim that 4'33'' satisfies the organized sound condition depends on the 'sounds heard' definition of music. As we have seen, though, this overlooks the role of the performer and composer in imparting organization to the work. What role is left for the performer and composer on the 'sounds heard' view is an open question.

content of the organized sound condition for that tradition. Furthermore, we can undertake this sort of analysis for any musical tradition, identifying the content of the organized sound condition for that tradition at a given time, thereby deepening our understanding of the music (and musical values) of that tradition. For whatever traditions we choose to study, though, this will require some musicological due diligence. We cannot simply specify the content of organized sound condition on the basis of our intuitions. That approach quickly leads to chauvinism or parochialism.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that 4'33" satisfies the organized sound condition on (Western art) music. Furthermore, 4'33" satisfies the socio-historical constraint, on which a work must bear the right sort of relationship to some musical tradition to count as music. If I am right that the socio-historical constraint is the only other condition on music, then 4'33" is music. Along the way I have shown how the organized sound constraint and socio-historical constraint interact, particularly with respect to innovation within specific musical traditions, and how we can approach an analysis of the organized sound condition for a given tradition and time.

It is my hope that this will lay the groundwork for a more fruitful interaction between philosophers of music, (ethno)musicologists, and music theorists. For philosophers, understanding the technical innovations introduced into a musical tradition, the historical context, and social values ascribed to music within that tradition will clarify ontological and evaluative questions concerning music – and it will do so in a way that can transcend the Western art music-inspired conceptualization of music that has historically dominated the philosophy of

music. For music theorists and musicologists, philosophical advances on the evaluation of innovations will help clarify the value of particular musical interventions beyond what can be inferred from historical influence. It might even help composers and performers pinpoint new avenues for musical exploration.

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