



No. 7129

*Treatise* *Handbook*

including

BUN No.2 FOR ORCHESTRA

&

VOLO SOLO

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Preview File Only

## Introduction

I wrote *Treatise* with the definite intention that it should stand entirely on its own, without any form of introduction or instruction to mislead prospective performers into the slavish practice of 'doing what they are told'. So it is with great reluctance – once having achieved, by some fluke, the 'cleanest' publication it were possible to imagine – that I have let myself be persuaded to collect these obscure and, where not obscure, uninteresting remarks into publishable form.

The temptations to explain why there is no explanation and offer instructions on how to cope with the lack of instructions hold no attraction. However, the years of work on *Treatise* have furnished me with a fund of experience obviously distinct from the experience embodied in the score itself. And this fund continues to accumulate, since my experience of and with the piece is by no means completed with the completion of the score; so some of the excreta of this fund may as well be made available to those who, because it's published, may shortly wish to be occupied with the score. Possibly some errors and misconceptions may thus be avoided.

To complete the information content of this handbook I must briefly outline the biography of the piece.

Early in 1963, on the basis of an elaborate scheme involving 67 elements, some musical, some graphic, I began sketching what I soon came to regard as my *Treatise* and pressed quite quickly ahead to what is now page 99. To start with my idea of what the piece was to be was so sketchy as to be completely inarticulate; later, in Buffalo in November 1966 I felt it necessary to completely re-compose the first 44 pages. In the summer of 1963 I put pages 45-51, 57-62, 75-79 into fair copy, using a much larger format than the one I finally decided on. The apparent musicality of page 99 seemed a stumbling block that impeded my way for some time to come. My next decisive action on the piece was in December 1964 when I put seven separate pages into freehand fair copy using the format that the piece now appears in. These pages were 53, 64, 74, 89, 93, 96/7 (as one page), 99. I quickly decided against freehand drawing for the finished score. In Rome in the first months of 1965 I pushed ahead to page 143, putting it into fair copy as I went along, with the exception of the 'black pages' which I did not finalise until much later (?Feb 1966). In England in the second half of 1965 I worked on redrawing in the new format the first passages I had copied out (45-51, 57-62, 75-79) as well as reworking the intervening material and drawing it in fair copy. When I came to Buffalo in October 1966 I thus had the score complete and continuous from 45-143.

By this time the fluency of my draughtsmanship had increased and my conception of the piece was expanding. I re-appraised the schematic material that I had yet to compose and made substitutions for some of the elements that had not yet come into play. For instance: I had originally planned to work with solid black ellipsoids towards the end of the piece; now I substituted either the idea of melodic presentation or the tree form that features prominently towards the end (at this point I cannot remember which of these two took the place of the ellipsoids). I had become

more and more strongly aware of the structure's adaptability to my desires since passages like 114-116 and 122-126, and especially from the experience of reworking 1-44. In the final 50 pages I exploited this adaptability to the full, even to the point of activating the (originally passive and merely pause-counting) numbers. These last 50 pages were written in the early months of 1967 in Buffalo.

After this exposition it hardly seems necessary to excuse the fact that many of the verbal notes written while working on the piece at different stages are likely to be mutually contradictory. If they are not it is not my fault. I have made no attempt to clean them up with a view to consistency.

One item weighs against my general reluctance in connection with this handbook, and that is the opportunity to print *Volo Solo*, which I find a useful piece, full of sweet airs, and now I come to think of it that may be the reason European publishers have so consistently sneezed at it.

The analytical article that follows *Volo Solo* was written in Rome shortly after the completion of that piece.

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Two years have elapsed since the foregoing was written. I have taken advantage of this delay in publication to include some new material, in particular the lecture on improvisation. Not that I now consider *Treatise* 'improvisatory' any more than I did while writing it. But it does seem (using hindsight) to have pointed in the direction of improvisation. A square musician (like myself) might use *Treatise* as a path to the ocean of spontaneity. Whether it will equip him for survival in that ocean is another question altogether. The lecture on improvisation represents an initial survey based on a thin veneer of experience.

9.2.70.

## Treatise: Working Notes

6th Feb 63

A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and consisely notated.

8th Feb 63

Notation is a way of making people move. If you lack others, like aggression or persuasion. The notation *should* do it. This is the most rewarding aspect of work on a notation. Trouble is: Just as you find your sounds are too alien, intended 'for a different culture', you make the same discovery about your beautiful notation: no-one is willing to understand it. No-one moves.

14th March 63

I do not suggest that the art of composition is really a science of measurement and precision. I do think that any work demands precision of judgment, otherwise it will blow away. It is precision that illuminates (Confucius (Pound): "The sun's lance falling on the precise spot verbally"). This clarity is joy, however much it may suit our temperaments to continue rolling in the mud.



is alright if it is exactly what you want (although how interesting is it to want exactly that? Well, that depends on how badly you want it). But it is bad if it is a confession of failure. And that's the point; where is the difference located? Certainly not in the squiggle. Hence for you, dear listener, there is no difference whatever. (Which is why I can never turn to you for advice).

63

(Written in the score) NB the sound should be a picture of the score, not vice versa.

63

Interpreter! Remember that no meaning is as yet attached to the symbols. They are however to be interpreted in the context of their role in the whole. Distinguish symbols that enclose space (circle, etc.); those that have a characteristic feature. What symbols are for sounding and what for orientation. Example: The horizontal central bar is the main and most constant orientation; what happens where it ceases (or bends)? Do you go out of tune (eg)?

15th May 63

In connection with Frege's 'Foundations of Arithmetic': "Symbols are not empty simply because not meaning anything with which we can be acquainted". This reassurance is disqualified; he means it in the sense that one cannot be acquainted with — for example — 3. Frege would never have considered finishing the sentence with a full-stop after 'anything'. If anybody *had* written it, intending a reference to some super-imagery or Jungian idea evoking a response only in the unconscious,

Frege would have applied his sarcastic "Mysterious power of words devoid of thought" and his confident "No-one will expect any sense to emerge from empty symbols".

May 63

The test: Devote time not to writing on in the treatise, but studying it and trying to realise what exactly is at work in it. *How* does it keep my imagination at work? *What* actually am I manipulating in the way of material? Do I assume some material that is not explicit (eg, real sounds)?

May 63

Intrapolation from the universal shapes of geometry, etc, to the idiosyncratic musical signs: a disturbing element is the signs that are not intrapolated in this way. *pf* ♪ ♫: in particular. These pre-formed symbols have no place in (my) netz of stavelines. How to get rid of them is the problem, since they are important indices for many of the basic elements.

26th May 63

The dot-dash relationship of events and happenings. Events: something short, compact, homogeneous that we experience as complete (though we may only experience a part of it in fact) and as one thing. Happenings: something that continues, the end is not legible in the beginning. Two sets of parameters: event parameters and happening parameters.

14th June 63

Visual communications. How to develop a visual presentation through logic. How to show continuity in a diagram; in a series of stages, or by *reading* left to right, etc. In Treatise, the same problem: Which lines are happening continuously, and which are instantaneous events; where to set the borderline? This should be solved. Otherwise work lapses into constant evasions. If one interpretation proves troublesome or unsatisfactory we slip into another; but this must be watched and conscious.

June 63

The grid. Like walking in a thick fog: suddenly we find a thread across the path, catch it and follow it—isn't it already an orientation, before we discover that it leads us up/down, to warmer/colder regions, in straight line or curve? The fact that we follow it makes it an orientation? But Frege: "being thought is a completely different thing from being true" (But Burroughs: "What do you mean is it true? It's only the latest bulletin")

Perhaps finally the merit of treatise will depend on its geometrical resolution! However, it can certainly never be interesting *as geometry* (I have neither the ability nor the desire to make it so).

June 63

A concept, in Frege's sense, defines limits so that one can say with authority whether or not something falls under it. The signs of Autumn '60 should be regarded in this way. If the sign for tremolo occurs it should be possible to hear off each