

Vinholes and Cage: Theories, Indeterminacy and Silence¹

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Teorias, Indeterminação e Silêncio

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Resumo

Neste artigo, estudei alguns aspectos da produção do compositor Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes, nascido em Pelotas, o primeiro compositor brasileiro a produzir obras aleatórias, comparando-os com aspectos semelhantes da produção do compositor norte-americano John Cage, tais como sua iniciativa de criar novas teorias para a estruturação musical baseadas no ritmo, o uso do silêncio em suas obras e sua opção por uma poética que visa a indeterminação na música, a fim de compreender a posição de Vinholes na esfera da produção da música aleatória desde o início da década de 1960. O artigo detecta pontos de divergência importantes em ambas poéticas demonstrando que a abordagem de Vinholes, aparentemente correlata à abordagem cageana, se distancia bastante desta.

Palavras-chave: Luis Carlos Lessa Vinholes, John Cage, Indeterminação, Silêncio, Teoria

Abstract

In this paper I've studied a few aspects of the production of the Pelotas born composer Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes, the first Brazilian composer to produce aleatoric works, comparing then with similar aspects of the production of the North-American composer John Cage, such as his initiative to create new theories for music structuring based in the rhythm, the use of the silence in his works and his option for a poetics aiming the indetermination in music, in order to understand the position of Vinholes in the sphere of the production of the aleatory music from the beginning of the decade of 1960. The article detects important points of divergence in both poetics, demonstrating that the Vinholes' approach, apparently correlated to the Cage's, differs a lot from it.

Keywords: Luis Carlos Lessa Vinholes, John Cage, Indeterminacy, Silence, Theory

Introduction

Between 2004 and 2009, I completed my PhD in Creative Processes in Music at UNICAMP (Campinas State University), focusing on Indeterminacy as a compositional approach. During my Master's degree studies at the same institution (2001–2003), I had already explored John Cage's poetics and aesthetics in depth. Encountering Vinholes' work in 2003 led me to suspect that his poetics would be aligned with Cage's, in some way. This impression was strengthened further when I overheard a "hallway conversation" referring to Vinholes as a pioneer of aleatoric music in Brazil.

This article was written in 2005, based on an interview I conducted with Professor Luis Carlos Lessa Vinholes at his home in Brasília in that same year. Given the continued relevance of the subject and its importance to the Brazilian music community, we decided to submit the text for publication. In light of the time that has passed since it was written, I've found it appropriate to offer a few introductory remarks on the current state of research and publications related to Vinholes' work and thought.

Until 2005, research into career and work of the composer Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes was primarily focused on the Master's degree dissertation by Professor Mario de Souza Maia, *Serialismo, Tempo-Espaço e Aleatoriedade: A obra do compositor Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes* [*Serialism, Time-Space and Aleatory: The Work of Composer Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes*], which was presented in 1999 at PUCRS. This study addressed both biographical and analytical aspects, particularly on the composer's engagement with the theme of moving beyond serialism, his development of the *Time-Space Theory*, and his adherence to the aleatoric. In the same year, Professor Maia also gave two lectures on the subject at events in the fields of Arts and Cultural Heritage. However, up until the Brasília interview in 2005, no further academic works dedicated to Vinholes' oeuvre had been published.

In 2007, Professor Vinholes took the initiative to contribute regularly to the online platform *Usina de Letras*, publishing short articles and essays that explored various aspects of his poetics. He

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also recounted very interesting episodes from his artistic, diplomatic, and activist career. Between 2007 and 2025 (the year of this publication), the composer made a total of 270 texts available on the platform. This substantial body of work has become an essential resource for any researcher interested in the composer's career, not only as a source of information on his own artistic production, but also as a window into the historical context in which he operated. Of particular interest are his relationships with the key figures who shaped the Brazilian arts landscape, as well as his sustained efforts to promote Brazilian art abroad. Vinholes is remarkable for his exceptional memory for details, which makes this digital archive a true treasure for scholars and enthusiasts alike.

Between 2009 and 2011, was written the main PhD theses in which the composer was an important theme. My thesis, entitled: *Da Indeterminação à Invariância: considerações sobre morfologia musical a partir de peças de caráter aberto*. [From Indeterminacy to Invariance: considerations on musical morphology on open works], was presented at UNICAMP in 2009, and was dedicated to Professor Vinholes, who appeared on the panel as the honoured composer. Around the same time, Professor Lilia Rosa de Oliveira, who was writing her thesis on the relationship between Vinholes' work and music education, conducted a series of video interviews with the composer, which were later published in excerpts on YouTube. The aforementioned work was presented in 2011 also at UNICAMP and was entitled: *Três Peças Aleatórias de L. C. Vinholes numa Abordagem Pedagógica para Crianças: análise, criação de atividades musicais e site* [Three Random Pieces by L. C. Vinholes in a Pedagogical Approach for Children: analysis, creation of musical activities and website]. In the meantime, in 2010, Professor Andersen Viana's doctoral thesis was presented at UFBA (Federal University of Bahia), entitled: *Música Inclusiva: Estratégias Compositivas conectadas ao uso público, em obras musicais de Ernst Widmer, Luis Carlos Lessa Vinholes e Gilberto Mendes* [Inclusive Music: Compositional Strategies connected to public use, in musical works by Ernst Widmer, Luis Carlos Lessa Vinholes and Gilberto Mendes]. Both works emphasize the inclusive nature of Vinholes' work connecting him to Professor H. J. Koellreutter as a pivotal figure in the development of a contemporary Brazilian musical praxis whose influence and impact had yet to be recognised in academia.

In 2011, Professor Vinholes also published a significant article in the journal *Música em Contexto* (UnB) about the electronic music activities at the *Seminários Livres de Música de São Paulo* studio in the 1950s: *Electronic Music in Brazil in the 1950s*. This unique document remains one of

the few detailed sources on the subject yet it is still largely overlooked in discussions about the development of Brazilian music using technological media.

Three other papers on L. C. Vinholes were published in the subsequent years: *O mar de Suzu na teoria tempo-espaço de Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes: poesia concreta, música aleatória e diálogos culturais entre Brasil e Japão* [The Suzu Sea in the time-space theory of Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes: concrete poetry, aleatory music and cultural dialogues between Brazil and Japan] by Yuka de Almeida Prado, in the *Revista Brasileira de Música* (2013), my paper in partnership with Danielley Dantas: *A Teoria Tempo-Espaço como ferramenta analítica para obras de caráter aberto de L. C. Vinholes: o caso da Instrução 61* [The Time-Space Theory as an analytical tool to open works from L. C. Vinholes: the case of *Instruction 61*] in the proceedings of the XXIV ANPPOM Congress (2014) and the 2017 paper by Lilia Rosa de Oliveira: *Música do século XX: As ideias de Cage, Boulez e Vinholes* [Music of the 20th century: The ideas of Cage, Boulez and Vinholes], in the *Revista Reprodução* of Casa Guilherme de Almeida.

Why Vinholes and Cage?

Why this counterpoint between Cage and Vinholes? What do we hope to gain from it? What does Cage have to do with Vinholes? These questions plagued me throughout all the time spent to writing this paper. As time passed and the text has been done, I realised that in front of me (and of us) perhaps starting humbly uncover a whole chapter of the Brazilian music history until today poorly told, referring to this “music as a process”, “open work”, “work in movement”, “aleatory music”, or an “indeterminate music”. Before starting this work, I believed that the only useful approach to understanding our aleatory musical production was to try to find in each composer its poetical or aesthetical genealogy in the European or North American music. “Are you the godson of whom: Stockhausen or Cage”? Having met Vinholes, however, I was forced to reconsider.

When I heard for the first time the works of the Pelotas born composer Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes, during the XIV Congress of ANPPOM (Porto Alegre – 2003), I immediately got the impression that I was in front of a composer affiliated to the ideas of John Cage regarding the utilization of material, silence and chance operations. For me was a beautiful surprise to see this, since the concerts programme presented Vinholes as an heir of Webern. To my ears, a certain essentialism was evident in the gestural sound used in the pieces, as well as a sympathy for the small and a hint of the groupism found in some of the Viennese master's works as in the Concert Op. 24, where fragments of the series are splashed over time acquiring the status of autonomous

characters involved in a silent climate. The very short duration of his pieces would be another related characteristic. However, the Vinholes' material was even more rarefied. There was a more radical simplicity. This perception, associated to the discover that the composer used aleatory methods in some of his pieces made me thought about the John Cage of the *Music for Piano 1-84* (1952-56), pieces in which the sonorous material, product of chances operations, and often does not exceeding 4 or 5 notes per page and where the silence acquire a new significance as a space for contemplating surrounding sounds, acting as an entity, that is more psychological than acoustic, dependent on the listener's intention.

However, in Vinholes, despite of the confirmation of his aesthetic genealogy, evident in the use of the sound material, there was something different about its *silences*. They were not treated as psychological Cagean entities, on the contrary, were inserted in the context as structural blocks. They had weight and relevance in the progress of the works. It was essential to hear them in the way they were displayed by the composer on time. Evidence of this, can be seen in the attitude of the musicians towards the noise produced by the audience, who were late and trying to find seats in order to enjoy the show: a certain apprehension and expectation by the creation of a window of *real silence* through which the music could begin. Although, in a first site, his works sounded like referencing the Cagean aesthetics, certainly also exhibited fundamental differences warranting further investigation.

Who would be this atomist composer? How is thought his structural silence? Where do Vinholes' relations with the aleatory come from? Would be Cagean? Is there an ideological motivation or is it purely aesthetic? This paper aims to deal with these questions. The approach consists in produce a counterpoint between Vinholes and Cage regarding their ideas on theory, indeterminacy and silence. I have taken care not to view Vinholes through the lens of a Cagean aesthetic, nor vice versa. My work aimed to understand how it happens in Brazil the first breath of that, in the XXth century, we called *aleatory music*. In this way Cage comes as a reference, maybe not imperative, but almost inevitable.

It is not my intention in this space to make a biographical study, even a resume, about John Cage. Nevertheless, I wish to make flashes in this sense always when some biographical aspects of him will came to help the present investigation. Regarding to Vinholes, due to yet little references to him in our bibliography, it is appropriate to proceed with a presentation of a resume of his career as a musician, poet and diplomat, before to proceed.

Vinhos

According to the very rich biographical study produced by Mario de Souza Maia, in 1999, Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinhols was born in Pelotas-RS, in 1933, where he starts his music studies. In 1946, he took part in the chorus of the cathedral and worked as a copyist of the Pelotas' Symphony Orchestra. Such office approach him to the repertoire and the music theory. In 1952, appointed by the pianist Yara André, he was accepted by Koellreutter at the Teresópolis Vacation Course. Vinhols already knew personally the German master, naturalized Brazilian, founder of the Música Viva Group, when he visited Pelotas to conduct its Symphony Orchestra, in December 1950. In this occasion Vinhols had a few classes of counterpoint and Koellreutter, noticing his dedication, asked the City Hall to give him a scholarship to go to the Teresópolis course. After many bureaucratic steps the scholarship was granted (Maia: 1999, 43).

After the Teresópolis Course, he moved to São Paulo, where he worked as a personal secretary of Koellreutter, in order to pay for his staying while studying at the Seminários de Música (previous Escola Livre de Música da Pró- Arte). This period in São Paulo allowed him with to study composition regularly with Koellreutter and presents a few works. He also read of poems together with the young concrete poets in performances that marked the beginning of his involvement with the concrete poetry. As a singer he took part in choral groups and in Brazilian premieres of works like St. Matthew's Passion, by Bach, and the Messe de Notre Dame, by G. de Machaut. During this period he organized concerts of contemporary music, ancient music, jazz and ethnic music in the São Paulo capital.

In 1956, in a series of three lectures entitled: *Uma Nova Tentativa de Estruturação Musical [A New Attempt for Music Structuring]*, he presented his theory of the organization of rhythmic-melodic-harmonic cells, named as *Time-Space theory*. In 1957 he assumed the place of Koellreutter, that had moved to Bahia, as the music critic of the Diário de São Paulo newspaper. The composer used his position to fight on behalf of the modern music, to criticize the traditional music education system and to analyze pieces of contemporary composers, as, for example Boulez and Stockhausen (Maia: 1999, 56).

In 1957 he received a scholarship to study traditional Japanese music in Tokyo. Arriving in Japan, as well as studying at the Music Department of the University of Tokyo, he was accepted at the Department of Music of the Imperial Palace to study gagaku, the music of the Japanese court. During this time, he also studied the shichiriki (small vertical flute) and the shō (mouth organ).

Between 1958 and 1961, Vinholes was hired by Usiminas to work with the company's Brazilians in Japan. In December 1962, his first aleatory work *Instrução 61* [Instruction 61] (the first aleatory music produced by a Brazilian) was presented in Tokyo. In this piece, the performers follow instructions printed on cards shown to them by members of the public. This procedure would later be used in *Instrução 62* [Instruction 62], from the following year, and the performer's freedom to interfere in the outcome of his music became a constant feature, as in his poetic works. As a composer he produced, until 1964, many works. Among those the piece *Time-Space VI – Kasumi*, that was premiere during the I Osaka International Festival of Contemporary Music occasion when Vinholes participated as a guest composer alongside with Schoenberg, Penderecki and Stockhausen.

Recognizing his work in cultural exchange in Japan which was facilitated by his employment at Usiminas, the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo ended up contracting him as a cultural attaché of Brazil, in Japan. It was in this period that he organized, on his own initiative, the first exhibition of Brazilian concrete poetry outside Brazil, in Tokyo, an event of enormous repercussion (Maia: 1999, 84). Many other exhibitions of concrete poetry were organized in Japan by the composer until the year of 1964. He promoted the publication of scores by Brazilian composers, anthologies of poetry and translated many works into Japanese. In 1962 Vinholes hosted a program called *Canta Brazil* [Brazil Sings] dedicate to Brazilian music, in Tokyo. In this same year he founded the International Society of Plastic and Audio-Visual Arts in Osaka.

In 1967, after spending ten years in Japan, he became an interpreter to Prince Akihito, during his travel to Brazil, and decided to settle in Paraguay to stay closer to home. During his time in that country, he did not dedicate himself to producing new works. He introduced the dodecaphonic technique in Paraguay when he became a composition teacher to Nely Jimenes. This period lasted until 1974 when, requested by the Embassy, he returned to Tokyo remaining there until 1977, that year he organized a Brazilian contemporary music exhibition in the Gallery of the Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo, featuring 474 scores by 97 composers. In October 1977 he moved to Canada, period in which he took up composition, and remained in that country until 1989. He is currently (from 2005 to the period of publication of this paper, in 2025), retired, the composer lives in Brasilia with his wife.

We can see in the trajectory of Vinholes some points of convergence between him and Cage that goes further than their use of the aleatoric elements in their works. Both in a certain point in

their careers were interest in Orient, produced solid literary works and were theoreticians of their own ideas. These elements will be used later to establish links between the two personalities.

Overcoming the masters

John Cage was a student of Arnold Schoenberg from 1935 to 1938. The German master, the creator of the dodecaphonic theory, had been in exile in the USA since 1931, due to the rise of Nazism in Germany. In order to study with Schoenberg without having to pay the high price for private lessons, the young composer assumed the compromise of dedicate his life to music. This well-known episode in Cage's biography marked the beginning of his relationship with the German master. Cage worshipped Schoenberg and, in the climate of dispute between the Schoenbergians and the Stravinskyans, very common at that time, in other words, between serialists and neo-classics, he behaved like a true *partisan*, defending his German master. Cage in an interview to Jeff Goldberg says:

When I was studying with Schoenberg in the thirties, Stravinsky came to live in Los Angeles, and an impresario who was our local Hurok advertised a concert of his music as "Music of the World's Greatest Living Composer". I was indignant and marched straight into the impresario's office and told him that he should think twice before he made such advertisements in a city where Schoenberg was living. I was extremely partisan. I was like a tiger in defense of Schoenberg. (Kostelanetz: 1991,7).

Over the years, serious theoretical conflicts began to arise among them, motivated by the fact that Cage did not accept the study of harmony as a valid basis for thinking about an art form that, by that time, had already included, as important structural parameters, the *noise* and the *silence*. According to Bernstein, another important conflict is related to Cagean preference for *connectivity* of the sound material (non-linear tendency) as opposed to the *continuity* valued by Schoenberg (linear tendency) (Bernstein: 2002, p. 35). Furthermore, while Schoenberg criticized the *literal repetition* as a sterile procedure, unable to create new forms, preaching *variation* as an obligatory pattern, Cage valued this same repetition justifying it with an image of Schoenberg regarding the variation: that this one would be nothing more than a "non-literal repetition" (Idem, p. 29).

Truly, the *connectivity* aspect only came to its full development by Cage very after the end of his contact with Schoenberg, a little after he assumed the *chance* as a method for disposition of the sound material. In works such as the *String Quartet in Four Parts* (1950) instead of filling the time with improvised material, technique used until then, he chose sequences of melodic-harmonic

fragments within a preconceived series of objects; Even in late works as his *Sonatas & Interludes* (1948-49) for prepared piano, Cage still demonstrated a certain dependence on linearity. However, the option for material *literal repetition* was extensively explored in his percussion works from 1939 and for prepared piano from 1940 to 1948, becoming a hallmark for the period immediately preceding the production of his first pieces based on sound objects and frameworks of gestural melodic-harmonic material. With the use of chance to establish continuity of sounds in time, starting with the last movement of the *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1951), the aspect of the literal repetition, and the control over the sound connectivity, do not appear anymore to be central in his works.

The interest for a music based not on scales or serial material but on the *total sonorous*, marks an important rupture between Cage and his former master. It is from this idea that Cage begins to elaborate his first proposals for musical organization having as a primordial parameter the *rhythm*, took as the only element truly indispensable for the conception of any music. It is also well known the dialogue between Schoenberg and Cage, in which the later declared that he had no ear for harmony. The teacher warned him to the impossibility of develop himself in musical composition without such skill:

After having study with him for three years, Schoenberg said: "in order to write music, you need to have sensibility for harmony". Then he said that I will always face an obstacle that will be like I arrive at a wall through which I will not be able to pass. I said: "In this case, I will dedicate my life to bit my head again the wall" (Cage: 1985, 114).

This dialogue marked the end of the relationship between Schoenberg and Cage. Schoenberg never recognized the disciple as a composer. Even very much later, he declared that, among all the disciples that he had in the USA, only Cage deserved to be remembered, but referring to him not as a composer, but as a genial inventor (Kostelanetz: 1991, 6).

Vinholes, on the other hand, was associated with the Brazilian composers interested in the dodecaphonic technique, in the mid-1950s, while studying composition with Koellreutter in São Paulo (another German master exiled in America due to Nazism). At the time they were in the midst of an ideological conflict against the nationalist composers. Vinholes, however, decided not to involve himself in this conflict. Maia sees the situation at the time as follow:

The nationalists, in terms of music theory, followed the development of the harmonic process, in other words, they used resources that were accepted, taken as certain, such as the intervals of thirds, sixths, fifths, accompanied by thirds, in short, consonant combinations, harmonic,

eliminating those taken as dissonant and, therefore, uninteresting and useless such as seconds, sevenths, the triton, etc. By their side, what did the dodecaphonists? They applauded everything that was denied by the concept of good and right, the use of the dissonance, of the second and seventh notes and anything that made a case against what was used by the followers of the traditional harmony.

(...)

In the middle of this confusion, Vinholes concluded that basically both (...) became the same thing, but in opposite sides. One was the mirror of the other (Maia: 1999, 12).

Vinholes himself declared to Maia in 1998: "I cannot be attached to this, because if it is only this, for me is too little. I've found that's just it, so I must try something else" (idem, 133). The dodecaphonism is a theoretically neutral compositional technique based on a sequence of intervals resulting from the arrangement of twelve notes that are repeated throughout the composition as a mean to maintain melodic-harmonic coherence. The question in Brazil is that, amid the ideological dispute between the nationalists and the dodecaphonists, results in a *dodecaphonic aesthetic*, or better, was developed, from the utilization of the twelve-tone technique, a kind of *aesthetic of the dissonance*, that ended up working as a new dogma for those who wanted to follow the Brazilian musical avant-guard. Due to these circumstances and primarily interested in creative freedom, Vinholes decided for a neutral stance.

Such neutrality was reflected in the way he wrote his music and motivated the end of its studies with Koellreutter. The subject was the dodecaphonic piece *Paisagem Mural [Mural Landscape]* (1955). the composer himself provides an explanation for the event:

He (Koellreutter) stopped being my composition teacher the day I disrespect the dodecaphonic technique (...). I wrote *Paisagem Mural* disrespecting the rules, the dodecaphonic series rules. He told me "If you do not correct it, I will not teach you anymore". I clearly answered, "Then this will indeed be our last class". We remained great friends and so more (Vinholes: 01/07/2005)

Vinholes makes a point of emphasizing that this moment marked the beginning of a horizontal relationship between the two composers. Koellreutter came to consider him now as a colleague, no longer a disciple, and both would be collaborators and close friends for decades. In order to continue writing his music, whoever, Vinholes was obliged to invent new compositional strategies that would free him not only from a tonal tradition, regarded as decadent, but also from an excessive formality of the dodecaphonic technique. In 1956, he devised a personal solution to the impasse, called *Teoria Tempo-Espaço [Time-Space Theory]*, where he proposed a systematic way to treat the sound material without binding it directly to any previously established system.

Emancipatory theories

Cage was interested, above all, in noise during the 1930s, and he worked hard to develop a rhythmic structure that could accommodate such sound entity. The silence, at first, was still considered just one more block in the palette that the composer wanted to create (as we shall see, identical to the Vinholes' *deliberate silence*). Breaking with a structure based on pitch, Cage was able to conceive a music, or *sound organization* in the following terms: sound *material* arranged according to a *method*, within preconceived *structures*, configuring a *form*. Cage, throughout his career, always referred to this rhythmic structuring as the key for his compositions, even when was in discussion the rupture with any of those concepts³. The terms *form* and *structure* means, respectively, as in the common sense, *content* and *form*. *Form*, for Cage, would be the disposition of everything that sounds inside a piece while *structure* is a composer's previously defined temporal division, within which the *form* unfolds.

The 1940s were characterized, under Cage's *rhythmic structure* influence, by a huge emphasis in the parameters *material* and *structure*. Belong to this period his works for percussion ensembles and prepared piano. Most of these pieces were written having as subject the accompaniment of dance. Since the late 1930s, Cage had collaborated with dance groups writing and performing. What he had available: a palette of noises (his percussion group or a prepared piano) and a rhythmic scheme, often elaborated by the dancers themselves, to write the musical part. This model was adopted as the basis for his *rhythmic structuring* (Cage: 2000, 34). In concert pieces, without dance, Cage experimented to create more abstract relationships using the so-called *micro-macrocosmic principle* of rhythmic organization where the small parts of the piece had the same relationships to each other as the large parts, as in *First Construction (in metal)* (1939) (Idem, 35) (Fig.1).

³ The Cagean parameter *structure* was questioned by the composer still in the late 1950s, when he began writing works where this framework becomes dispensable or even non-existent at all. This is the case of works such *Winter Music* (1957) for 1 to 20 pianos and the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1958), where total autonomy between the parts and the possibility of these being played in any amount within the limits of the score, makes it no longer possible to identify the temporal boundaries of theory (N.P.)

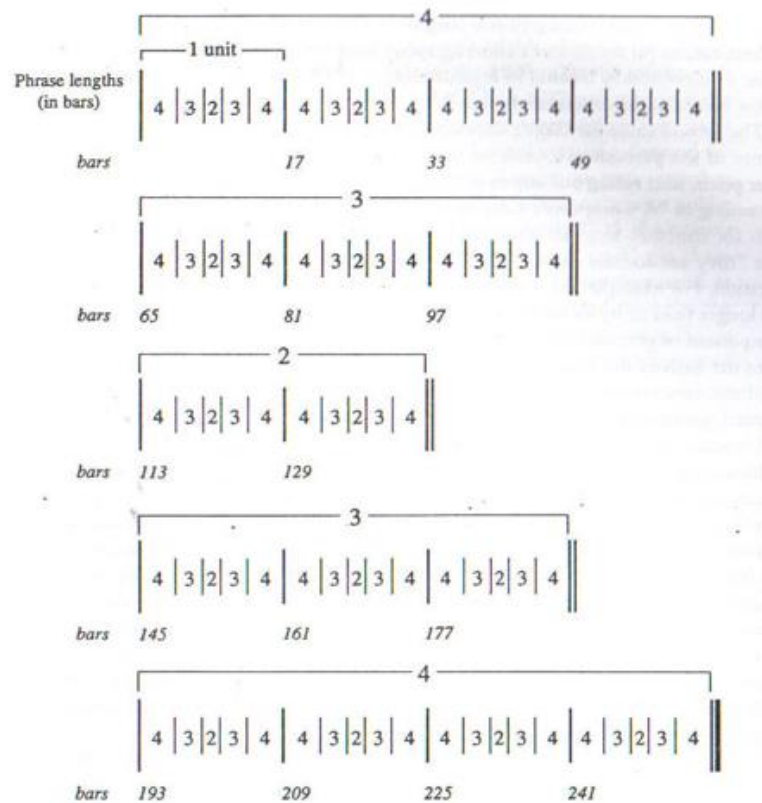


Fig 1 - rhythmic structure of the piece *First Construction (in metal)* (PRITCHETT, 1995, p.17).

The aspects of the *form* and *method* never gained their own systematization. Initially, they were the result of improvisations; subsequently, they were the result of choices made within a series of objects or sound frameworks and, finally, they became the result of chance operations. In his article of 1944, *Grace and Clarity*, Cage draw attention to the relationship between *form* and *structure*, asserting that the “players, dancers, and audiences enjoy hearing and seeing the laws of the rhythmic structure, being now observed and now ignored” (Cage: 1995, 92). Indeed, Cage’s music from the late 1930s is characterized by the complete subjugation of *form* in relation to *structure*. It is for this approach that comes the patchwork aspect of pieces like *First Construction (in metal)* (1939), *And the Earth Shall Bear Again* (1942) (Fig.2) and *Daughters of the Lonesome Isle* (1945).



Fig. 2 - fragment of the score of *And the Earth Shall Bear Again* (1942). The double bars represent important points of the rhythmical structure. John Cage. Prepared Piano Music, Vol. 1: 1940-47. New York: Peters, 67886a, p21.

Later, the composer began to make flexible the relationship between *form* and *structure*. This evolution led the *form* to tend towards self-referentiality, in other words, Cage's music of this period (late 1940s), can almost be classified as great written improvisations (*Music for Marcel Duchamp* – 1947, *Sonatas & Interludes* – 1948). The adoption of a rational *structure* as a reference played an important role in the construction of a music of non-linear feature. When this reference ceased to exist, as a natural consequence of Cage's search for greater flexibility between *form* and *structure*, it became necessary to use, instead of the pure will of the improvisation, the series and the frameworks of the gestural material for the organization of the *form*. But the total flexibility would only come when Cage decided to use chance as a method to organize *form* within *structure*. Chance thus arises, in this way, as a mean to solve the problem of the agency and their accents within composition.

In 1956, Vinholes decided to put in theory a series of ideas he had been working on since 1952. He created his own system of sound organization that he called *Teoria Tempo-Espaço* [*Time-Space Theory*]. Maia draws attention to the fact that the vast majority of Brazilian composers chose to experiment techniques that were explored by USA or European composers and, in Vinholes' case, "his thinking was directed towards an alternative of his own" (Maia: 1999, 136).

By *space*, Vinholes meant the difference, in frequency, between two notes (intervals); by *time*, the duration of each note. His theory is based on small nuclei (cells) of notes, characterized by any melodic-harmonic relationship which can be presented and combined in different ways. There is no recommendation regarding the use of pitches.

In the dodecaphonic music there were prohibitions. There were parameters that should be followed rigidly with regard to what was accepted or not accepted, in other words, consonance and dissonance, for short. I wanted to put an end to this, I wanted to get out of this prison, cut these handcuffs. I created Time-Space where this doesn't happen. It doesn't matter if there's a third or not, if there's a tritone or not... it doesn't matter anymore, it's over. It is a space controlled by those nuclei, you do those three forms of presentation of each nucleus and it is done, it's over. (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

The new theory ended up requiring a new terminology which, at first, makes it difficult to understand. We have the *Unidades Espaciais* (UE) [*Spatial Unities*] which would be any interval between two notes and the *Unidades Temporísticas* (UT) [*Time Unities*] which would be the figures of duration to be linked to the spatial figures. By connecting these two concepts, we have an *Unidade Estrutural* (US) [*Structural Unity*] (Fig. 3).



Fig.3 – respectively, the spatial unity (UE), the time unity (UT) and the structural unity (US).

Next are listed the various ways of presenting these rhythmic-melodic-harmonic cells which can be linked to each other to form the so-called *Unidades Estruturais Consecutivas* (UC) [*Successive Structural Unities*] presented in three ways: F1 – the *extreme frequencies* (fe) having short duration, allowing between them a structural silence; F2 – the *first extreme frequency* (pfe) (located to the left of the cell), has a long duration, while the second one is short; and F3 – the *second extreme frequency* (sfe) having a long duration while the first one presents a short duration. When we mix these forms alternately or not, we have an *Estrutura Rítmica Mista* (ERM) [*Mixed Rhythmic Structure*] (ERM). The composer also classifies *structuring processes* by highlighting the variety of forms and structures used in a given case. Once exposed the details of his theory, Vinholes wrote, in 1956, the *Time-Space I*, as a way of illustrating it (Fig.4).

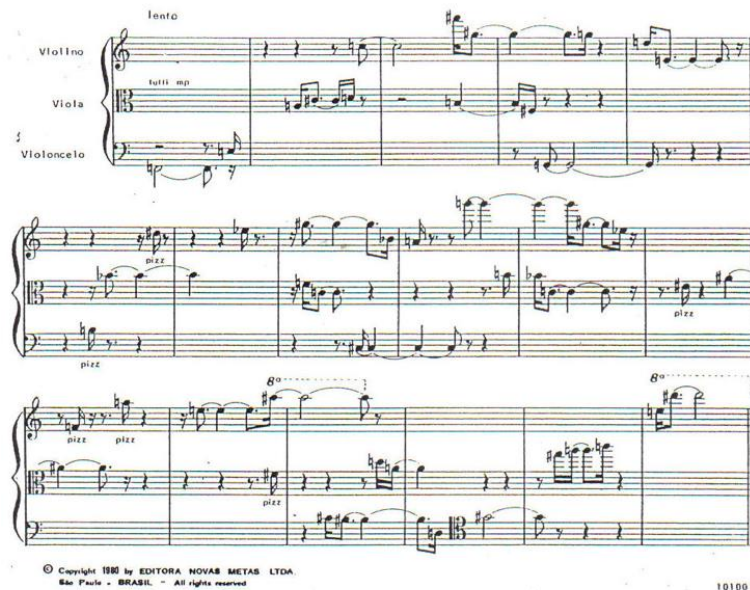


Fig. 4 – the score of piece *Time-Space I* (1956) (MAIA, 1999, p. 195)

Vinholes, like Cage, was looking for a way to structuring his pieces that doesn't require a systematic approach directing the relationship between pitches. For the Brazilian composer, it doesn't matter which intervals would be used, as he recognizes that each composer has their own idiosyncratic repertoire of sounds. *Noise*, an aspect that didn't attract so much attention from Vinholes at the time he conceived such a theory, is also contemplated, insofar as we can use its *structural cells* without reference to pitches. "I'm neither in favor of nor opposed to sound and noise", would say the composer (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

Ironically, Vinholes, as Cage, used the terms *form* and *structure* as key concepts of his theory. Here, however, such concepts have a completely different meaning, since they refer to musical structuring from the micro. While for Cage *structure* means a division of the whole into parts, for Vinholes this term is related to elementary building blocks of the piece. Cage's *form*, that is related to the organization of the sounds within the *structure*, has to do with the way these elementary blocks are shown. The overall shape of the piece itself, in Vinholes, is secondary, since it is the result of the way are organized the small cells within it. In other words, using Cage's concepts we have a *structure* and a *form* that depend on the conception of the *method* and, as we have already seen, the *material*, in Vinholes' poetics, acquire a secondary status, and can even be inserted into the context after the other parameters have been organized. A poetics of the *micro* to the *macro* as opposed to a poetics of the *macro* to the *micro*.

In a way, the proposal by Vinholes is complementary to the Cage's, as it allows for the structuring of those parameters that remained undiscovered by the North-American composer and

that had to do with the development of *form* and the definition of a *method*, as well as considering as secondary the aspects *structure* and *material*. Vinholes, to this day (2005-), keeps composing according to his *Time-Space* technique, even when he accepts solutions of an indeterminate feature. His early experiments with so-called aleatory were marked by the idea of random superimposition of small autonomous parts, as we will see later in the *Instructions 61* (1961).

Chance, indeterminacy, aleatory

In order to better understand the difference between Cage's *chance* and Vinholes *aleatorism*, we need to follow the evolution of their thinking prior to their taken that stand. For Cage, as we have seen, there was a need to create a way out to the impasse *freedom* versus *law*, expressed by the relationship between *form* and *structure*, without sacrificing the notion of *discontinuity* in the conception of *form*. The series of sounds objects and the frameworks of gestural material were an important step in this direction, since the choice of details was made a priori in order to create the frameworks or series and the composer could operate more freely, choosing his building blocks, and running less risk of falling back on linear solutions. In 1951, while working on *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra*, his student, the composer Christian Wolf, gave him an *I-Ching*, or *Book of Changes* (Pritchett: 1995, 70). The oracular use of the I-Ching consists on drawing, using sticks or coins, *trigrams* formed by combination of lines *yin* – hollows and *yang* - compacts. These *trigrams* have a dynamic relationship with each other of perpetual transience or mutation and, combined, form more complex signs called *hexagrams*. There are 64 in all.

Cage used the I-Ching as a *method* to organize the *form* in his pieces of this period. With this, he managed to achieve both a musical discourse based on *discontinuity* – the result of composer's aesthetic taste not interfering with the result – and an unobstructed relationship between *structure* and *form*, which at this point were definitively unobligated. The basic characteristic of the pieces of this period is the *fixation* of elements, chosen by chance which had to be followed to the letter by the performer. Cage, when referring to his *Music of Changes* (1952) for piano, the first piece fully elaborated using chances operations, compared his approach to the creation of a Frankenstein's monster.

The *Music of Changes* is an object more inhuman than human since chance operations brought it into being. The fact that these things that constitute it, though only sound, have come together to control a human being, the performer, gives the work the alarming aspect of a Frankenstein monster. (Cage: 1995, 36)

Cage differentiated *chance* from *indeterminacy*. To him, *chance* referred to the use of some random process during the act of composition. *Indeterminacy*, on the other hand, referred to the quality of a piece that can be performed in several different ways (Pritchett: 1995, 108). Until 1957, Cage worked almost exclusively with the first principle and created several works in which the performer was always at the service of choices made through chance operations such as the oracular use of I-Ching: *Music of Changes* for piano, *Imaginary Landscape N°4* for twelve radios, *William Mix* for tape, *Two Pastorales* for prepared piano, all produced in 1952; observation of graphic imperfection on sheets of paper from where notes were defined: *Music for Carillon N°2* (1954), *Music for piano 1- 84* (1952-56), or both techniques: *26'1.1499" For a string Player* (1955).

The works involving *indeterminacy*, in other words, the active participation of the performer in their final format, began to appear in the second half of the 1950s with works such as *Winter Music* (1957) for 1 to 20 pianos, where the composer uses autonomous parts in variable number. Such autonomy between the parts means that the notion of *Structure* is definitively lost (Fig. 5).

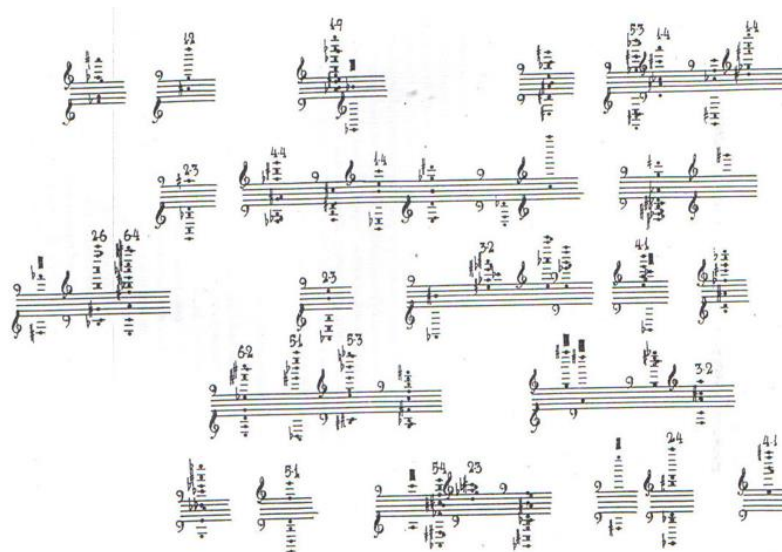


Fig.5 – fragment of the score of *Winter Music* (1947) (PRITCHETT, 1995, p. 111).

In the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1958), there is the same principle of autonomy between the parts. In addition, the soloist must choose its performing line, from a book with 84 different types of indeterminate notations (Fig. 6). The concert can be played with any number of

performers, the minimum format being piano solo (in that case the piece should be called *Solo for Piano*). The conductor, following its own score, plays a more choreographic than music roll.⁴

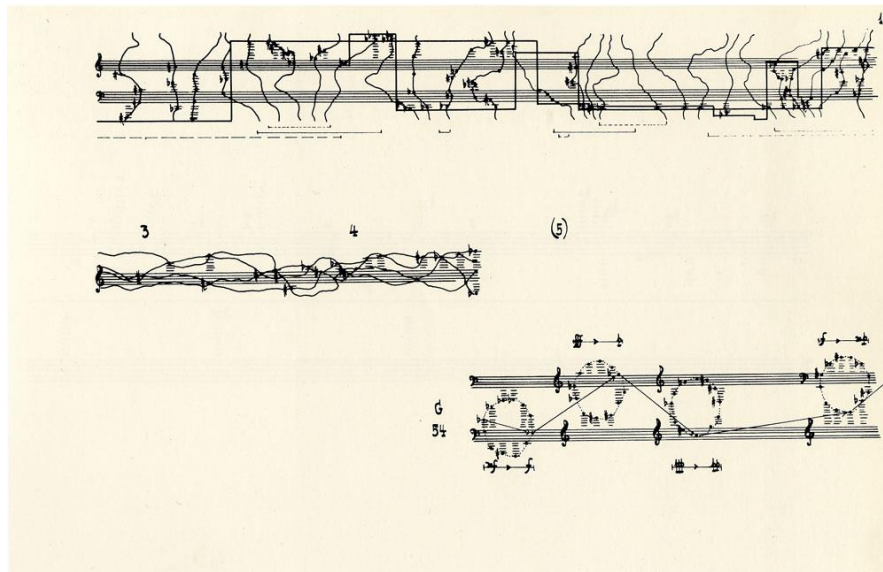


Fig.6 – One of the notations used in the part for piano of the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1958) (PRITCHETT, 1995. P. 118).

There is in this Cage choice to give freedom to the performer a desire to blur the boundaries between the performer and the composer. Cage, in 1958, in his text *Experimental Music*, referring to his indeterminate music, explains: “What has happened to me is that I have become a listener and the music has become something to hear”. (Cage: 1995, 7) At this point this *dilution* is taken place in Cage’s work, since composer no longer represents the subject who has total control over what is going to happen on stage. He himself is at the mercy of what might happen. He himself is a listener despite being the proposer of the sound situation within which everyone is immersed.

However, these freedoms granted to the performer ended up taking their toll. Cage soon realized that not every performer is capable of achieving the objectives of this type of proposal, whether due to technical unpreparedness, ignorance of how to proceed, or simple bad faith. Referring to this in an interview granted to G. Helms, in 1972, he vents:

⁴ In the premiere of this work, at the celebration Concert on the 25th anniversary of the composer's career, in the Town Hall in New York in 1958, the choreographer Merce Cunningham was responsible for "conducting" the performance (N.P.).

This giving of freedom to the individual performer began to interest me more and more. And given to a musician like David Tudor, of course, it provided results that were extraordinarily beautiful. When this freedom is given to people who are not disciplined and who do not start - as I've said in so many of my writings - from zero (by zero I mean the absence of likes and dislikes) who are not, in other words, changed individuals, but who remain people with particular likes and dislikes, then, of course, the giving of freedom is of no interest whatsoever. (Kostelanetz: 1991, 71).

A good illustration for what is meant by indiscipline in performance would be the sabotage suffered by Cage in 1961, on stage, by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein, at the premier of the piece *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1961). The musicians removed the microphones from their instruments and started banging on them in protest. In backstage, some said to Cage: "come back in ten years. Maybe we'll take you seriously" (Kostelanetz: 1991, 69).

It is important to know that Vinholes had no contact with the Cage's work before his trip to Japan. This may have been due to the fact that Cage's output was restricted to a privileged few who was able to visit New York in the mid-1950s. These few could only return to Brazil with reports of what they had seen and heard, since John Cage's pieces and texts were only published in 1961, when he signed a contract with Peters Edition. Even when, in 1958, Cage took part as a lecturer and performer of his own works at the Summer Course in Darmstadt (Germany), when composers from all over the world, including Brazil, had access to his ideas, Vinholes had already left. According with the Brazilian composer himself:

Knowledge of Cage's works, honestly say, I have come to have in Japan. Not in São Paulo. In São Paulo Cage was an unknown figure. I met Cage himself, in 1961, in Tokyo. There was a great festival and he was there (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

The Vinholes' insertion into what was called aleatory occurred as an evolution of total freedom idea already expressed when he created the *Time-Space* technique. At first, he wanted to get rid of the need for semantic choice proposed by the "national x dodecaphonic" dispute by proposing a neutral syntax. Secondly considers that this process of liberation could be expanded to performers and even to the public. Vinholes created a type of music in which the composer, performer and listener are placed on the same level of enjoyment and participation. For him this would be the true essence of the aleatoric music.

As long as there is the dichotomy of audience and performer, there is still something missing to make things of aleatory to be fully realized, because there is still those who expects to hear something and those who expects to produce something that is heard (Vinholes: 01/07/2004).

Umberto Eco in his article *Poetics of the Open Work*, in the section that deals with the work of art ontology, draws a parallel between the *work in movement* (open work, equivalent to the Cage's work of *indeterminate* character) and the Einsteinian conception that exists such an *a priori* order in space-time, even if it is not sufficiently expressible with the human tools available. "Einstein does not presupposes a God who plays dices, but the Spinoza's God, who rules the world according to perfect laws" (Eco: 2003, 61). Eco suggests an analogy between the organizing God who defines the mysterious rules of the cosmos, so that it remains intact even though it appears chaotic, and the composer of *moving works*.

The work in movement is the possibility of a multiplicity of personal interventions, but it is not an amorphous invitation to indiscriminate intervention. It is the non-necessary and unambiguous invitation to guided intervention, to freely insert ourselves in a world which, however, is always the one desired by the author

And continues:

The author offers, in short, to the viewer a work to be finished: he doesn't know exactly how the work will be completed, but he does know that the work completed will be always, and despite everything, be his work, not another, and that at the end of the interpretative dialogue, a form will have been realized that is his form, even if not organized by another in a way that he couldn't completely foresee: because he had, essentially proposed some possibilities that were already rationally organized, oriented and endowed of organic development requirements. (Eco: 2003, 61-62).

The *work* concept means, among other things, the fruit of someone's labor. In Vinholes' aleatory poetics, this work is essentially carried out by the performers (including himself) and the composer's influence on the results is minimized as much as possible. The composer even denies that error exists in the performance of this type of music. Regarding the diagnosis of Eco on the role of the composer as the hidden regulative principle of moving work, one has in Vinholes an activator of processes that, once underway, theoretically, would be beyond his control. I say theoretically, because although he recognizes the lack of preparation of the performers in the performed open-ended pieces, due to their inadequate training, he has his own aesthetic preferences (a taste for simplicity, for saying a lot using little) and his work is a reflex of this.

I've never believed that to say things in any language you have to talk for hours. No, you don't. You can say a lot with very little. A line can be a work of art, a few words, as was done in concretism. A small volume can have an extraordinary beauty (Vinholes: 01/07/2005)

By this I mean that, despite the apparently unrestricted opening, there is an expectation about the outcome. However, in the case of Vinholes, there is not a strategy for guaranteeing results, either intrinsic to the work, or dependent on extra-musical issues, as in Cage. A certain detachment from the work is actually part of his poetics.

The best illustration of this aspect of Vinholes' work is one of his performances in the field of avant-garde poetry. In Venice, when he was invited to the *Festival de la Parola*, where poets from all over the world were present, instead of writing a poem of his own on the catalog of the meeting, he decided that the public would do it. Collectively a rule was decided: sentences would be written in which the word "eye" had to appear. Having the catalog of some of those present and with the aid of an overhead projector, Vinholes arranged the sentences, one on top of the other using, as the central column, the words *eye* (as in Cage's *mesostic* poems, but using a whole word instead of letters as the central axe). Then, each one took his catalogue and left the theater.

The person who wrote in its catalogue page owns it, and so do the others. The work is written by everyone, but some don't know about the others. At that moment, the work was restricted to that space in the theater. But at the moment those people left, some going to Milan, others going to Paris, Haroldo (de Campos) returning to São Paulo, those catalogues would be gone and the space occupied by the work done would expand. These catalogues will last until when? Some will be destroyed, other will be burned... will be minimized the size of the work done. There's an authorship in it, there is something made, there is space for something made, but no one has any idea what it is, where it is and for how long (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

In other words, the process is triggered and, then takes on a life of its own. We have an *activator of processes* rather than a traditional author, and the *collective*, that becomes the author (performers), soon loses control of the unfolding of the work, which acquires existence absolutely unrelated to any control. To Vinholes, in this occasion, "exists an essence of aleatory thing" (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

John Cage deals with the *work in movement or, composition as a process*, to use its own terminology, in order to distancing himself from the control of the work and making itself present to him as something new. This is the meaning of the Cage's statement that he became a listener. His foray in this direction came about through chance. However, the chance in Cage does not occur

at the expense of what Eco sees as *integrity* of the moving work. Cage's chance is always subject to a specific compositional project and served as way of choosing between various possibilities. *Dices are thrown* to find out whether three or five events will occur in a specific space of time, for example. With a few exceptions, even his production of *indeterminate* music has several cases of formal integrity, given, for example, by the coherence of choice of sound materials that are repeated within a given time lapse forming static textures. Cage, concerned with such integrity, always seeks to balance this freedom with the choice of performers. The freer the performer, the more disciplined, responsible and musical they should be.

The piece *Instruction 61*, for any instrumental combination, by Vinholes, premiered in Tokyo on December 31, 1961, was the first work of indeterminate character created by a Brazilian. It consists in four instructions distributed among 100 square cards: 1) blank sheet, 2) dot, 3) short line and 4) long line, which are presented to the performers during the performance by collaborators taken from the audience. The long line means a note with long duration, the short line, a note with short duration, the dot a *punctiform sound* (very short) and the blank sheet means structural silence (deliberate). If the card is presented vertically, for the short line we have a small cluster of sounds, for long line, a large cluster of sounds.

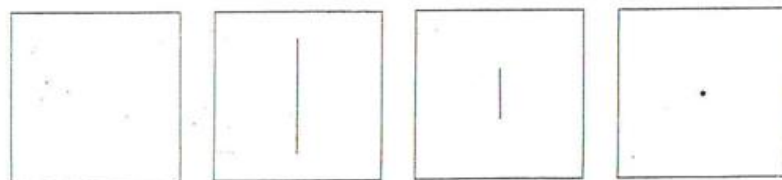


Fig.7 – models for *Instruction 61* cards (vertical position)

Note that the values of time and number of sounds are both relative. Thus, a sound is *long* always in relation to another sound taken as *short*. A cluster of sounds is considered *small* when compared to another considered *larger*. Here there is no specification of instruments or the number of performers. Once understood the rules, it is not even necessary to purchase the cards from the composer. Anyone can draw them up on themselves.

An important observation in my opinion is that the objects presented on the cards refer to the type of material used in the first *Time-Space* pieces⁵. Here these elements (long note, short

⁵ This hypothesis was developed in the article: FIEL DA COSTA, V. & DANTAS, D. M. *A Teoria Tempo-Espaço como ferramenta analítica para obras de caráter aberto de L. C. Vinholes: o caso da Instrução 61* In: Anais do XXIV Congresso da ANPPOM, São Paulo-SP, 2014.

note, structural silence, etc.) are organized (freed from the rigidity of the norm) by *chance* in the choice of sequence and overlapping of material and by the decisions of the performers, who deal with autonomous parts, in the gestural modeling of this material.

Compared to Cage's path, this peace marks a kind of leap directly from the determinate to the indeterminate. From a music based on performer's full compliance with the composer's indications, to a music where the performer and even the audience end up deciding, mediated by chance, the sound result, of which the composer, or rather, the maker of the initial proposal, becomes more of a listener. It's like Cage's image, just discussed earlier, of the composer who became a listener and the music something to be heard. The *audience* element, however, appears here as a differential. Faith in the performer and a certain detachment about the sound result will differentiate Vinholes' attitude in relation to Cage's. I believe that Cage had his reasons to distrust performers and the public: he was a very targeted figure at the time, he had been the center of small conceptual scandals that were very poorly digested by the musicians in general (even today), he lived in New York, which at that time, could still be considered the center of post-war world culture, its expansive and visionary personality kept him constantly in the spotlight.

A recent fact (in 2005) helps us better define Vinholes' stance regarding his *collectivistic* music during this period. When he moved to live in Brasilia shortly before retiring, the composer began to show an immense interest in the work of the Rio de Janeiro architect Athos Bulcão, Oscar Niemeyer partner in the construction of Brasilia and who was responsible for creating more than 100 tiles murals in the country's capital. The aspect of Athos' work that enchanted Vinholes was that, on several walls that he tiled, instead of defining in detail the final configurations, he preferred to leave such a choice to the workers. The master tiler would leave a simple instruction such as "avoid closing the circles and went away" (VINHOLES, 2005). The work was the result of the labor and preferences of the workers and the architect only provided the instructions that made it possible. Vinholes asseverate the relationship of his works in aleatoric music with Bulcão insertions in Brasilia and is surprised that there was so much similarity between the two creative projects, in different parts of Brazil, in the same period.

I've created the Instructions ... is what Athos Bulcão certainly thinks: it was the workers who made what is in the National Theater, not him. The music that was made in 61 and that is made every time you use the cards, *Instruction 62*, the *Peça/Pessa para fazer Pssiu/xi*, is

different each time. I didn't make that. I only prepared the instructions that enables that thing to be done (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

Maia quotes the poem *Alea I – Semantic Variations* by Haroldo de Campos as another similar example of correspondence with the Vinholes' vision. In this poem the reader should freely perform permutations in two words of five letters. The universe (this information is written in the poem's page) has 3,628,800 possibilities (Maia: 1999, 175). Vinholes consider this poem to be related to his ideas expressed in *Instructions*.

Another essential aspect of Vinholes work with indeterminacy, in addition to his detachment from the composer's stance is *accessibility* as a principle, rather than a circumstantial requirement.

I gave people the opportunity to make music without knowing much about music, without knowing anything about music.

(...)

There is no need to you to be a virtuoso. The opera *prima donna*, the concert soloist are unnecessary and dispensable figures. I prefer those others with less knowledge, with less gymnastics and juggling and everything else, making music. I want to be closer to this majority that did not have the privilege of becoming a central figure. Hence the great difference between my aleatoric Brazilian colleagues and my work. Because I want others, non-musicians to make music. This dichotomy of the musician and non-musician, poet and non-poet shouldn't exist (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

This aspect is relevant to our *counterpoint* since, in Cage's case, the technical accessibility is closely linked to the circumstances. The works created to be played by amateurs during the period which he was responsible for dance accompaniment at the Cornish School in Seattle (1938-1941) or by Cage himself when he was unable to find a professional group of performers during his early years in New York – which, in fact, motivated the great production of pieces for prepared piano during this period (PRITCHETT 1995, 24) – are, as a rule, quite accessible from a technical point of view. However, whenever there was the opportunity to count on a virtuoso performer, Cage wrote something capable of exploring the limits of musicians. Accessibility was not therefore, at first, an essential aspect of his work.

In 1979, Vinholes composed the piece *Peça/pessa to do Psiu/Xi* for choir in honor to the International Year of the Child. In it he uses only literal instructions such do "*psiu*" (as if asking for silence) and/or do "*xi*" (referring to peeing), the composer, in this case, dispenses the support of score or cards. This leads Maia to draw attention to the relationship between this poetics and the music of oral tradition, justifying such a comparison noting the absence of graphic support and

authorship reflexes in making music and its collective character as a sum of individual expressions. Vinholes is more cautious and warns that, despite the similarities, the focus is different: “We got to that point, there is a great similarity with what is there, but the thought that let it to happen and the thought that leads this to happen now are very different thoughts” (Vinholes: 01/05/2005). In fact, despite the clear relationship between this open music, simple, ritual, collective and non-authorial and manifestations of oral tradition, we cannot forget or erase the accumulated experience of more than two centuries of searching by complexity, valuing of hierarchical principles, individualism, authorship, conception of the art work, valuing this work of art according to interested criteria dependent of priorities of specific groups, etc. This is how Anton Webern commented in his lecture: *The Path to New Music*, on the relationship between the polyphonic procedures of the dodecaphonists and the Flemish music of the Renaissance: “Our presentation technique has achieved a very close relationship with the methods used in the XVI century by the Dutch, but of course also uses all the results of the conquest of the tonal-harmonic field” (WEBERN: 1960, p.53).

Vinholes’ catalogue includes only four more pieces of aleatoric feature within the anarchic spirit of *Instruction 61: Instruction 62*, for keyboard and a collaborator, which also includes instruction cards, and the pieces *Peça/Pessa to make Psiu/Xi* (1979) (already seen) and *Vento-Folha* (wind/leave) (1961-1978), both experiments with reading poems taken as musical events. The habit of oralizing poems was cultivated by the concrete poets in São Paulo in the period in which Vinholes lived there, just before travelling to Japan. Both pieces can be performed by non-musicians reading just a few instructions. Vinholes also mixed aleatoric procedures with his *Time-Space* technique in the pieces *Tempo-Espaço XIII – 4 Lados das Mil Faces de Janet* [Time-Space XIII – 4 Sides of the Thousand Janet’s Faces] (1978), where the performer moves freely, using an autonomous part and a matrix of *Time-Space* cells (Fig. 8). *Tempo Espaço XV* [Time Space XV] (1978) is made following the same principle. Both pieces can be played simultaneously configuring the piece *Tempo-Espaço XVa* [Time-Space XVa].

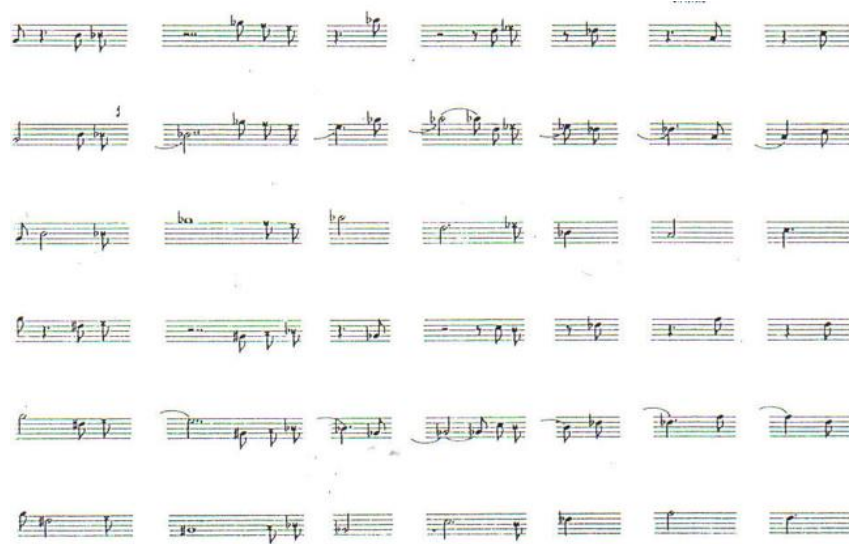


Fig.8 – fragment of the score of *Time-Space XIII – 4 Sides of Thousand Janet’s Faces*.

The piece *Time-Space XIV* (1978) presents this same principle superimposed on a reading of the poem *Suk-a* by Bill Bisset (Fig.9).

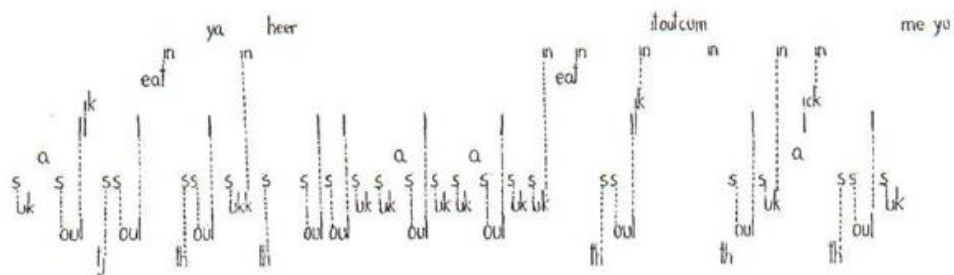


Fig. 9 – score for reading performance of the poem *Suk-a* (MAIA, 1999, p.151).

As one can soon realize Vinholes production is greatly small. There are, according to the composer, two reasons for this. The first is his dedication, while he was out of Brazil, to the embassy and to the avant-garde poetry, and the second, simpler and more subjective, is that he does not feel comfortable composing if he does not feel that such activity is adding something new. Thanks to this characteristic, Vinholes was nicknamed by Gilberto Mendes as a “leap year composer” (Vinholes: 01/07/2005). “I can’t produce all the time. Because if I don’t find a reason to search, a reason to think about something, I won’t write. I’d rather not write than do something that I think is repeating something else” (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

Silence

Another aspect to be addressed is the *silence*. Silence for Vinholes was treated as a structural element in the majority of his pieces (only his musical oralizations do not provide for such structural silence). It is a musical element that contributes to the overall construction of the pieces. This is true for his pieces written according to the *Time-Space* technique and also for his *Instructions*. This characteristic is what became evident when listened, in Porto Alegre (2003), an episode recounted at the beginning of this text, where musicians, to begin with, waited for a real silence (in the concert hall) and, when playing the pieces, interpreted the pauses in such a way as to make them evident. The use of *silence* as an effective part of the constitution of the nuclei (cells) of the *Time-Space* Theory, one of its fundamental characteristics, provides such an aesthetic differential. From his early *Time-Space* pieces, silence is seen as a structural element. In the theory it is called *Valor Negativo (VN)* [Negative Value].

The *Time-Space* cell has three ways to present itself: one in which the first element is always the longest and the second is the shortest; the other in which the first element is the shortest and the second element is the longest; and a third wherein the first and the second elements, the extremes, are the shortest, and the longest is the silence between them. It happens to be an element equal to the others. Silence is structure. Silence is not something that happens (Vinholes: 01/07/2005).

In pieces such as *Time-Space XIII* and in the *Instructions* themselves, there are two types of silence. To use Maia's terminology, one that is *deliberate*: when the silence is part of what is been played at that moment (when a silence card is in front of a performer, for example) and another that is *non-deliberated*: those silences that occur by chance between one intervention and another.

These two types of silence explored by Vinholes are used by Cage in a systematic way. At first, interested in expanding the pallet of sound possibilities at the composer's service, Cage admitted *deliberated* silence as part of this new and unrestricted universe and even defended his proposal for rhythmic structuring stating that duration is the only aspect of sound that is common to both sound and silence (Pritchett: 1995, p. 39). Influenced by the famous experiment inside an anechoic chamber at Harvard University – where he discovered that, even in a situation of absolute silence it is still possible to hear the sounds of his own body – Cage came to the conclusion that *silence*, after all, is nothing but a psychological entity. What determines silence would be the intentionality of hearing. From this experience, Cage's silence begins to exist per se. It escapes the score. It became an opportunity to listen on another level. To come in contact with the very nature of environmental sounds. Cage establishes now a difference between *written* and *unwritten* sounds: "For this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated and those that are not.

Those that are not notated appear in written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment” (Cage, 1995, p.7-8).

To continuing using Maia’s terminology, we can say that, in Cage’s case, instead of having *deliberated* or *non-deliberated* silences, what we have are *deliberated* and *non-deliberated* sounds. In Cage’s pieces with long moments of silence, there is in fact intense sound activity. The configuration of this sound activity depends on listening. In Vinholes, *non-deliberated* silence is the product of chance. There is not a systematic or special treatment for it: it simply occurs. His *deliberated* silences, in terms of performance, have a similar propriety to the Cage’s pieces, like *4’33”*, where, as a rule, the performers can define, for the sake of emphasis, specific postures on the articulation of the movements. For the listener, that is a deliberate silence. Is *being played*. Similarly, in the *Instruction 61* or *62* by Vinholes, a blank card is the opportunity for the performer to *express* this absence of sound. However, there is not in Vinholes the figure of the non-deliberated sound. That sound information that is there is part of the music, without it being played or put into vibration. This is one of the consequences of his choice of structural silence: an existing silence, building-block, a tile silence, in the sense of the works of Athos Bulcão.

Conclusion

The counterpoint Cage-Vinholes was indispensable only insofar as it helped me in the approach to Vinholes’ poetics, since I had already studied Cage during the period of my Master degree at Unicamp (State University of Campinas-SP) (2001-2003), and I was left with the impression that there was much more to go through before to exhaust the subject. I did not discuss, for example, the influence of the oriental aesthetic in both composers. Perhaps, a deeper study on the *simplicity* in Cage and Vinholes will be necessary later on.

We saw that, despite of many points of contact between the two composers regarding the path that led them to indeterminacy (one of the main subjects of this work), such as their education, the way how to occur their rupture from their masters, the initiative in creating new theories for musical structures, their pursuit of freedom based on undefined, their valorization of silence. At the same time, I saw some small aesthetic and poetics conflicts between the two composers that helped me to understand what was the most singular in the work of Vinholes: structuralist thought starting from the micro, propagating and over passing the macro; unlike structuralism that part of the macro overwhelming the micro of Cages; the aesthetic implications of a poetic of silence over a poetic of sound; the question of the unrestricted accessibility in comparison to a the specific

accessibility. In the end, this confrontation result in helping me to understand better, also, John Cage.

The comparative analysis presented here, which highlights key aspects of each composer's work, help to dispel the provincial notion that, here in Brazil had a kind of "cagean missing link" which, precisely because of this, deserved to be recovered and brought to light. Breaking this expectation enabled me to recognise that, despite the colonial project in which we are embedded — and which continues to shape our institutional frameworks, aesthetic-ideological norms, and power structures — there's still room for self-determination. Writing this comparative analysis ultimately convinced me that there was no longer a need for others of its kind. The self-determined Brazilian composer, immersed in their own context and creative path, invents their own strategies and their own universes. This should suffice to ground a reflection on the urgent need for autonomy in the study of musical phenomena in Brazil. A new musicology will only be meaningful, in a peripheral country like ours, to the extent that it manages to assume as its very object this radical contextualism which defines our artistic endeavours.

The history of the Brazilian music, as it was left to us, does not seem very friendly to our experimental composers with their happenings, hazards, pieces that never sound in the same way at each performance, their silences, their noises, their non-things, their sound art. I hope this paper will be added to the texts of that ANPPOM of 2003 and to the works by Mario de Souza Maia, Lila Rosa Oliveira, Andersen Viana and so many others about Vinholes in order to begin to put together the conceptual and historical shards of the adventure of indeterminacy in Brazil.

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