Treatise

Treatise

on

With invited contemporary visual artist, Chan Chan Har's reimagined artworks.

Cardew's Treatise:

imagined.

and reimagined.

Telok Kurau Studios Art Gallery
10th March 2024
1930 - 2130

WTF

Programme

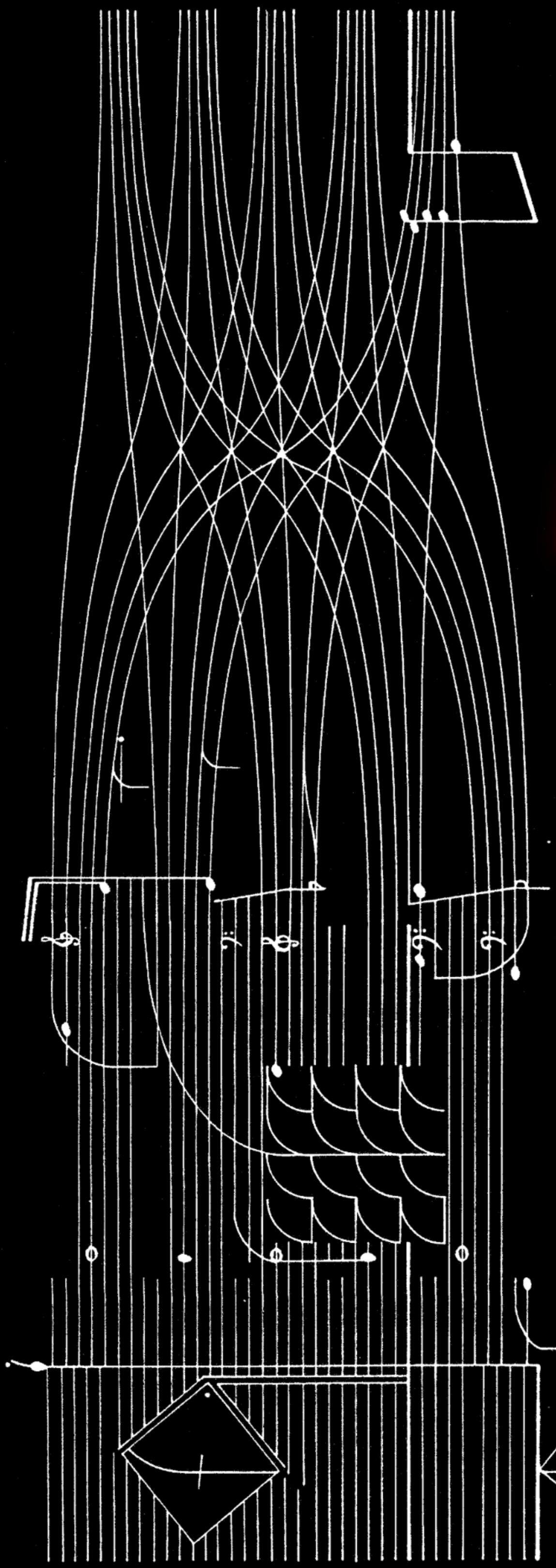
1930: Exhibitions

2000: Cardew: Treatise (Selected)

2030: Jaden: four eight

Xavier: enthalpy II

2100: Exhibitions



a treatise on Cardew's Treatise

an exploration of his score

a reimagination of his music,

by artists and musicians

join us

surrounded by Cardew's drawings:

swarmed with cacophonous noise

listening to reimagined "music"

surrounded by new artworks

About this Exhibition

I met Xavier in my studio in December 2023 and I am very impressed with the ideas from Xavier for attempting to reimagine Cardew's Treatise. Little do we expect that the single conversation would
brought us to the venture of collaboration between visual and audio, to set up a show together at Telok Kurau Studios Art Gallery.

In January 2024, painstakingly, I pasted 193 A4 size pages of Cornelius Cardew's creation, page by page, for presentation in the show. And painstakingly, I pondered on the enormous effect of this musician in creating such wonderful and mystical graphic scores. As I studied his work, I reimagined and created my visual works. At the same time, Xavier sent me his collaborative piece of music with WTF based on the inspiration of Treatise on Treatise.

The result of the art exhibition is something that will speak beyond words, as music and art have no barriers to human. I thank you for the valuable opportunity to work with Xavier and his team.

May this show bring many to the imagined and reimagined world of Treatise on Treatise, a world of both
sound and sight...

Chan Choy Har
Contemporary Artist
Singapore

Reimagined on Reimagined 100cm x 100cm - Chan Choy Har

I met Choy Har at the end of 2023, and I was immediately impressed with her way of thinking and aesthetics. Many of her artworks are highly unique and individual, highly nuanced down to the single brushstroke, and each provoking great thought and introspection.

At the same time, I was also studying the work Treatise written by Cornelius Cardew, a British composer avant-garde at the time of writing that work. What struck me with the Treatise is in its “notation”. Instead of opting for convention stem and note notations, which many of us are familiar with, each page of his score is a delicate and intricate visual masterpiece. Characterised by various lines, shapes and quasi-musical elements, each page of the Treatise deliberately challenges our notions of what notation, and by extension music means.

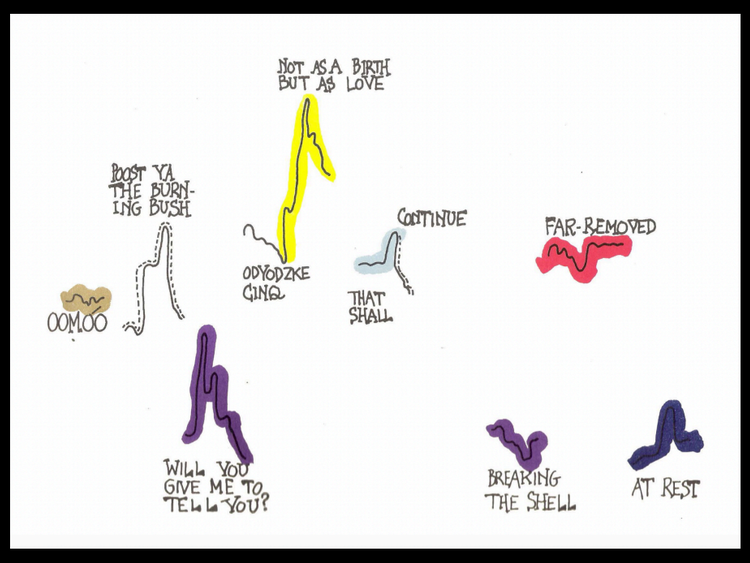
With these two things in mind - the artist and the score - I decided to collaborate with Choy Har with my group to present this exhibition tonight. What I find incredibly curious, are the intersections between music and the visual arts, and how the Treatise can be interpreted in new ways besides from a compositional standpoint. You will hear two new compositions, reactions from composers, and will see a new work by Choy Har, a reaction from a visual artist.

Xavier Hui
Artistic Director
what the FORTE

Reimagined on Reimagined 100cm x 100cm - Chan Choy Har

About Cardew and his Treatise

Before unpacking Cardew as a composer further, one needs to unpack three things:



John Cage: Aria (1958)



AMM, at a performance in 2009



March on Washington,
Civil Rights Movement, 1960s



Cornelius Cardew: 1977

1

The Avant Garde: One of the leading figures of new music at that time was John Cage, who composed the well-known piece 4'33". The piece focused on everything but the “music” in the concert hall - the breathing of the people, the intermittent coughs, the subtle figidting of the audience.

During this period, Cage was exploring indeterminate pieces, i.e pieces which are not precisely notated. One example of this would be his work for solo voice, Aria. A sample of the score can be seen on the left - with the interpretation of the contours and colours up to the discretion of the singer.

Cardew switched to indeterminate notation after attending a concert by Cage in 1958, and some of his influence can be seen in Cardew’s Treatise. Many of the elements are left to the performers’ judgement, resulting in unique versions of the piece with each performance

2

Cardew as Improviser: Improvisation is an important musical concept for Cardew during the 1960s. In 1966, Cardew joined the free improvisation group AMM, which comprised various English Jazz musicians.

Improvisation perhaps, had a politically radicalising influence in how it provided lessons of fruitful corporation and productive freedom - lessons which Cardew would impart in his later music. Hints of Cardew’s improvisational tendencies can be seen in Treatise, where performers are often in a intermediary state between prepared performance and free improvisation.

3

The Socio Political Context: the 1960s were a period of immense social change. Many activist movements (such as the civil rights movement), and counter-cultural movements (such as the hippie movement), grew in popularity in the West and the rest of the world. The period also saw many liberalising reforms, such as the abolition of racial segregation in the United States, and the abolition of the death penalty in the United Kingdom (where Cardew was based)

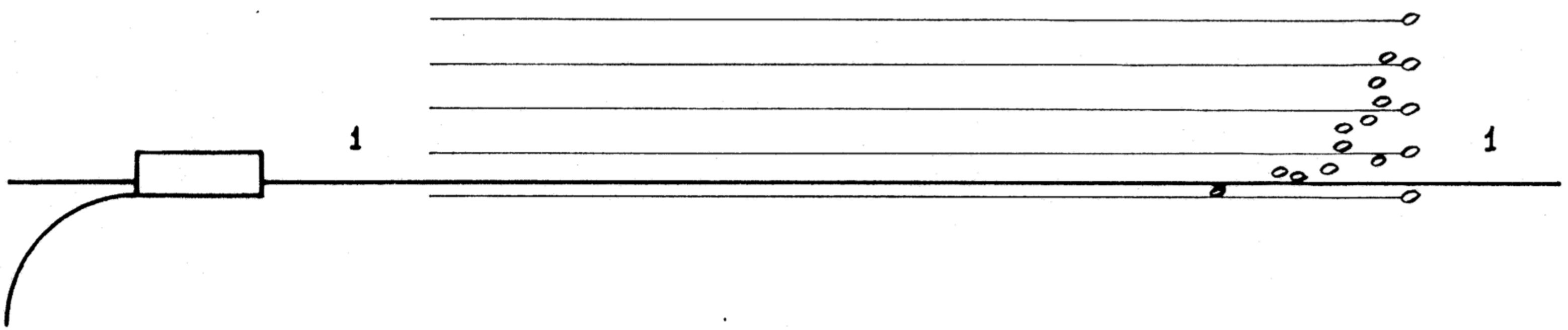
Cardew himself, grew increasingly sympathetic to Marxist and Socialist ideologies (notably, Maoism), which eventually led him to openly denounce the Treatise and by extension the avant-garde in the 1970s

Treatise (1963 - 1967), is a set of 193 pages, each with a unique design comprising of various lines, shapes, numbers, and musical symbols. There are two musical staffs at the bottom of each score, to show that this is still a musical score.

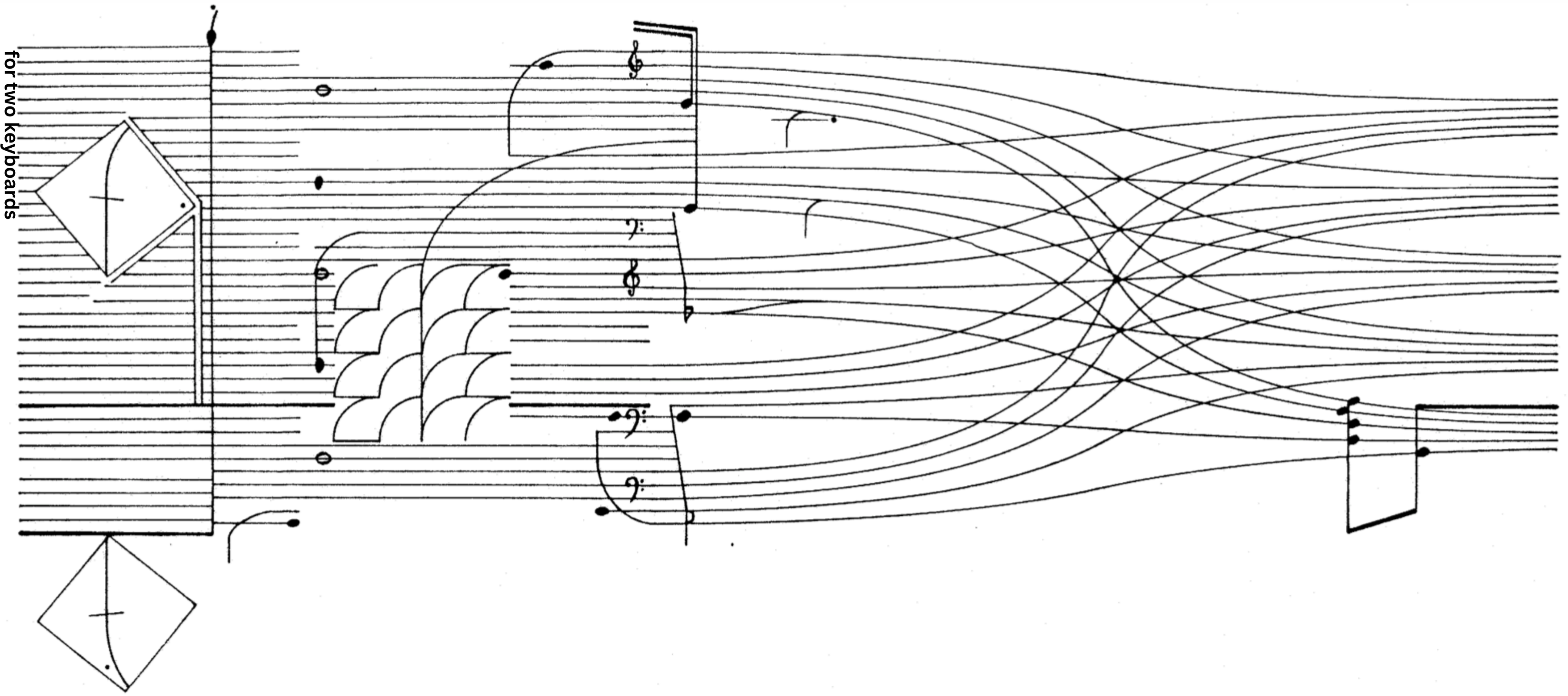
The Treatises are performed commonly as a whole. However, for tonight’s performance, we would like to zoom in on five selected Treatises - each realisation being highly contrasting to each other.

We would like to challenge the audience tonight to interpret these Treatises together with us during this segment. We have attached the scores for these five treatises in the next page - feel free to turn your phones and look at them while listening to us.

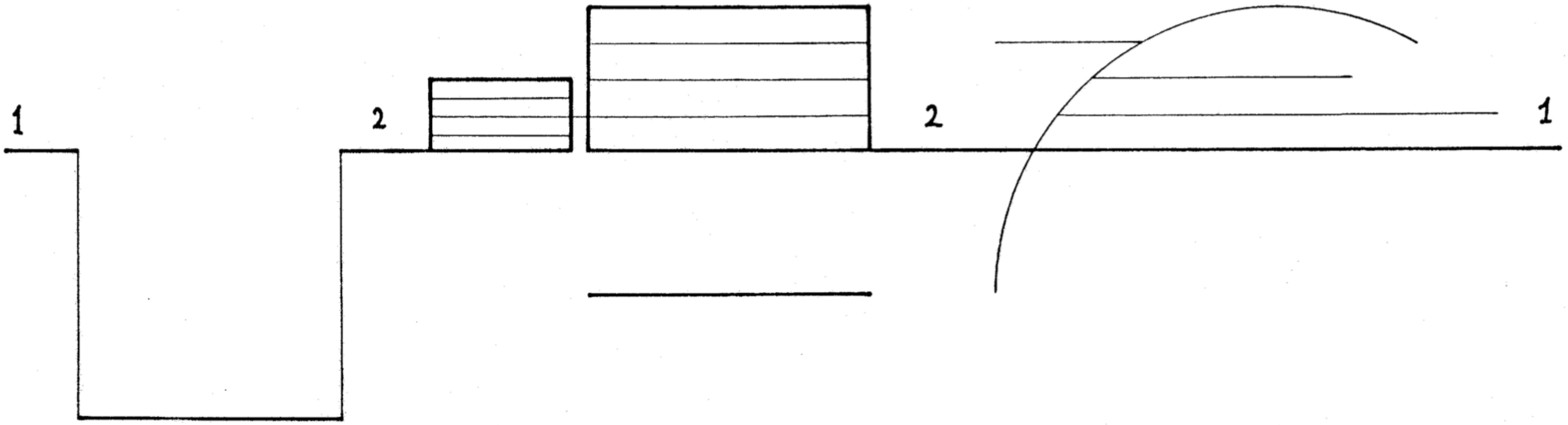
for whole ensemble


1
1

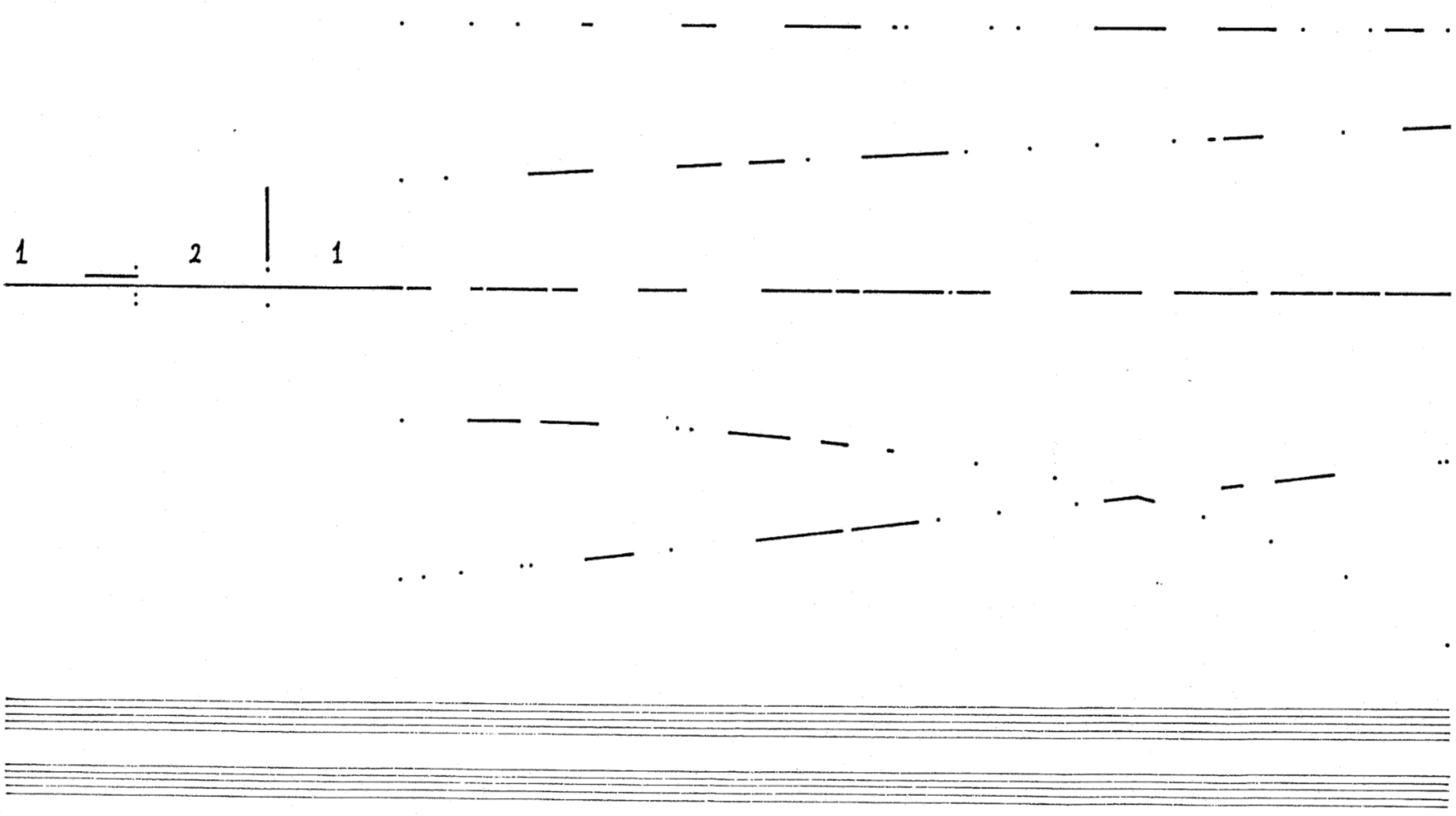
for two keyboards

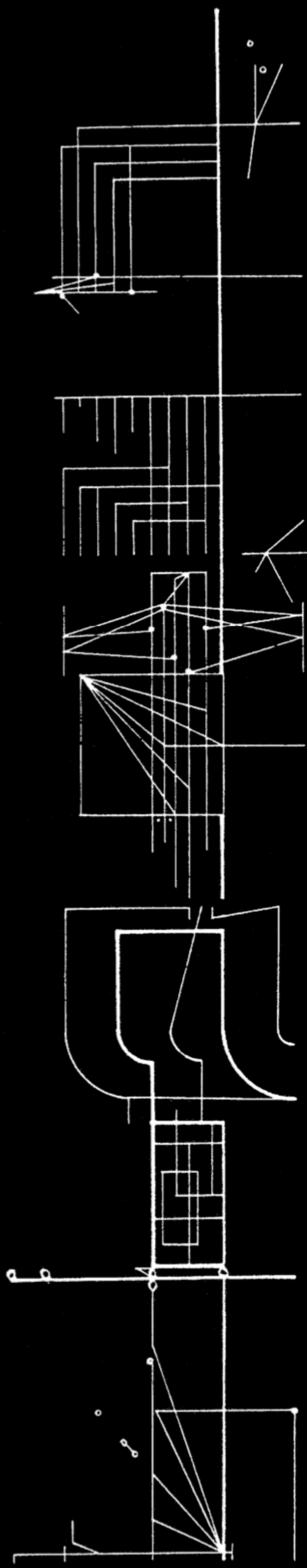


for viola and drumpads



for whole ensemble





four
eight

four eight:

Classically trained and having composed mostly tonal music, interpreting Cardew's Treatise is quite a step-up for me.

My composition for this concert, "Four Eight", uses Cardew's Treatise No. 48 as a basis for interpretation. The piece opens up with a set of 4 glissando that introduces 5 pitches: C, D, E, F# and B. This pitch set of 5 forms the foundation of the entire piece.

I interpret the section with juxtaposing rectangles as 2 similar motifs 'clashing' with one another. A notable section in the first half of the piece features the 2 keyboards playing the same melodic motif made using the pitch set. However, one of the keyboard players uses the modulation wheel to shift the pitches upwards slowly, which causes a clash in harmony.

The second half of my piece focuses on the part of the visual stimuli that contains many lines. From a macro scale, I interpret the dense lines as flowing accompaniment figures, with most of the accompaniment being made up of harmonies that are associated with C, D, E, F# and B. This setion's main idea is to create an ethereal atmosphere, a direct contrast to the first half's rather repetitive and rigid nature.



Learning piano since the age of four, Jaden has always been a talented pianist with an ambition to pursue the highest level of artistry in piano performance. He had won numerous prizes in competitions and performed in concerts, both locally and internationally.

In his schooling years, He was awarded the MOE Music Elective Scholarship during his time in Eunoia Junior College, before completing his H2 and H3 Music for A-Levels in 2023.

Being part of the Music Elective Program for 6 years allowed Jaden to cultivate an interest in music creating, where his composing skills are honed through composition and arranging coursework.

enthalpy II

enthalpy II

This work is the second of my enthalpy series - a series of compositions exploring the extremes of very intensive violent music, and very ambient static music. Odd numbered enthalpies are violent outbursts of energy, while even numbered enthalpies such as this work, are calm, meditative and absorbing.

As part of the event Treatise on Treatise, I wrote this with Cardew's Treatise as a visual stimulus. I interpreted the stimulus by deconstructing three distinct elements: the parallel lines, the bolded line, and the circle. Rather than a taleological one-for-one interpretation of the Treatise, I explored and manipulated these elements more freely throughout the work; the visual elements as points of inspiration, rather than actual musical equivalencies.

I interpret the parallel lines as quiet, static streams of sound. The circle to me, is interpreted as a very dense and packed sound, while the bolded line is an intermediary between these two sonic colours. A more sonic approach was adopted, the music flowing as one organic complex with ebbs and flows of predictability and unpredictability.

The work is organised in three sections. first section establishes the main elements - the lines (bolded and not bolded), and the circle. The second section explores a gradual blurring between elements: small swells constantly interrupt a constant stream of pointilistic sounds, eventually merging and blurring together. The third follows a similar process, albeit at a much faster and more intense manner. The music eventually dies down, with small (yet final) reiterations of the main elements.

This work was written for my ensemble, what the FORTE (WTF), for the event Treatise on Treatise. This event was an interdisciplinary collaboration with a visual artist Chan Choy Har, who specialises in contemporary and avant-garde paintings. The grouped reached out to her and other various composers, and alongside this group, explores different reactions and perspectives to Cardew's famous graphic score.

A Statement from our Artist:

Arranging the graphic score according to the sequence and not in sequence is a challenge and mind- blowing experience to me. I never expected that to arrange the images of the graphic score would create another visual experience and reimagined on the imagined series of artworks through the presentation of the graphic score from Treatise by Cornelius Cardew.

How could I illustrate it? I arranged the 193 pages of graphic score from Treatise by Cornelius Cardew firstly as how I would want to present it, from top to bottom, page sequence, laying forty pages on a long piece of paper measuring three meters in length and one meter in height. As I studied the graphic score and listen to Cardew's musical piece, "Treatise", I was inspired by the "flow and speed of musical notes" that I dropped my task and ventured to my painting of the canvas with acrylic paint (as shown in the art gallery).

This prompt me to further experiment with arrangement of graphic score from left to right in a linear arrangement. Visually I can imagine the continuous flow of the form of the sound visually in my own interpretation and I add on another coat of colours on my canvas in my reimagined world. In this way, I completed the presenting the 193 pages of graphic score of Cornelius Cardew on a total of five pieces sheet of papers, each measuring 3 meters by one meter height (forty pieces in a piece). Even the spaces decided in between the pages speaks meaning to me as it is pausing in breath and plays the musical notes visually on the paper as according to the graphic score. The rest of the remaining pages are arranged in a gradual reduction of pages placed in a linear order that symbolise the finale of the musical score that fade into the background and complete its imagined world of visual and sound.

Written by Chan Choy Har
7th March 2024

Reimagined on Reimagined 100cm x 100cm - Chan Choy Har

About Choy Har

Chan Choy Har is a BA graduate in Fine Arts from RMIT University, Australia and MA in Art Education from National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
Her numerous awards included the Commonwealth Foundation Fellowships in Arts and Crafts (1992 - 1993), second prize at the Philippe Charriol Foundation Contemporary Art Competition (1994), Best Young Artist by Singapore Telecommunications (1995) and Dr Tan Tze Chor Excellence Award (1997 and 2007). An artist-in-residence in Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, she held her 1st solo exhibition in Aberdeen Arts Center in Scotland, United Kingdom (1993) and studied under the late Scottish Artist, Alexander Fraser.



Her local and overseas exhibitions (1986 – present),
are namely the Asian International Art Exhibition (AIAE), held in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Macau, China, Japan, South Korea and Fukuoka, Japan (2021). Her solo exhibition was at the Visual Art Center in Singapore (2018), featuring her works from 1986 to 2018. As an artist in residency in Telok Kurau Studios since 2021, Choy Har initiated the concept of ART/ARK that reached out to the community through the arts. She spearheaded the first art exhibition, "See and Seek" with aspiring artists from all walks of lives in the community in December 2022.

An art educator since 1997, she contributed and published an art education research article for Learning Symposium 2021(Cluster). As Chairperson of Telok Kurau Studios Management Committee (2022-2023), she organized "Encore of Colours" Art Exhibition 2023 and " Interwoven" Art Exhibition 2024 for Telok Kurau Studios, Singapore Art Week 2023/2024. Her works have been collected by Singtel, Four Seasons Hotel (Singapore), other corporations and private collectors from Singapore, Malaysia, China and Korea.

About what the FORTE

The limits of new music are BOUNDLESS

The nature of new music is one that is experimental and one that is highly personalised. In some sense, our group shares the same general direction to innovate and to push aesthetic boundaries as the ecosystem of the many new music groups in Singapore.



Yet, this group seeks to provide different aesthetic and compositional perspectives not as a rejection of these groups, but as something which is highly unique to the personalities of our musicians and our composers.

This is the beauty of creation and the compositional craft in this day and age – in which music has become highly individualised and personal instead of conformist to a particular style of music. In bringing out the best individual quirks of the musicians, composers and artists we work with, we aim to contribute our part to the musical ecosystem at large.

Our aesthetics focus predominantly on finding a convergence between experimental music and more vernacular styles.

On one hand, our programmes aim to present a diversity of styles, from highly sophisticated works of experimental academic technique to more simplistic and vernacular-based forms of music

On the other hand, we aim to appeal to BOTH new music and vernacular-based audiences through redesigning the concert experience.

The possibilities are endless: from programming audience-interactive pieces, to creating more casual contexts for the performance of new music, to introducing dialogues within concerts. To us, inclusivity is an important value that guides our programming, and as much as possible we aim to open ourselves to different groups of listeners across the concerts/events we hold.

We also wish to include different art forms in the music making process.

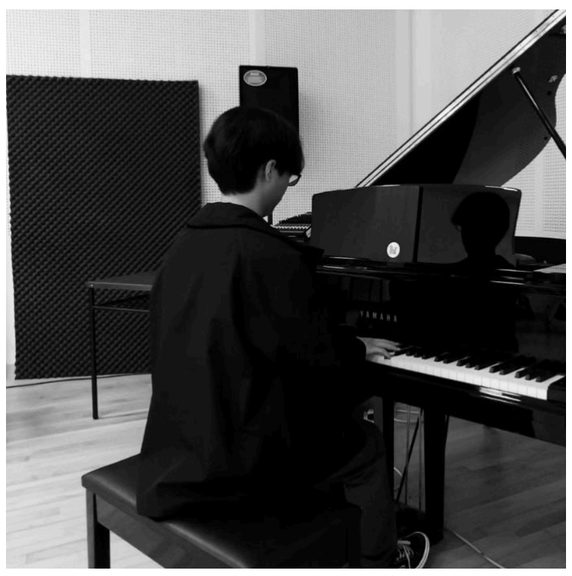
Interdisciplinary collaborations are an integral category of our projects, serving not just a way to reinterpret existing music, but also to marry music with new artistic mediums to create more complex art forms.

We firmly believe that all art is connected – and we aim to explore the intersections and departure points between these respective art forms

About the Musicians



Xavier
Xavier is an eclectic composer who explores a vast variety of styles, and aims to push for new musical boundaries by exploring the very fine line between different musical styles. This desire to challenge preconceptions (not just compositional) can also be seen in his leadership of Re:Cinta Wind Symphony: a youth-centric band which aims to present wind band music in a new unconventional light; and what the FORTE (WTF): an experimental group which aims to present new local compositions in the form of interdisciplinary collaborations.



Ken Shiin
An experimenter at heart, Ken Shiin is a stickler for exploring multiple genres and performance contexts. He enjoys creating heavily modified electronic timbres, besides tooting his horn and playing Liszt on the piano.



Jasper Goh
Jasper Goh is a Singaporean Oboist. He completed his studies at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts under the tutelage of Joost Flach, prior to his admission to NAFA, he has studied under Tay Kai Tze and is currently under the tutelage of Rachel Walker. Known for his active participation in the classical music scene in Singapore, Jasper has played under numerous ensembles: The Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of Music Makers, Metropolitan Festival Orchestra, Ventus and Singapore National Youth Orchestra. Jasper has also represented Singapore in orchestra festivals in Indonesia, Hong Kong and China.



Joya
Joya picked up the viola at the age of 12 & found her love for ensemble playing when she joined her secondary school string ensemble & subsequently SNYO. Joya also took up MEP & H2 Music & got to deepens her musical knowledge. her interest to further explore contemporary music led her to join this project.

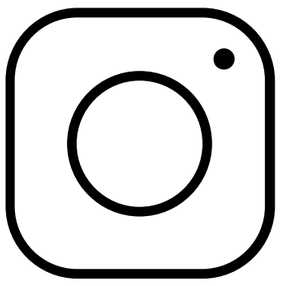


Jiawen
Jiawen is a rock/pop/indie drummer who has been playing drumset since around 8 years ago. He had been participating in stage performances since secondary school, in CCAs such as SPF Symphonic Band, EJC Symphonic Band, EJC Rock Band and NUS Amplified. In EJC Rock Band, he started writing and recording his first project with the band called EJC School Anthem rock version. He is very pleased to be participating in the formation of WTF to give an alternative experience to you all.

Thank you!

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