

| | |
|--------------|--|
| STONE, Kurt. | |
| 1980 | <i>Music Notation in the Twentieth Century</i> . New York, London: W. W. Norton. |

PREFACE

When composers of serious music, in the early 1950s, began to explore areas far beyond all traditional concepts, conventional notation soon proved insufficient for dealing adequately with the new musical techniques and philosophies. The invention of new notational signs and procedures thus became imperative.

As the musical experiments and innovations continued and spread, new notational devices proliferated. Moreover, experiments conducted simultaneously in different parts of the world often brought forth identical signs for different effects, and vice versa.

After two decades of this disconcerting and ever-increasing deluge of new notation, invariably accompanied by endless explanations and more or less idiosyncratic instructions, communications from composer to performer had become seriously impaired. It seemed the right time to take stock, examine the new inventions for clarity and efficiency in practical use, select the devices that appeared most universally satisfactory, eliminate duplications, and codify the results in a practical guidebook.

In 1970, I proposed this plan to a number of individuals and organizations. As a result, the Index of New Musical Notation was established, under my direction, in the Music Division of the Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, New York. (For details, see the Introduction and Appendix 2.)

The Index project was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation (with the New York Public Library as sponsoring organization) and later also by the Ford Foundation (with the Music Library Association as sponsor).

The resulting efforts culminated in an International Conference on New Musical Notation, organized jointly by the Index project and the University of Ghent, Belgium. At the conference, which was held in Ghent in 1974, eighty professional musicians, composers, music editors, and musicologists from seventeen countries scrutinized and discussed close to 400 selected notational signs and procedures presented by the Index project, and then voted on them. The present book contains, as its nucleus, all those devices endorsed or recommended at that conference, along with a comprehensive, integrated presentation of traditional notation, based on more than thirty years of editorial experience in the field. Thus, virtually the entire arsenal of notation, old and new, of serious music in the twentieth century is covered by this guidebook.

INTRODUCTION

New Music and New Notation

New notation has never been generated exclusively by new musical ideas. New ideas are an integral part of composed music, at least in Western civilization, and notational procedures have generally been sufficiently adaptable to cope with them.

Only a fundamental break with established musical aesthetics and philosophies can bring about a commensurate notational change, and such profound upheavals have occurred extremely rarely. In fact, there have been only three in all of Western music history .

The first of these basic reorientations was the momentous shift from monody to polyphony around A.D. 900. The notational consequences were epochal: the vagueness of neumatic pitch notation was rendered obsolete and was replaced with the intervalllic precision of staff notation. And perhaps even more important, the specificity of durations was introduced: mensural notation. Both of these innovations have remained indispensable elements of music notation ever since.

Centuries went by during which the linear predominance of early polyphony gradually saw itself challenged by emerging vertical phenomena: chords and chord progressions. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a perfect balance of the horizontal and vertical forces was achieved; but around the year 1600, chordal harmony took on a life of its own by becoming an independent functional force capable of dominating the linear elements that had previously reigned supreme.

Now the traditional partbooks, being purely linear, were no longer appropriate, since they failed to capture the essence of the new music, the harmonic functions. Thus the second major notational change came about: partbooks were superseded by score notation because a score, showing all parts underneath each other, enables the reader to follow not only the horizontal (melodic, linear) aspects of a given composition, but also the vertical (harmonic) ones.

In the 1950s the third stylistic upheaval began to erupt, an upheaval which developed in two sharply contrasting directions. One of these was characterized by an unprecedented increase in precision of every conceivable component of a musical texture, with particular emphasis on formerly subsidiary elements such as dynamics, timbre, pitch inflections (microtones), location of sound sources, and so forth. This trend also went far beyond the traditional note values, often superseding the conventional geometric progression of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 ... with the arithmetical 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. ...Needless to say, traditional notation could not cope with these new demands, and a host of new symbols and procedures had to be devised to accommodate the new musical concepts.

The other stylistic trend rejected precision. Instead, it introduced deliberate ambiguity, varying degrees of indeterminacy, choices between alternatives, improvisation, and the utilization of extraneous, unpredictable sounds and circumstances. All these required radically new notation, even to the abandonment of conventional symbols and procedures altogether, in favor of implicit graphics, because such graphics assure the greatest possible interpretive freedom by drawing heavily on the performers' contributive imagination and ingenuity. Naturally, this trend not only called for new notational signs, but for an entirely new attitude toward notation as such.

Considering that composers throughout Europe and America, as well as in several countries of Asia, embraced the new musical trends and aesthetics, it is not surprising that new notation, too,

was invented everywhere with great abandon. As a result, musicians were soon engulfed in a chaotic deluge of notational duplications, contradictions, and general confusion.

After about a decade of this anarchic proliferation, attempts were made to unravel the notational maze by collecting, describing, and categorizing the new signs.¹

The most comprehensive of these efforts was.. Erhard Karkoschka's *Das Schriftbild der neuen Musik* (Celle, 1966; English translation-*Notation in New Music*-London and New York, 1972). Here we find the first major attempt to classify not only the new signs, but also the underlying aesthetic approaches. In addition there are evaluations of the various signs as to appropriateness, clarity (or deliberate vagueness), and efficiency, and each sign is meticulously documented as to its source of origin.

Other collections followed. The most extensive American one is Howard Risatti's *New Music Vocabulary* (1975, University of Illinois Press) and the monumental, as yet unpublished. *20th Century Notation* by Gardner Read.

All of these collections differ from one another in many ways, but they all have one thing in common: whatever recommendations they contain represent the personal opinions of their respective authors.

The present book--*Music Notation in the Twentieth Century*--is unique in three crucial ways:

1. it is not a collection, but a compendium of selections;
2. these selections do not represent one person's preferences, but are the results of research done by the *Index of New Musical Notation* (a four-year project) followed by the deliberations and decisions of the *International Conference on New Musical Notation* (Ghent, Belgium, 1974);
3. it does not treat new notation as a phenomenon apart from traditional procedures, but integrates it into the total notational vocabulary of all serious music written in the twentieth century.

The Index of New Musical Notation and the International Conference on New Musical Notation

In the early 1950s, when the first published examples of new musical notation arrived from Europe, the author was chief editor of *Associated Music Publishers, Inc.*, New York, then the foremost American importer of European music. The names of the new composers were still quite unfamiliar, but soon they were to dominate the field: for example, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Sylvano Bussotti, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Karlheinz Stockhausen. Shortly thereafter, similar American efforts appeared, mainly in the works of Earle Brown² and John Cage.

The author became interested in these unprecedented manifestations, studied and compared them, attended countless rehearsals and performances to find out how they worked in actual practice, and eventually began to lecture and write about new notational developments.

Writing and lecturing, however, were only one side of the coin. A much less entertaining aspect was that the new notational deluge proved to be a serious hindrance to good performances. Many musicians who had been greatly interested in new music began to resent the ever increasing

¹ One such early treatise was the author's own *Problems and Methods of Notation*, written in 1962 (see Bibliography).

² Actually, Earle Brown's efforts in this direction preceded Stockhausen's, even though the latter generally is credited with being the originator of new notational procedures.

profusion of notational ambiguities, identical notation for different effects in different compositions, and totally unexplained signs and procedures. Rehearsal time, being expensive, was limited, and performances were (and still are) all too often under-rehearsed and far from what they should have been. Something had to be done.

In the author's view, the most appropriate position in the musical spectrum from which to effect practical improvements is that of the music editor. An editor serves as the mediator between the composer who invents new notation and the performer who must interpret it properly. A conscientious editor, one who involves himself in the musical aspects of the scores under his care, can bring the performers' need for greater notational clarity to the attention of the composer and collaborate with him toward this goal. Conversely, he can elucidate to the performer some of the composer's intentions and visions which may not be fully realized in the notation. Musical notation, after all, is not an ideal method of communication, utilizing, as it does, visual devices to express aural concepts.

But it is as we have.

An editor's scope, however, is limited, since he deals- primarily with the works of composers who happen to be in the catalogue of his particular publishing house. To overcome this proscription, the author initiated the Index of New Musical Notation and located it in the Music Division of the Library of the Performing Arts at New York's Lincoln Center, a context independent of any publishing interests. This enabled the staff of the Index project to examine any score considered pertinent.

After conducting detailed notational analyses of a large variety of music containing graphic innovations, and after categorizing and otherwise ordering the findings, about 400 signs and procedures, chosen by statistical and evaluative methods, were submitted for discussion to the active participants of an International Conference on New Musical Notation, organized jointly by the Index project and the Belgian State University at Ghent, and held there in October of 1974.³

All new notational devices and procedures endorsed or recommended by the Ghent Conference are included in the present volume, along with many others which could not be discussed in Ghent, but were dealt with subsequently in consultation with professional musicians in the U.S.

On the Inclusion of Traditional Notation

In spite of the new notational signs generated since the early 1950s, a major part of our era's music, whether 'serious', or not, has been, still is, and probably will continue to be written either entirely by means of traditional notation or with a mixture of old and new signs and procedures. It is for this reason that traditional notation has been included in this guidebook.

Elementary rules and practices, however, will not be found here. It is assumed that those who wish to use this book are familiar with the rudiments of traditional notation. What has been admitted are the less obvious features: matters of proper beaming, stemming, and spacing, irregular durational divisions, the proper position of marks of articulation, dynamics, and phrasing, the correct note values for tremolos, and even a few purely graphic fine points. In the past, such details were rarely if ever taught, but in the music of our era they have become increasingly important for two quite separate reasons.

³ For details of the operation of the Index project and the International Conference. see Appendix 2.

First, since music during the last few decades has grown to unprecedented complexity, in addition to operating according to many new and radically unconventional aesthetic concepts, notation-old and new-has been strained to its utmost capability to meet these challenges. Consequently, each and every notational symbol must be drawn with greater precision and consistency than used to be necessary, because in present-day music any graphic deviation from convention may constitute not simply an accidental flaw, but a deliberate and meaningful variant! In other words, awkward or amateurish imperfections-irregularities which were hardly noticed in former times-have become serious impediments to a clear and proper interpretation of new compositions. One should never forget that notation is the composer's only means of conveying his ideas to the performers: it must be as explicit as possible. (Even if ambiguity or total freedom is intended, the signal for it must be explicit.)

Second, music publishers, for economic reasons, are increasingly given to issuing facsimile reproductions of the composer's manuscript, rather than engraved (or equivalent) editions.. It is not at all infrequent, therefore, that a publisher, in determining whether to publish a work or not, will be influenced by the graphic quality and notational professionalism of a manuscript, rather than exclusively by its musical content.⁴

Performers, too, look more closely now at composers' ways with notation, since any unconventionality is likely to divert a performer's attention from instant perception and interpretation of the notation he sees before him. Even if he is not actually aware of what is wrong with the notation he sees-what the irregularities and flaws really consist of-he will react subconsciously to any visual difference from the standards which have conditioned his reflexes throughout his musical life. He is forced to make adjustments and corrections in his mind during the minute interval between perceiving the symbol and producing the desired effect. It can make him hesitate, even a little, and can slow down the process of learning a piece, thus quite possibly leading to a poorer performance than needs be.

To sum up, then, the meticulous observance of the rules and conventions of traditional notation (rules often ignored by, or not even known to many composers and performers) will increase the effectiveness of a composer's entire notational repertory, old and new. And thus it will improve his ability to communicate his intentions to the performer, which will most certainly result in better, more accurate, and more enjoyable performances.

The traditional rules and conventions included here have not been treated separately from the new notational signs and procedures. Most of them, however, appear within the first section of the book, which covers general categories of notation, and only occasionally in the second section, which deals with notation for specific instrument families, the voice, and electronic sounds.

⁴ See Facsimile Reproductions, Appendix 3.