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# VIEWS: The theory of the artist

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## **PATTERN, FORM AND SILENCE IN *AMALGAMATIONS*, AN EXTENDED DURATION WORK**

**Abstract:** The article examines Sophie Stone's composition *Amalgamations* (2016), an extended duration work for solo organ. Pattern is explored in the form of both the notation and performance of the piece. The notation comprises verbal and graphic notation, with many possible combinations of instructions resulting in sustained sounds and silence. *Amalgamations* is non-linear and non-teleological. Tim Ingold's notion of 'wayfaring' provides a way of understanding how a performer may negotiate the notation. Due to the improvisatory and aleatoric elements of the piece, each performance will be different. Numerous types of silences will result from performances of *Amalgamations* and the experience of these silences are different and are determined by the sounds surrounding them.

**Key words:** duration, silence, performance, form, pattern, Cage, Beuger, Feldman, Ingold.

This article will discuss *Amalgamations* (2016), a work for solo organ, which is the first composition resulting from my doctoral project entitled *Exploring*

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*Extended Duration Music: Compositional Strategies, Performance Situations and Silence.* This project aims to gain new perspectives on composing experimental extended duration music and comprises an investigation of notation, possible performance situations – including installations and performance spaces – and the different uses and types of silence. In line with this research, *Amalgamations* has an open duration and can therefore be performed over an extended period of time. Despite this open duration, I suggest a minimum length of twenty minutes in the performance instructions; this achieves my desired aesthetic, which requires a type of listening different to that for music of a shorter duration.

To help contextualize my research, a discussion of Morton Feldman's (1926–1987) late works and, in particular, his *String Quartet II* (1983) is necessary. The minimum length of *Amalgamations* is partly intuitive, but the duration of music over twenty minutes is a topic that has been discussed by Feldman. Feldman's works from the late 1970s pushed music beyond this duration, which was characteristic of the majority of new music written for the concert hall at the time. His work explored much longer time spans, for example *For Samuel Beckett* (1987) has a duration of fifty-five minutes, *For Philip Guston* (1984) approximately four hours, and *String Quartet II* up to six hours. Musicologist Bob Gilmore wrote that in this type of music, "form became essentially irrelevant".<sup>1</sup> Feldman himself stated:

My whole generation was hung up on the 20 to 25 minute piece. It was our clock. We all got to know it, and how to handle it. As soon as you leave the 20–25 minute piece behind, in a one-movement work, different problems arise. Up to one hour you think about form, but after an hour and a half it's scale. Form is easy – just the division of things into parts. But scale is another matter. You have to have control of the piece – it requires a heightened kind of concentration. Before, my pieces were like objects; now, they're like evolving things.<sup>2</sup>

Feldman acknowledged that longer works require a different method of composition with a focus on scale. He noted that rather than the music being considered an "object" it was now "evolving", and it is the evolving nature of the music that makes listening to extended duration works so different. In a 1981 article, on the subject of scale in his works, Feldman wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Gilmore, "Wild Air: The Music of Kevin Volans", *Journal of Music*, 2006. <http://journalofmusic.com/focus/wild-air-music-kevin-volans> – accessed 18 February 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Morton Feldman, A short biographical statement taken from Universal Edition's catalogue of Feldman score, Wien, Universal Edition, 1998.

It seems that scale (this subliminal mathematics) is not given to us in Western culture, but must be arrived at individually in our own work in our own way. Like that small Turkish 'tile' rug, it is Rothko's scale that removes any argument over the proportions of one area to another, or over its degree of symmetry or asymmetry. The sum of the parts does not equal the whole; rather, scale is discovered and contained as an image. It is not form that floats the painting, but Rothko's finding that particular scale which suspends all proportions in equilibrium.<sup>3</sup>

Feldman's later works had to be long as if he were to form shorter compositions by having fewer repeats, editing out sections, or scaling down the ideas, the music could seem "simplistic or uninteresting".<sup>4</sup> The ideas of his longer works evolve through time and this is why they do not work for shorter durations. For Feldman, as in my own work, it is the auditory experience of a performance that makes "ultimate sense of the music", not the notation.<sup>5</sup>

In an interview with Michael Whiticker, Feldman discussed his *String Quartet II* and the reasons behind its extended duration. Feldman explained that the piece was so long because the human attention span is so short and this was "a serious problem"; in music, he was interested in what he could remember and his length of concentration.<sup>6</sup> He wanted to "alienate memory" by creating differences in repetitions so that they would only be vaguely familiar to the listener.<sup>7</sup> On composing the string quartet, Feldman explained, "I'm not doing very much – that's why it's so long. In fact, what I'm doing in the string quartet is essentially using three notes [...] Everything else is a repetition".<sup>8</sup> He used combinatory techniques to develop the three notes and it is this technique that he said differentiates composing extended duration music from shorter compositions. Feldman stated that compositionally *String Quartet II* involves "the only two elements known to us in music", which are "change" and "reiteration".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Morton Feldman, "Crippled Symmetry", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 2, Autumn 1981, 103.

<sup>4</sup> John Rockwell, "Morton Feldman (and Crippled Symmetry)", *Morton Feldman Page*, <http://www.cnvill.net/mfrockwl.htm>, accessed 18 February 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Whiticker, "Morton Feldman: Conversation without Cage, Michael Whiticker, 25 July 1984", in: Chris Villars (Ed.), *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964–1987*, London, Hyphen Press, 2006, 185–186.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Gilmore coined the term “overcoming form” to describe extended duration music from which “questions of form became essentially irrelevant”.<sup>10</sup> This apt term is part of the title of Richard Glover and Bryn Harrison’s book *overcoming form: reflections on immersive listening* (2013) which discusses this specific type of music and what Harrison describes as music “viewed as one immersive experience”.<sup>11</sup> This is a type of music where the listener is offered “a much closer (one might say magnified) perspective of the materials through which we are invited to focus on the subtlest aspects of change”.<sup>12</sup> The listener is also challenged by not knowing where they are within the work or where the work is heading, which “adds to the abstractness or intangibility of experience”.<sup>13</sup> Although these quotes describe Feldman’s *String Quartet II*, they can easily translate to other works which comprise repetition and/or subtle changes of ideas over an extended duration. Music theorist, Dora Hanninen explains that in this type of music it is difficult to apply traditional analysis due to the notion of emergence; it is the accumulation of events which gives meaning and makes the work experiential.<sup>14</sup>

Building from these initial observations, this article will focus on both the notation and performance of *Amalgamations* as it is the experiential and indeterminate nature of this extended duration work which provides an interesting theoretical discussion. I will examine the differences and similarities in pattern and form in both movements, considering the experience of potential repetitions over extended durations, and will employ Tim Ingold’s notion of ‘wayfaring’ as an example of how a performer’s negotiation with the notation can be understood.<sup>15</sup> I will also discuss the possible types of silence experienced in *Amalgamations*, drawing on Edward Pearsall’s definition of “performative silence” and examples of works by Antoine Beuger.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bob Gilmore, “Wild Air...”, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Bryn Harrison, “Repetitions in extended time: recursive structures and musical temporality”, in: Richard Glover and Bryn Harrison (Eds.), *Overcoming form: reflections on immersive listening*, Huddersfield, University of Huddersfield Press, 2013, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Dora Hanninen, “Feldman, Analysis, Experience”, *Twentieth-Century Music*, vol. 1, 2, 2004, 232.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*, Oxon, Routledge, 2011, 48–149.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Pearsall, *Twentieth-century Music Theory and Practice*, Oxon, Routledge, 2012, 236.

## Pattern and Form in Notation

The word *amalgamation* is defined as “the process in which separate organizations unite to form a larger organization or group, or an organization or group formed in this way”.<sup>17</sup> The title of this work describes the number of different combinations of instructions possible for a performance. The work comprises two movements that are linked by a set of performance instructions. The movements may be performed consecutively, with a short pause, or on their own. The performance instructions include seven instructions each for sound/stops, pitches, manual/s and pedals (see Figure 1).

<p><b>Sound/Stops:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Foundation</li> <li>B. Flutes</li> <li>C. Strings</li> <li>D. Chorus reeds (softer reeds)</li> <li>E. Solo reeds (e.g. trumpet)</li> <li>F. Hybrid (or mixture of flutes and strings)</li> <li>G. No sound</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pitches:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Any pitch</li> <li>ii. Any pitch with mutations</li> <li>iii. Any pitch with mixtures</li> <li>iv. High notes</li> <li>v. Low notes</li> <li>vi. Middle notes</li> <li>vii. No sound</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pedal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. A single sustained note</li> <li>II. Singular notes followed by a silence of the same length (repeat)</li> <li>III. Dyads followed by a silence of the same length (repeat)</li> <li>IV. Cluster/s</li> <li>V. Sustained dyad</li> <li>VI. No pedal</li> <li>VII. Multiple notes played in any rhythm/order</li> </ul>	<p><b>Manual/s:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Singular notes followed by a silence of the same length (repeat)</li> <li>2. A single sustained note</li> <li>3. Sustained dyad</li> <li>4. Dyads followed by a silence of the same length (repeat)</li> <li>5. One note followed by a second note, release the first and then the second (repeat)</li> <li>6. Cluster/s</li> <li>7. Several notes played in succession</li> </ul>

**Figure 1:** Performance instructions for *Amalgamations*

The instructions include an option for no sound in three of the four groups, therefore performances will result in many different combinations of sound and silence. The instructions are an expansion of those used by John

<sup>17</sup> Colin McIntosh (ed.), “amalgamation”, *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* [online], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, fourth edition, 2013. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/amalgamation> – accessed 17 April 2017.

Hails in *organism I (organ)* (2014); Hails gives a list of possibilities for both the manuals and pedals.<sup>18</sup> Similarly to *Amalgamations*, Hails's lists are labelled numerically (pedals, I–X) and alphabetically (manuals, A–O). The content of Hails's lists is much more detailed than my own as they contain information about the fingers that should be used, frequencies, movement, pitch and beats per minute, for example:

One finger, all manuals: repeated depression of one key at around 300bpm, although finger should waver irregularly around entire manual set up (this relating in many different keys and combinations thereof being depressed, as well as periods where no key is depressed).<sup>19</sup>

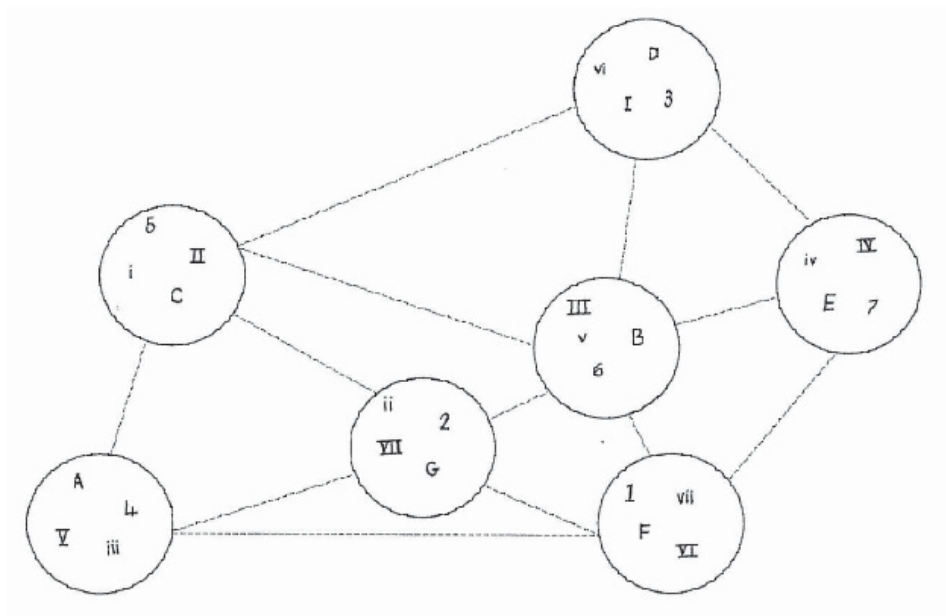
Although my instructions are simplified, I include additional instructions for sound, stops and pitch, and this allows for many different possibilities. The instructions for *Amalgamations* are applicable for a wide range of instruments, and therefore the work is easily accessible and portable. For example, *Amalgamations* can be performed at an organ with any number of manuals, and the stops are grouped into types of sounds rather than named stops. The use of instructions within my indeterminate composition are broad and therefore not limiting, allowing for performer interpretation, and thus resulting in contrasting performances.

The notation of the first movement is a constellation-like pattern comprising seven circles or structures adjoined by dashed lines (see Figure 2). In *Amalgamations*, the structures contain four instructions, one of each instruction for manual/s, pedal, pitches and sound/stops. The performer is instructed to choose any structure to begin with, and then they should proceed to perform all of the instructions within that circle, simultaneously or gradually. The performer may then choose a path, using the adjoining dashed lines, to fulfil each circle that is visited. Once another circle has been reached, the performer should gradually change one or more of their instructions; the new circle may be fulfilled entirely, or the performer can choose the number of instructions they intend to change. For example, the performer may choose to start on the top instruction (D, vi, I and 3); the performer can start the instructions simultaneously, or they may gradually add one instruction after another. After a duration of the performer's choice, they may then choose a connecting structure, for example the one to the right (IV, iv, E and 7).

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<sup>18</sup> John Hails, *organism i (organ)*, 2014. [unpublished]

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 2:** The first movement of *Amalgamations*

The performer may change each instruction one at a time or may choose to only change one instruction before moving on to the next structure. For example, the performer may change instruction D (chorus reeds) to E (solo reeds) before moving to a new structure such as 1, vii, F and VI, and so on. The gradual changes of instructions will then create a sound of slowly changing sustained ideas with many different possibilities from overlapping structures, rather than the limitations of the four instructions of each structure. This overlapping unveils a hidden part of the score. The circles/s may be visited multiple times, or not visited at all. An example of the decisions made by a performer can be seen in Figure 3, and these result in episodes of sound and silence. As the duration of this work is open, the performer then chooses when to end the performance.

The second movement has a more open notation than the first as each instruction, instead of being grouped, is spread across a blank page (as seen in Figure 4). This type of notation is predicated by composers such as Toshi Ichiyanagi (1933) in his composition *Sapporo* (1962).<sup>20</sup> In *Amalgamations*, my intention is to encourage the performers to interpret the emptiness in the

<sup>20</sup> Toshi Ichiyanagi, *Sapporo*, New York, C. F. Peters Corporation, 1963.



notation and to think more carefully about the space between sounds and how sound and silence are equally important. A performer may also interpret the space between instructions as durational,<sup>21</sup> for example, the further the instructions are apart, the longer the performer may take to perform the instruction or spend changing the instruction.

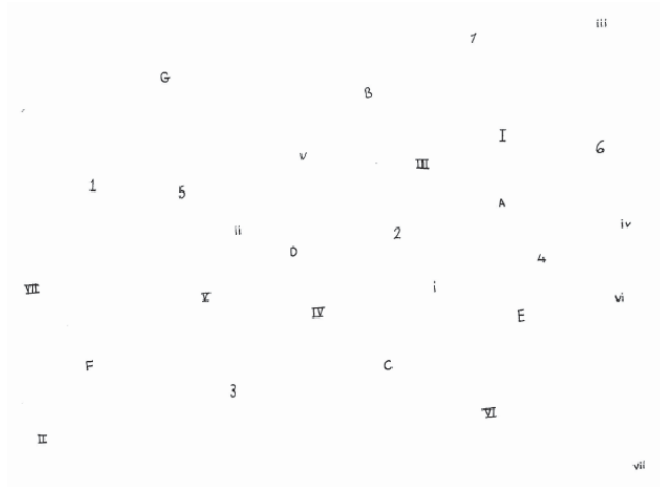
Circle	Instruction Layering	Sound
iv, IV, E, 7	iv, IV, E, 7	Pedal clusters and several notes played in succession on the manual, with high notes and solo reeds
1, vii, F, VI	vii, IV, E, 1	No sound
III, v, B, 6	v, IV, B, 1	Pedal cluster/s and single notes followed by a silence of the same length (repeated) on the manual, with low notes and flutes
D, vi, I, 3	v, I, B, 1	Pedal sustained note and single notes followed by a silence of the same length (repeated) on the manual, with low notes and flutes
5, i, II, C	v, I, C, 1	Pedal sustained note and single notes followed by a silence of the same length (repeated) on the manual, with low notes and strings.
III, v, B, 6	v, I, C, 6	Pedal sustained note and manual cluster/s, with low notes and strings.
ii, VII, 2, G	ii, VII, 2, G	No sound

**Figure 3:** The results of possible performance choices of *Amalgamations*, movement one

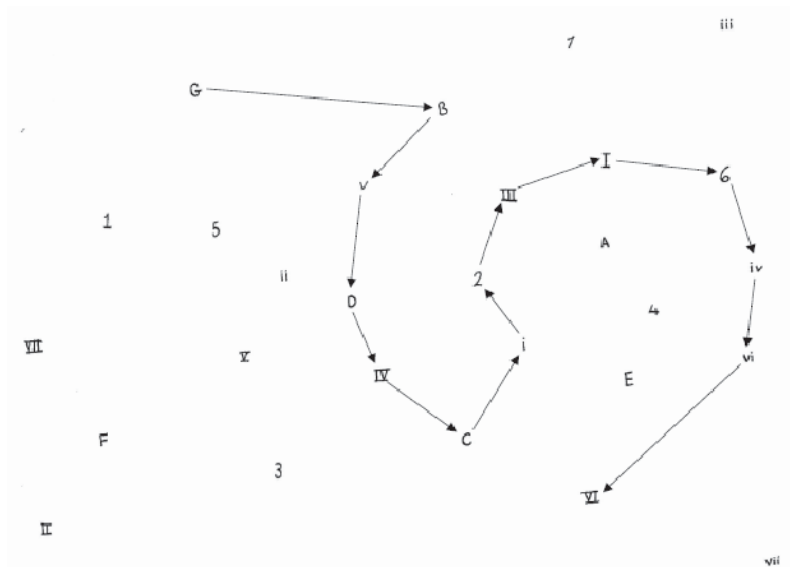
Like the first movement, the second requires the performer to choose the direction of the performance. However, in the second movement, the performer chooses one instruction at a time. They must choose an instruction to begin with, and then, at random, they should continue to choose other instructions; the succeeding instruction will either be a replacement, or an additional layer of sound. As an instruction for pitch or sound/stops requires an instruction for the pedal or manual/s, the performance will be silent until an instruction for the pedal or manual/s is reached. However, the ‘silence’ is never silent due to the changes of stops and the sound of the environment; the experiences of silence within *Amalgamations* will be discussed in depth further on in this chapter. In the second movement, there is a greater variety of possible layers of sound and silence in comparison to the first because of the freedom given to the performer. Each instruction may also be visited multiple times or not at all. An example of the choices a performer could

<sup>21</sup> Space-time notation is a widely used type of contemporary music notation where the distance between notes or instructions is indicative of duration. Examples of space-time notation include Cage’s *Music of Changes* (1951) and Earle Brown’s (1926–2002) *String Quartet* (1965). Cf. Mark Delaere, “Tempo, Metre, Rhythm. Time in Twentieth-Century Music”, in: Darla Crispin (ed.), *Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth Century Music*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2009, 41.

make are in Figure 5, and the sounding results and layering of instructions are shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 4:** The second movement of *Amalgamations*



**Figure 5:** Possible performance choices in *Amalgamations*, movement two

Instruction	Instruction Layering	Sound
G	G	No sound
B	B	No sound – only sound from the new stops
v	B, v	No sound
D	D, v	No sound – only sound from changing stops
IV	D, v, IV	Pedal clusters with low notes and chorus reeds
C	C, v, IV	Pedal clusters with low notes and strings
i	C, i, IV	Pedal clusters with any pitch and strings
2	C, i, IV, 2	Pedal clusters and manual sustained note with any pitch and strings
III	C, i, III, 2	Pedal dyads and manual sustained note with any pitch and strings
I	C, i, I, 2	Pedal and manual sustained notes with any pitch and strings
6	C, i, I, 6	Pedal sustained note and manual dyads with any pitch and strings
iv	C, iv, I, 6	Pedal sustained note and manual dyads with high pitches and strings
vi	C, vi, I, 6	Pedal sustained note and manual dyads with middle pitches and strings
VI	C, vi, VI, 6	Manual dyads with middle pitches and strings (no pedal)

**Figure 6:** The results of possible performance choices in *Amalgamations*, movement two

Despite both movements using the same set of instructions, the sound of each movement can differ due to the restriction of the notation in movement one, and the freedom of movement two. The changes of instructions in movement two may be more gradual and very subtle since these occur one at a time. The changes between structures in movement one may be more distinct to the listener as the performer may choose to change up to four instructions at a time, thus resulting in a more contrasting sound that was heard prior. The longer the performer holds on to the instruction, the clearer the changes are to the listener.

*Amalgamations* gives the performer freedom from the more conventional notation of reading from left to right with a beginning and an end. As each movement is on one page, the performer is given an overview of the work and a new perspective as they can explore the entirety of the movement at once and can choose to end the piece when they are ready to. The performer does not only ‘perform’ the work but they perform a compositional process.

## Pattern and Form in Performance

In the first movement of *Amalgamations*, the repetition of structures is a high possibility within performance. Repetitions of structures over extended durations was an idea utilized by Feldman in his late works, particularly in his *String Quartet II* which was Feldman’s longest work with performances lasting up to six hours.<sup>22</sup> In *overcoming form: reflections on immersive listening*

<sup>22</sup> Bryn Harrison, op. cit., 46.

(2013), Harrison explains how in Feldman's late works, 'temporal ambiguity is created through the iteration of self-similar motifs, often with altered or differing contexts.'<sup>23</sup> Feldman's *String Quartet II* comprises differentiated structures which are repeated for irregular durations and are repeated at different places within the score.<sup>24</sup> Within *Amalgamations*, an idea is repeated or performed for an extended period, and then possibly revisited later in the performance. In Harrison's discussion on *String Quartet II*, he explains how the listener has to make adjustments to their listening throughout the piece as each structure changes.<sup>25</sup> The same could be said for *Amalgamations* when the performer takes the listener through different structures of the first movement and changing instructions more gradually in the second.

The structures of *Amalgamations* movement I may be repeated within a performance separated by other structures, but it is a set of ideas that is repeated rather than a specific rhythm, dynamic, duration and pitch. Therefore, the iteration is similar in context, but is never exact. The second time a structure is performed there will be differences due to the indeterminacy of the instructions and the number of instructions carried on from a previous structure. This means that there may be differences in pitch, rhythm, stops and silence. Additionally, there will be a difference in duration as there is no minimum or maximum duration for each structure. Although the structures may be repeated within a performance, they are almost imperceptible because of the time lapsed and the differences of the repetition, either significant or subtle. Within *Amalgamations*, the structures may overlap which will create merged ideas. And, as identified by Harrison, the content of the structure will impact the listener's memory; some structures may be more memorable and others may have similar content.<sup>26</sup> As the duration of *Amalgamations* is any length over twenty minutes, the listener's memory of repetitions will change as the duration of the overall performance increases and the duration of each structure will also affect memory. Of the repetitions of structures in Feldman's *String Quartet II*, Harrison observes that "previously heard events may be repeated exactly but most often contain some slight variations which may

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>24</sup> Magnus Olsen Majmon, "Analysis of Morton Feldman's *String Quartet No. 2* (1983)", excerpt from *En diskurs om 'det sublime' og Morton Feldman's String Quartet No. 2*, University of Copenhagen, 2005, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Bryn Harrison, op. cit., 46–47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 47.

or may not be identifiable perceptually without the aid of the score or multiple hearings”.<sup>27</sup> Unlike *Amalgamations*, Harrison observes that Feldman’s work reveals itself through a “diary form”:

What we bear witness to in Feldman’s work is what I have termed a kind of ‘diary form’. As with diary entries, some are long, some are short, some are eventful, and others are less so. At times, pages of entirely new material rub up against each other, often contrasting, refreshing and extreme. At other times, the material seems to take on a kind of ‘anonymity’ (to borrow Feldman’s term) in which it seems almost neutral or repetitive to the point of rendering the piece less ‘visible’. Each ‘entry’ is penned in ink by hand and remains uncorrected. There is no editing to the score, no going back over things – they stand as an imprint of a moment in time.<sup>28</sup>

*Amalgamations* is a temporally non-linear work as the material is not goal-directed. It is an example of Jonathan Kramer’s “vertical time”, the experience of an extended single moment.<sup>29</sup> Westerners have subconsciously become accustomed to listening to linear tonal music: harmonic progressions towards cadences, melodies, phrases, tension and resolution. As a listener, one tries to hear non-linear music as linear and tries to piece together causal relationships that are non-existent. As the listener realizes that these expectations are not fulfilled, the listener can either become uninterested and give up completely or experience the performance as “vertical time”.<sup>30</sup>

Although *Amalgamations* is non-linear and non-teleological in the sense that there is no goal, the performer follows a movement along paths between structures and instructions, and the embodied experience of this movement is what anthropologist Tim Ingold calls “wayfaring”.<sup>31</sup> In *Amalgamations*, the performer follows a ‘map’ and acts as a wayfarer, finding a path and creating a journey. Ingold explains that ‘the wayfarer has no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes on, there is somewhere further he can go’.<sup>32</sup> The wayfarer leaves a trail of ‘threads’ which intertwine with other wayfarers’ journeys to form ‘knots’ (places) which create what Ingold calls a

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan D. Kramer, “New Temporalities in Music”, *Critical Enquiry*, vol. 7, 3, 1981, 549.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 540, 550.

<sup>31</sup> Tim Ingold, op. cit., 48–149.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 150.

'meshwork'.<sup>33</sup> Ingold emphasizes the importance of differentiating wayfaring from transporting:

By transport, I mean the displacement or carrying across of an already constituted, self-contained entity from one location to another, rather like the 'move', in draughts or chess, of a piece across the board. This is how all movement is understood in the terms of the genealogical model. In wayfaring, by contrast, things are instantiated in the world as their paths of movement, not as objects located in space. They are their stories. Here it is the movement itself that counts, not the destinations it connects. Indeed wayfaring always overshoots its destinations, since wherever you may be at any particular moment, you are already on your way somewhere else.<sup>34</sup>

*Amalgamations* comprises two maps, one for each movement. The first movement is more complex as the performance instructions ask the performer or wayfarer to journey through and between structures (containing performance instructions) on given possible pathways. Although possible paths are given, the performer creates a journey that is individual to that performance. The second movement is freer, and the performer creates their own path journeying through different performance instructions. The visited instructions and structures in *Amalgamations* can be compared to the places or "knots" that Ingold describes.<sup>35</sup> And as in his writing, the wayfarer in *Amalgamations* "may even return repeatedly to the same place".<sup>36</sup> It is the movement between each instruction and structure that is important and not the destination. The instructions and structures are not separate entities as each movement between them influences the next and the instructions and structures are often overlapping. For example, in the first movement the performer can perform the instructions of one structure and then gradually change each of the four instructions (one at a time) to then fulfil another structure. A more complex performance could comprise four overlapping structures with the performer playing one instruction from each structure which covers the four parameters (pedal, pitch, manual/s and sound/stops). This overlapping is the space between the places, which in transport is ignored.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 148–149.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 160.

## Silence in Performance

Sound and silence are equally important in *Amalgamations*, and it is a statement supported by many. On the phenomenon of musical silence, Thomas Clifton compared studying silence to studying the space between trees in a forest as it contributes to how the forest is perceived as a whole.<sup>38</sup> My interest in silence is reflected in *Amalgamations*, which shares similarities and differences to works composed by Cage and members of the Wandelweiser collective; the combination of possible extended durations and silence are approaches shared by many Wandelweiser composers, who are heavily influenced by Cage.<sup>39</sup> Wandelweiser are a group of composers, performers and artists founded by Antoine Beuger (1955) and Burkhard Schlothauer (1957) in 1992, the year of Cage's death.<sup>40</sup> The collective have their own record label, Edition Wandelweiser, and share interests in Cage, silence, quietness, extended durations and the importance of place, despite not having a set criteria or aesthetic.<sup>41</sup> The name 'Wandelweiser' translates as 'change wisely', a reference to Cage's *Music of Changes* (1952), a pioneering piece of indeterminate music.<sup>42</sup> Schlothauer once claimed that "the only composer I'm really interested in is Cage",<sup>43</sup> and the admiration of Cage by all Wandelweiser members was reiterated at the Amsterdam Wandelweiser Festival in January 2017 during a discussion between the cofounders.<sup>44</sup> In this discussion, Beuger explained that each member of the group has different ideas and approaches, but the main commonalities are long durations and nothingness or silence. He also stated that their collective admiration for Cage is not just for his use of si-

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Clifton, "The Poetics of Musical Silence", *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 62, 2, 1976, 163.

<sup>39</sup> G. Douglas Barrett, "The Silent Network—The Music of Wandelweiser", *Contemporary Music Review*, 'Wandelweiser', Special Issue, vol. 30, 6, 2011, 460.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Melia & James Saunders (eds.), "Introduction, What is Wandelweiser?", *Contemporary Music Review*, "Wandelweiser", Special Issue, vol. 30, 6, 2011, 446.

<sup>42</sup> Antoine Beuger & Burkhard Schlothauer, *Conversation between Antoine Beuger (D/NL) and Burkhard Schlothauer (D), founders of Wandelweiser* [discussion], *Amsterdam Wandelweiser Festival*, Orgelpark – 11 February 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Dan Warburton, "The Sound of Silence: The Music and Aesthetics of the Wandelweiser Group", Edition Wandelweiser Records <http://www.wandelweiser.de/> – accessed 13 June 2016.

<sup>44</sup> A. Beuger & B. Schlothauer, *op. cit.*

lence as some members favour his algorithmic compositions and/or indeterminacy.<sup>45</sup>

Beuger's *calme étendues* (1996/97), a series of seventeen pieces for individual instruments with the same basic compositional structure, is an example of extended duration music combined with silence. The performers repeat a pattern of sound and silence until the performer stops for an even longer silence.<sup>46</sup> The silences before and after the performance leave the listener 'hovering above an imminent silent abyss' and it is these silences that Beuger is most interested in, where the emptiness is interrupted with sound.<sup>47</sup> Beuger describes silence as being "a direct—not symbolic or imaginative—encounter with reality".<sup>48</sup> In *overcoming form: reflections on immersive listening* (2013), Harrison discusses the use of silence in Beuger's *calme étendue (spinoza)*, which includes 40,000 monosyllabic words from Baruch Spinoza's (1632–1677) *Ethics* (published 1677).<sup>49</sup> The words are spoken quietly without the intention of grouping words or making sense of them, and in Beuger's performance, one word is spoken every eight seconds. And like all the works in the series, the episodes of sound alternate with silence.<sup>50</sup> It is not the words that the listener focuses on, but the sounds and the equilibrium between sound and silence, which Harrison describes: "a pressure or force exists between words, akin to the surface tension on a still pool of water or the energy of a magnetic field".<sup>51</sup>

There are four types of silences that occur within Beuger's *calme étendue*: the silence prior to the first sound; short silences between sounds; extended silences between sounds; the silence after the final sound. The first silence is extended and is filled with suspense as the listener waits for the first sound. Within this work, the short silences between sounds are repetitive, regular, and expected. However, the experience of the extended silences between sounds is very different. The silence is sudden and an unexpected emptiness

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Antoine Beuger, *Calme étendue (Spinoza)*, Haan, Edition Wandelweiser Records [CD], 2001, 1997. [http://www.wandelweiser.de/\\_e-w-records/\\_ewr-catalogue/ewr0107.html](http://www.wandelweiser.de/_e-w-records/_ewr-catalogue/ewr0107.html), accessed 16 February 2018.

<sup>47</sup> G. D. Barrett, op. cit., 460.

<sup>48</sup> Dan Warburton, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Bryn Harrison, op. cit., 43.

<sup>50</sup> Antoine Beuger, *Calme étendue (Spinoza)*, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> Bryn Harrison, op. cit., 43.



in which the listener waits for a sound to occur. As the silence is extended, the listener becomes more accepting of the emptiness before a sound is heard again. Of this experience, Harrison says “a vista opens; the work transforms momentarily from a hermetically concealed world to an inclusive, open environment”.<sup>52</sup> The extended silences between sounds appear multiple times within the work, and the more sound and silence appear, the more ‘omnipresent’ they become.<sup>53</sup> The final silence at the end of the work is experienced similarly to the extended silences between sounds as the listener becomes accepting of the emptiness. The silence is not so unexpected due to the multiple silences heard before it, however as another sound is not reached, the listener finally accepts that a new sound will not occur. As Harrison explains, these silences “are not pauses or moments of inactivity but movements in which silence feels immanently present”.<sup>54</sup> Harrison describes the unusual relationship between sound and silence in *calme étendue (spinoza)* with reference to Peter Ablinger, who suggested that “it can feel like the silences are the materials of the piece through which the sound events act as pauses of momentary interruptions”, and therefore there is a change between the hierarchy of sound and silence, with silence being in the foreground and thus changing the listener’s perception of time.<sup>55</sup>

The types of silences possible in *Amalgamations* are similar to those used by Beuger: silence before sound; silence between sounds; silence after sound. Due to the indeterminate nature of the work, each performance can explore any number of these possibilities. Unlike in Beuger’s work, the possibility of a pattern such as short silences of equal length separated by sound are unlikely in *Amalgamations* as the performer chooses the amount of time taken on each structure or instruction in either movement, and there are more instructions for sound than silence. This means that there is an irregularity of sound and silence, which is most likely dominated by sound. Therefore, there is not an equilibrium between sound and silence or a hierarchical change as in Beuger’s work. Instead, there are extended silences that can occur before, between and after sounds, which are experienced similarly to Beuger’s work, but possibly for much longer durations and irregularly, the experience of which would be more unexpected and sudden.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 45.

*ins ungebundene* (1998), another example by Beuger, is a solo performance for the organ that combines sound and silence through the appearance and disappearance of sound. The performer plays rare, singular, short, soft sounds and that stop between 10 and 40 minutes of the performance. The performance should end between 60 and 90 minutes after it started.<sup>56</sup> At the 'Amsterdam Wandelweiser Festival 2017' (9–12 February 2017), Dante Boon (1973), Dutch pianist and composer, and Wandelweiser member, described *ins ungebundene* as 'radical, poetic and deep' before a performance was given by Keiko Shichijo.<sup>57</sup> For this performance, Shichijo played a single note for approximately twenty minutes which was followed by silence for a further forty minutes. The colour of the extended singular note changed over time, affected by the movement of the listener and the workings of the electronic organ and speakers. A similar experience of sound can be heard in *Amalgamations* as each sound is sustained with very gradual and often subtle changes. The silence in *ins ungebundene* focuses on the emptiness of a sound that existed before it, and for those unaware of the work it remains unclear whether a note will be heard again.

Beuger's *ins ungebundene* is an example of what music theorist Edward Pearsall (1954–2017) calls "performative silence", a phenomenon where there is no silence, but the music is "a form of silent expression", such as sound masses, sustained sounds and static textures, for example.<sup>58</sup> He explains that it occurs when the sound has no narrative and is non-progressive. Pearsall gives an example of Feldman's *For Samuel Beckett* because of 'inactivity' over an extended duration.<sup>59</sup> It can be argued that performative silence does not exist as there is always a narrative in sound. With sustained tones, Glover argues that although the pitch is written as fixed, the auditory experience is not. With a more concentrated mode of listening, which Glover calls "performative listening", one can perceive pattern, repetition and sound transformations.<sup>60</sup> Sound transformations include harmonics, alterations in pitch, and

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<sup>56</sup> James Saunders, "Antoine Beuger", in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, James Saunders (ed.), Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009, 233.

<sup>57</sup> Dante Boon, *Concert 1* [Concert Introduction], *Amsterdam Wandelweiser Festival*, Orgelpark – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Edward Pearsall, op. cit., 236.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Glover, "Sustained tones, sustained durations", in: *overcoming form: reflections on immersive listening*, Richard Glover and Bryn Harrison (ed.), Huddersfield, University of Huddersfield Press, 2013, 7–11.

the pulsing or beating patterns created by different clusters.<sup>61</sup> Cage reiterated this point with reference to Zen practice:

If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. Eventually one discovers that it's not boring at all but very interesting.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, when a sound is sustained over an extended duration, the direction the listener faces can alter the sound perceived, and for any instrument such as woodwinds, brass and even the organ, as it warms up there can be many subtle changes to timbre and intonation. The sound will always be affected by the technology used. For example, at the concert on 11 February 2017 of *ins ungebundene* in Amsterdam, the organ was electronic and therefore the speakers made subtle fluctuations to the sound.

The silences within *Amalgamations* differ from one another, they can differ from the works described above and are dependent on the decisions made by the performer (see Figure 5). The silences are an absence of performative sound and can occur before, after or between sounds. The time in which the emptiness occurs affects how it is perceived. If the silence happens before a sound, the listener is waiting in suspense, if it occurs after a sound, the listener hangs on to the sound that was heard before it, and the silence can also be heard as an interruption of sound or as silence interrupted by sound depending on the performer's interpretation of the instructions. Furthermore, the more extended the silence, the more the suspense is heightened, and therefore the listener is more aware of the sounds from the environment. The duration of the silence is also affected by the duration of the overall performance. This was evident in a ninety-minute performance of *Amalgamations* by organist Ben Scott in January 2018 on the three manual Walker organ of the Holy Trinity Church in Folkestone, Kent. Within the performance there was a silence in the first movement that lasted twelve minutes, however the experience of time was much shorter. At first, the experience of time passing felt slow as the silence was so sudden. However, as I became more accepting of the silence, just like in Harrison's experience of Beuger's *calme étendues*, I concentrated on the sounds of the environment and the experience of time passing became shorter.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 10–11.

<sup>62</sup> John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, London, Marion Boyars Publishers, 2015, 93.

Despite silences being notated within *Amalgamations*, the experience of the silences is never truly silent. The performer may come across instructions where there should be no sound for the manual/s and pedals, however they are instructed to change the stops; depending on the organ, the sound of stops changing can be significant and is a performative sound. Some of the silences within a performance will require the performer to sit still at the organ, producing no performative sound. However, in this situation, there are still many sounds taking place which become part of the performance. In music comprising sound and silence, Cage said:

For in this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated and those that are not. Those that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment.<sup>63</sup>

As *Amalgamations* is written for the organ the performance location would usually be in a church, an environment renowned for being an echo chamber. The natural echo of the space amplifies the sounds of the environment and therefore makes the listener more aware of their surroundings. On the topic of silence, Cage stated:

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.<sup>64</sup>

In an article on silence, Isabella van Elferen and Sven Raeymaekers described their visit to an anechoic chamber where all sounds were blocked out and sounds could not reverberate. Absolute silence exists in theory, but it is metaphysically impossible to perceive. In an empty anechoic chamber absolute silence may exist, however the human body will always break the silence. Van Elferen and Raeymaekers experienced near-silence as described by Cage, with the only sounds audible being from inside their own bodies.<sup>65</sup> After leaving the space, they realized that the silence of the quiet neighbourhood outside was loud and not silent at all. What is called silence in everyday life comprises sounds that we usually ignore, for example, the sound of birds and cars driving by; it is a form of silence that sits between soundlessness

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>65</sup> Isabella van Elferen, Sven Raeymaekers, "Silent dark: the orders of silence", in: *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 19, 3, 2015, 265–272.

and sound. Van Elferen and Raeymaekers call this phenomenological form, *silence by negation*.<sup>66</sup> These are sounds that are heard so much that they are ignored or listeners stop hearing them. Cage's *4'33"* (1952) is an example of a performance where the listener becomes more aware of the sounds that we would usually ignore. When there is a sudden silence in *Amalgamations*, the listener is tricked into thinking that there is no sound (silence by negation), but as the silence increases in duration, the listener becomes more aware of the sounds of the environment.

## Conclusion

The experiential nature of extended duration music that overcomes form requires a different type of listening called immersive listening. Immersive listening is a deeper level of listening where the listener focuses on subtler changes in sound. *Amalgamations* is an example of this type of non-teleological extended duration work which is experienced by the listener as Kramer's "vertical time":

A vertical piece does not exhibit cumulative closure: it does not begin but merely starts, does not build to a climax, does not purposefully set up internal expectations, does not seek to fulfill any expectations that might arise accidentally, does not build or release tension, and does not end but simply ceases. It defines its bounded sound world early in its performance, and it stays within the limits it chooses.<sup>67</sup>

During a performance, the performer acts as a 'wayfarer' and journeys through the notation to unveil hidden parts of the score and create an immersive environment of sustained sounds, repetition and silence.<sup>68</sup> The sustained sounds could be perceived as Pearsall's 'performative silence'<sup>69</sup>, however immersive and 'performative listening' mean that many changes in sound will always be perceived.<sup>70</sup> The types of silences within *Amalgamations* can be experienced differently which affects the temporality of the work. And, the silences are never truly silent as the performance environment becomes part of the performance. The experience of repetition in *Amalgamations* is almost

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan D. Kramer, op. cit., 549.

<sup>68</sup> Tim Ingold, op. cit., 148.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Pearsall, op. cit., 236.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Glover, "Sustained tones, sustained durations", op. cit., 7–11.

unperceivable due to memory and differences created by the indeterminate performance instructions. Repetition then becomes a private exchange between the composer and performer, thus presenting another level of silence.

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## Summary

The article examines Sophie Stone’s composition *Amalgamations* (2016), an extended duration work for solo organ. Pattern is explored in the form of both the notation and performance of the piece. The notation comprises verbal and graphic notation, with many possible combinations of instructions resulting in sustained sounds and silence. *Amalgamations* is non-linear and non-teleological. Tim Ingold’s notion of “wayfaring” provides a way of understanding how a performer may negotiate the notation. Due to the improvisatory and aleatoric elements of the piece, each performance will be different. Numerous types of silences will result from performances of *Amalgamations* and the experience of these silences are different and are determined by the sounds surrounding them.