

*Composed Improvisation* for snare drum alone by John Cage

Although officially composed in 1989 for a series of snare drum solos entitled *The Noble Snare* (Smith Publications),<sup>1</sup> *Composed Improvisation* for snare drum alone by John Cage is an example of Cage's early use of aleatory and indeterminacy. Cage initially began experimenting with aleatory during the late 1950s and early 1960s after a lecture series at the New School for Social Research from 1957-1959 resulted in an art movement known as Fluxus.<sup>2</sup> In these lectures, Cage called for a liberation of the ear, so that the ear could be retuned to new facets of perception. He also called for a breakdown of structure, while at the same time maintaining the sense of compositional purpose.<sup>3</sup> This experimentation led Cage to the I Ching, an ancient Buddhist document known as the *Book of Changes*. The I Ching is a system of devising order among randomness, initially intended as a philosophical gaze into the meaning of life, but more recently used in the creation of art through chance operations.<sup>4</sup>

The score for *Composed Improvisation* is a text-based event score, a term taken from Fluxus member Dick Higgins. Event scores are characterized by the use of reduction, repetition, improvisation, and chance.<sup>5</sup> A text-based score is classified as graphic notation, as the prose takes the place of notated music. In order to dig deeper into the

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<sup>1</sup> John Cage, "Composed Improvisation," *The Noble Snare*, ed. Sylvia Smith (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1987), vol. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Herwitz, "John Cage," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (2008), October 17.

<sup>3</sup> Herwitz, "John Cage."

<sup>4</sup> James Pritchett, "John Cage," *Oxford Music Online* (2009), February 8.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Shaw-Miller, "A Chorus of Voices: Seeing Music in Cage and Fluxus, the Birth of Postmodern," *Visible Deeds of Music*, ed. Simon Shaw-Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

relationship between the graphic notation and the gestures associated with the music, one must go through numerous processes to realize the text-based score. As a result, it is more useful to think of the original text-based score of *Composed Improvisation* as a map that provides the necessary instructions to realize a sonic event.

In order to more clearly examine the piece, I realized Cage’s score through a series of chance operations. I placed 64 sheets of paper into a hat, numbered from 1 to 64, and completed each one of Cage’s instructions for different parameters. In lieu of detailing this process in drawn-out prose form, I have opted to include in the Appendix, a page indicating complete results of the chance selection of pieces of paper. In short, the piece was divided into three parts based on 15 second intervals between 0’00” and 8’00.”

Table 1: Formal Breakdown of *Composed Improvisation*

<b>Part 1: 0” to 45”</b>	<b>Part 2: 1’00” to 4’45”</b>	<b>Part 3: 5’00” to 8’00”</b>
Event a: 15 icti	Event a: 51 icti	Event a: 12 icti
Event b: 24 icti	Event b: 17 icti	Event b: 21 icti
Event c: 28 icti	Event c: 27 icti	
Event d: 1 icti	Event d: 31 icti	
	Event e: 59 icti	
	Event f: 52 icti	

As indicated above, each part was comprised of a set number of events, which themselves were comprised of a set number of icti, or unique sonic occurrences. Snare drum technique utilizes a great deal of embellishments, such as flams, buzzes, drags, rim clicks, and dead strokes to name a few. Cage makes special mention of extended techniques by stating that any embellishment counts as one icti. For example, a flam, which is a small

grace-note figure that is tied to a rhythmic note value, would only constitute one icti. Similarly, a buzz, which is made up of three to seven notes, would be considered one icti.

Different pairings of sticks and beaters were chosen at random in order to create sonic variance within each event. Cage dictates ten different pairs of beaters: eight pairs of standard percussion beaters, one pair of hands, and one pair of nothing. Cage does not specify the type of beaters, so I selected the following: regular drum sticks, brushes, medium rubber mallets, blasticks, soft yarn mallets, hard yarn mallets, hard plastic mallets, and medium timpani mallets. As a result, the breakdown of beater by event is shown in the following table.

Table 2: Stick and Mallet Use by Event

Event 1		Event 2		Event 3	
<b>A</b>	Blastick, hard yarn	<b>a</b>	Hand, timpani	<b>a</b>	Nothing, nothing
<b>B</b>	Rubber, soft yarn	<b>b</b>	Hard yarn, hard yarn	<b>b</b>	Hard yarn, timpani
<b>C</b>	Hand, plastic	<b>c</b>	Hand, hard yarn		
<b>D</b>	Stick, plastic	<b>d</b>	Hand, hand		
		<b>e</b>	Rubber, timpani		
		<b>f</b>	Brush, brush		

While not specified in the score, I made the decision that the first stick in a pairing would be for my left hand, while the second stick would be for my right. For example, in Event 1a, I would hold a blastick in my left hand and a hard yarn mallet in my right.

A misconception about this piece, as well as other text-based scores by Cage and other avant-garde composers, is that a text-based graphic score is not music. It is possible to view this composition as random-randomness, meaning that Cage simply wrote down a series of numbers and instructions and called it art. This is a similar held belief that my college art teacher harbored against abstract-expressionist Mark Rothko, resulting in the common classroom statement, "I could have done that." While not seeking to tell people how to think, the following analysis of my sonic realization of *Composed Improvisation* seeks to dispel these beliefs by relating the text-based graphic score to the element of musical gesture, as previously defined in the first section of this paper.

## **Part 1**

Part 1 of *Composed Improvisation* is 45 seconds long and consists of four unique events totaling 68 icti. In contrast to Jason Baker's realization and analysis of this piece that breaks down each event into a set length, I did not set a time length for each event that makes up Part 1; rather, I chose to focus on Part 1 as an overall phrase consisting of 68 icti in 45 seconds with a variety of different beaters.<sup>6</sup> This choice allows for more freedom within an event, as well as a continuity of structure and motivic development.

Part 1a serves as a presentation of initial motives that will be developed throughout the entire composition (**Note:** dynamics only apply to the note or grouping they appear under; unmarked notes or groupings are assumed to have a dynamic of *mf*). It should be

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<sup>6</sup> Jason Baker, "The Snare Drum as a Solo Concert Instrument," University of North Texas, 2004.

noted that all rhythmic transcriptions are approximate and are not intended to show metric relationships; rather, they are intended to show motivic development and gesture.

### Example 1: Score of Part 1a

The image shows a musical score for Part 1a on a single staff. The score is divided into two main sections by brackets at the bottom: 'Clause 1: Descending Gesture' and 'Clause 2: Ascending Gesture'. Above the staff, three motives are identified with brackets: 'Motive A' (a quarter note), 'Motive B' (a beamed eighth note followed by a sixteenth note), and 'Augmentation Motive A' (two eighth notes followed by a quarter note). The first note of the piece is marked *mf* and is followed by a series of wavy lines representing a buzz. The second note is marked *p* and is followed by another series of wavy lines. The third note is marked *pp* and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The fourth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The fifth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The sixth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The seventh note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The eighth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The ninth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The tenth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The eleventh note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The twelfth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The thirteenth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The fourteenth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines. The fifteenth note is marked with an accent (*>*) and is followed by a series of wavy lines.

This 15-note event played with a blastick and hard yarn mallet consists of two dependent clauses that serve as a model for the rest of the improvisation. The first clause contains two motives, a simple struck quarter note of any embellishment, Motive A, and a three-note figure of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth, Motive B (although the order is not as important as the grouping of three notes). The second part of the first clause consists of an augmentation of the original motive (two eighth notes followed by a quarter note and then a quarter note buzz). This buzz effectively acts as a cadential arrival, but is not strong enough to dictate an actual end to the event. In comparison, the second clause, which contains both Motives A and B, ends on an emphatic two-note accented figure. This releases the tension that built from the first clause, marking the end to Part 1a and the transition to Part 1b.

In regards to gesture, the first clause is made up of two independent phrases, each of which, as previously mentioned, are made up of Motives A and B. The echo produced from the first note at *mf* to the next figure at *p* to the next one at *pp* signifies a prolongation of the initial motive. I have labeled this type of musical gesture a

*Descending Gesture*. The second half is made up of only one independent phrase, which helps it to serve as a closing function and subsequent arrival at the end of the event. I have labeled this type of musical gesture an *Ascending Gesture*.

The strict analysis of the Part 1a raises some significant questions about the intent of the composer and the role of the performer. While it is true that I am an accomplished improviser with extensive training on percussion instruments, I recorded my realization of *Composed Improvisation* in one take. I did not have enough time to compose-out a version of the piece, as I was too busy following the strict time parameters, mallet changes, and other directions laid out by Cage. While one could argue that this element of gesture and motivic development is circumstantial, further study of the rest of the improvisation yields far too many theoretical relationships as to be labeled coincidental.

Part 1b consists of 24 icti played with a medium rubber mallet and soft yarn mallet. The 24-icti take place over 15 seconds, marking an increase in sonic activity. The first four icti of Part 1b, stemming from the accented eighth notes at the end of Part 1a, function as a transition to the real start of the phrase, which begins on the fifth icti, a grouping of four sixteenth notes. Sonically, Part 1b introduces two new sounds into the improvisation, the flam and the rim click. In addition, one new motive is introduced and is represented by the flourish of five sixteenth notes in a row starting on the 9<sup>th</sup> icti (following the sixteenth rest). Discussion of later events will follow up on the presence of five-note units in the improvisation.

## Example 2: Score of Part 1b

The image shows a musical score for Part 1b, consisting of two staves. The top staff begins with a double bar line and contains a series of notes with dynamic markings: *f*, *p*, *f*, *pp*, *ff*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. A bracket labeled "Transitory" spans the first four notes. A bracket labeled "Clause 1: Descending Gesture" spans from the fifth note to the end of the staff. A bracket labeled "Motive C" is positioned above the staff, covering the notes from the fifth measure to the eighth measure. The bottom staff begins with a double bar line and contains a series of notes with dynamic markings: *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. A bracket labeled "Clause 2: Ascending Gesture" spans the entire length of the staff.

Similar to Part 1a, Part 1b can be broken down into two separate clauses, the first ending on the 15<sup>th</sup> icti and the second beginning with the first flam of the improvisation. The first clause has a distinct echo effect that results in a large-scale decrescendo to the end of the clause. Each of the four rhythmic groupings represented on the score above get progressively softer until the silence is interrupted by the first flam, which starts the second clause. In stark contrast, the second clause grows to the end. As in Part 1a, the first clause is a descending gesture, while the second clause is an ascending gesture.

Of particular interest is the amount of time and icti each clause takes up. Clause 1 consists of 11 icti that take place over 10 seconds. Clause 2 consists of 9 icti that take place over 5 seconds. While not statistically significant, the almost two to one relationship between the densities of the two clauses is curious. Comparing this data to that of the clauses in Part 1a, one finds similar results. The first clause of 1a consists of 9 icti over 11 seconds, while the second clause consists of 6 icti over 4 seconds. This supports labeling each event's first clause as descending and the second as ascending.

Part 1c is the densest phrase of Part 1, consisting of 28 icti in 20 seconds. No new motives are introduced in this phrase; rather, the material develops from various augmentations and diminutions of previous motives. While a noticeable meter is absent from this improvisation, I have tried to indicate a metric relationship between the various rhythmic figures. This results in Part 1a centering on quarter and eighth notes, Part 1b centering on eighth and sixteenth notes, and Part 1c centering on sixteenth, sixteenth note triplets, and 32<sup>nd</sup> notes. This large-scale, rhythmic accelerando culminates at the high point of the entire part, the accented four-stroke drag that is the 11<sup>th</sup> icti of the event. What follows is effectively the denouement. This period attempts to re-reach the high point, but fails until all but sputtering out. The final *pp* gesture is Motive B, in its original form.

Example 3: Score of Part 1c

The image shows a musical score for Part 1c, consisting of two staves. The top staff contains a complex rhythmic figure with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a dense section of 32nd notes, and then a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff contains a simpler rhythmic figure with a half note, followed by a series of quarter notes, and then a triplet of eighth notes. Annotations include 'Ascending Gesture' spanning the first two staves, 'High Point' above the 11th icti, 'Clause 2' above the second staff, 'Motive B' above the final triplet, and 'Denouement: Cadential Gesture' spanning the entire phrase. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo).

The form of this phrase is different than the previous ones in that the first of two clauses, which ends with the aforementioned 11<sup>th</sup> icti high point, is the ascending gesture. There is no descending gesture in the phrase since the material that follows the 11<sup>th</sup> icti functions like a cadential extension, causing me to label it a *Cadential Gesture*.

#### Example 4: Score of Part 1d



The cadential gesture carries over into Part 1d, which consists of only one note, a buzz.

This final arrival point is followed by a silence until the start of Part 2a.

## Part 2

Part 2 is 3'45" long and consists of six events totaling 238 icti. In general, Part 2 functions as a development section, effectively taking previous motives and composing out. The only additional features include different sounds. There is the addition of a dead stroke, an extended roll, and a rim shot. There is also greater use of embellishments, accents, and crescendos. Combining all of these elements together results in Part 2 being the most active section of the piece, in regards to both rhythmic variety and density.

Part 2a consists of 52 icti that take place over 52 seconds. This 1:1 relationship of icti to unit of time, especially in relation to the denseness of Part 1c, creates a greater deal of space. The notion of space is important for the function of Part 2a, which is to introduce new sounds on the drum. First, the snares are off for all of Part 2, meaning a resonant tom sound becomes the new timbre. Second, the aforementioned dead strokes are clearly audible, as they raise the pitch of the purely pitched tom.

Part 2a can be broken down into two distinct clauses: the beginning up to, but not including, the first quintuplet, and the quintuplet to the end. In contrast to the phrases in Part 1, these two clauses are not dependent on one another. The first clause itself is made up of two segments, consisting of ten icti each. The initial segment repeats the beginning of Part 1b with the single sound of Motive A; however, the dynamics of the four notes are in retrograde to those from Part 1b, resulting in an increase of tension rather than the transitory feel to Part 1b. In addition, the final note of the grouping is the first dead stroke of the piece, an extremely audible moment. The final two gestures of the first segment are both exact versions of Motive B, with the second one consisting of all dead strokes. This segment contains only previous material, acting like a review of the gestures used in Part 1. With the rise in tension, the first segment plays the role of ascending gesture, while the second segment is a descending gesture. This second segment eventually leads to a pair of *pp* dead strokes that mark the completion of the first clause.

Example 5: Score of Part 2a

The musical score for Part 2a is presented in three staves. The first staff begins with a double bar line and is annotated with 'Repeat of Part 1b: Segment 1 of Clause 1' above it. The dynamics are marked as *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. A bracket below the staff labels the first part as 'Ascending Gesture' and the second part as 'Segment 2 of Clause 1'. The second staff starts with a 'Descending Gesture' bracket. It features a quintuplet (marked with a '5') and dynamics of *mp*, *p*, and *p*. A bracket above it labels the section as 'Clause 2 initial statement'. The third staff begins with a quintuplet (marked with a '5') and is annotated with 'Clause 2 repeat by diminution' below it. It includes a 'Rim Shot' annotation and a 'Cadential Gesture' bracket. The dynamics are marked as *p*.

The lack of activity in the first clause is more than made up for in the second, which consists of 30 icti in 18 seconds. The first half of the clause features a repeated phrase of a quintuplet followed by a syncopated five-note unit. The repeat is not literal, as the repeated version features a dead stroke version of the quintuplet and a diminution of the five-note unit. The importance of the number five is one that can be debated in theoretical terms; however, it is interesting to note my personal obsession with the number five. This obsession seems to have worked its way into the improvisation as the entire Part 2 of the piece is saturated with quintuplets and various five-note groupings.

After a brief interjection of a dead stroke Motive B, the second segment spins into a cadential gesture, a progression of Motive A that crescendos to the one and only rim shot in the composition, as dictated by Cage. The fact that this is only the first of six events in Part 2 seems to signify that a plethora of activity is to follow.

Indeed, Parts 2b-2d follow in the same direction as Part 2a. I have chosen to lump these three events together for purposes of analysis as they are less of independent phrases, and more of a long unit that culminates in the four-stroke drag, or the last icti of Part 2d. These three events combined consist of 77 icti over 79 seconds, a near 1:1 relationship that is found in Part 2a.

Part 2b features two extended buzzes, each of which occur at the end of its respective clause. The two clauses are relatively simple in motivic scope, consisting of direct use of Motives A and B. The extended buzz marks the first time in the improvisation that a single icti has been sustained. On its own, Part 2b lacks any gestural element as the event

essentially ends exactly where it began. This cyclic feel to Part 2b becomes important only in relation to its place as an introduction to Parts 2c and 2d, which will be discussed below.

Example 6: Score of Part 2b

The image shows a musical score for Part 2b, consisting of two staves. The first staff is divided into two sections: 'Clause 1' and 'Clause 2'. 'Clause 1' begins with a double bar line and contains several musical units, including a quintuplet marked with a circled '5' and a dynamic of *mf*. 'Clause 2' follows, starting with a dynamic of *p* and *mf*, and ending with a repeat sign. The second staff is labeled 'Transitory material to Part 2c' and begins with a dynamic of *mp*. It contains several musical units, including a quintuplet marked with a circled '5' and a final four-stroke drag. The score uses various musical notations such as beams, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Part 2c features two clauses of quintuplets and five-note units. The initial segment of Part 2c is the retrograde of the *Clause 2 repeat by diminution* found in the score example of Part 2a. Combined with the two note dead-stroke unit attached to the end of this segment, this segment functions as an ascending gesture. The second segment of Part 2c features a gradual decline in scope on motives A and B, until a final four-stroke drag, the softest unit of the segment. This second segment functions as a clear descending gesture. The final quintuplet unit at the end of Part 2c functions as a cadential gesture. What is most striking about all three gestures in Part 2c is that they feature, what I would like to call (as adapted from Caplin), *limited gestural strength*. While they clearly function in the ways previously described, within the larger form of Part 2b, 2c, and 2d, the gestural strength becomes somewhat muted. The concept of limited gestural strength will be discussed further below.

Example 7: Score of Part 2c

Segment 1: Retrograde of diminution of Part 2a

Ascending Gesture

Segment 2

Descending Gesture

Cadential Gesture

Part 2d marks the end to this three-part grouping, and seems to combine various aspects of Parts 2b and 2c. There is a quintuplet, an augmentation of a five-note grouping, and even a quotation of the cadential gesture (featuring Motive A) that leads to the rim shot in Part 2a. The four-stroke drag that ends the section after a long period of silence refers to the end of the descending gesture that ends the second segment of Part 2c.

Example 8: Score of Part 2d

Motive A

Motive B

Motive C

Additive Motive C

Five-note unit augmentation

Quotation from Part 2c

The plethora of motivic repetition in Part 2d, combined with the introductory feel of Part 2b causes me to see each of these parts as its own gesture. Part 2b would introduce the section, while Part 2c consists of an ascending gesture and a descending gesture, and Part 2d is one long cadential gesture. This relates back to a previous statement I made about

the limited gestural strength of segments of Part 2c. As such, the cadential gesture at the end of Part 2c would not be a gesture, and the ascending and descending gestures are made stronger by the introductory feel of Part 2b and the cadential gesture of Part 2d.

Part 2e consists of 59 sounds in 54 seconds, the first time in all of Part 2 that an event has greater than a 1 to 1 ratio of icti to units of time. In fact, as we will discover soon about the final section of Part 2, Part 2f, the ratio becomes even greater as the section comes to a close. The two most unique aspects of Part 2e are the introductory accelerando and crescendo culminating in Motive A, as well as the four consecutive five-note groupings that make up the majority of the second clause. The first clause consists of the aforementioned accelerando/crescendo, which is immediately followed by a quick decrease in motion and volume. As a result, the arch like structure of this clause functions as an introduction.

Example 9: Score of Part 2e

The musical score for Part 2e is presented across three staves. The first staff is labeled 'Clause 1: Introductory Gesture' and contains a sequence of notes with dynamic markings *mp* and *p*. A bracket above the staff identifies 'Motive C' as a specific rhythmic pattern. The second staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features four consecutive five-note groupings, each labeled 'Motive C'. The third staff is labeled 'Clause 2: Long Ascending Gesture' and shows a long, continuous melodic line with various rhythmic values and dynamic markings.

The second clause features the aforementioned five-note groupings, which seem to characterize Part 2. In general, this clause, while containing a great amount of silence and taking up a lot of time, gradually ascends, marking the whole clause as an ascending gesture.

The final phrase of Part 2, Part 2f consists of 52 icti in 40 seconds. In addition, Part 2f features the only exclusive use of brushes in the improvisation. The brushes add a different timbre as well as new possibilities for sustain. Part 2f begins with fragmentation of the five-note unit found at the beginning of Part 2c. Motive C appears six times in Part 2f, accounting for 30 of the 52 icti. This marks the most intense event of motivic development and also corresponds to the end of Part 2. Specifically, Part 2f begins with an introductory gesture that leads to an ascending gesture, which itself contains a weak cadential gesture. The sustained roll, the longest sustain in the piece, is a descending gesture, which is immediately followed by a strong cadential gesture for Part 2f.

Example 10: Score of Part 2f

The musical score for Part 2f is annotated with several key features and gestures:

- Introductory Gesture:** Starts with a five-note unit fragmentation (marked *p*), followed by a full five-note unit (marked with a '3' and a slur).
- Ascending Gesture:** A section containing two five-note units, the second marked *f*. It concludes with a weak cadential gesture (marked *fp*).
- Descending Gesture:** A section featuring a sustained roll, marked with *accel.* and *rit.*
- Cadential Gestures:** A final five-note unit (marked *f*) is followed by a strong cadential gesture (marked *fp*).
- Transitory:** A section between the first and second five-note units.

The end of Part 2f, at 4'45", is nearly 60% of the way through the entire improvisation, or very close to the Golden Mean. While this is only an interesting fact to know, coupled with the intense motivic development and repetition, and the longest sustained note of the improvisation, Part 2f plays an important hierarchical and structural role in the improvisation. It seems to indicate that the development of material is now complete and the improvisation is going to begin winding down. And as we will soon find out, this is exactly what happens. In regards to the aforementioned hierarchical structure, Part 2f serves as the cadential gesture for the entirety of Part 2.

### Part 3

Part 3 of *Composed Improvisation* features 33 icti over 3 minutes. This large decrease in rhythmic activity marks the denouement of the improvisation. In addition, part 3a is the only event that uses neither sticks nor beaters. I had to create unique icti without using hands. The twelve icti created feature blowing into the drum, saying "Too" into the drum, grinding my beard on the drum, and striking the drum with my nose. Even with these new icti, the element of musical gesture is present. The ascending gesture occurs up to, but not including the beard scrape, which is transitory. The remainder of the material constitutes a descending gesture, ending with a cadential "Too."

Example 11: Score of Part 3a

The score for Part 3a is divided into two lines of rhythmic notation. The first line contains the following elements from left to right: 'Blow', '"Too"', 'Blow', '2 "Too's"', 'Beard scrape', 'Long blow', and 'Long blow'. Below this line, a bracket labeled 'Ascending Gesture' spans from the beginning to the start of the 'Beard scrape'. A bracket labeled 'Transitory' spans from the 'Beard scrape' to the end of the first line. The second line contains 'Three nose strikes' and 'Quick "Too"'. Below this line, a bracket labeled 'Descending Gesture' spans from the beginning to the end of the 'Quick "Too"'. A bracket labeled 'Cadential Gesture' spans from the beginning of the second line to the end of the 'Quick "Too"'. Dynamic markings *f* and *p* are placed below the 'Long blow' notes in the first line.

The final event of the piece, Part 3b, consists of 21 icti over 88 seconds, and features the use of increased texture for the first time in the piece. The increase in texture is heard as a mallet that is dragged around the drum while other single icti are played. This added sonic element aids in the cadential aspect of the entire event, although, as seen in the score example, Part 3b is made up of musical gestures, albeit weak ones. The ascending gesture is comprised of a large-scale augmentation of Motive C, the five-note unit. However, in this context it is meant to comprise five unique sonic entrances that are preceded and followed by space. The descending gesture is comprised of the material that takes place during the textural drag. A final cadential gesture is heard on the last icti of the piece, a sustained drag across the drum.

Example 12: Score of Part 3b

The image displays a musical score for Part 3b, consisting of two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Augmentation of five-note unit based on unique entrances' and 'Ascending Gesture'. It features a series of notes with wavy lines underneath, indicating a textured or dragged sound. Annotations include 'Final Motive B' and 'Drag begins'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Descending Gesture' and 'Cadential Gesture'. It also features notes with wavy lines underneath. Annotations include 'Motive B augmentation', 'Drag ends', and 'Final note drag'. Dynamic markings *mf* and *mp* are present on the top staff, and *pp* is present on the bottom staff.

As evident in the previous analysis of my realization of Cage’s *Composed Improvisation*, a hierarchical structure of musical gesture permeates the surface of the music. The idea of limited gestural strength can be applied on the clausal, phrase, and section-level. As a result, a particular event can consist of introductory, ascending, descending, and cadential gestures while functioning, on the larger level, as purely a descending gesture.

Table 2: Gestural Hierarchy in Cage’s *Composed Improvisation*

<b>Event</b>	<b>Internal Event-Level Gestural Functions</b>	<b>Event-Level Gestural Function</b>	<b>Part-Level Gestural Function</b>
1a	Descending, ascending	Introductory	Introductory, ascending
1b	Descending, ascending	Ascending	
1c	Ascending, cadential	Descending, cadential	
1d	Cadential (from 1c)	Cadential	
2a	Ascending, descending, cadential	Ascending	Ascending, descending
2b	n/a	Introductory	
2c	Ascending, descending, cadential	Ascending, descending	
2d	n/a	Cadential	
2e	Introductory, ascending	Ascending	
2f	Introductory, ascending, cadential, descending, cadential	Descending, cadential	
3a	Ascending, descending, cadential	Ascending	Cadential
3b	Ascending, descending, cadential	Descending	

Table 2 details this gestural hierarchy on the internal event-level, the event-level, and the part level. The result is a smooth formal structure: introductory, ascending that transitions from Part 1 into Part 2, descending, and cadential.

One might ask what part of this analysis is coincidence and what part Cage intends. While the former question is intriguing, it would require further study as well as a comparison of dozens of different sonically-realized versions of *Composed Improvisation*. However, the present analysis yields interesting results as to Cage's intent. Why did Cage choose to notate the piece as he did, in textual form with no standard notational characters? I argue, and the previous analysis supports the notion, that Cage found that the most effective way to encompass the idea of musical gesture in this piece, was to notate it as prose. Due to elements of chance, the only way for Cage to notate the piece with formal elements as well as chance elements was to create a set of instructions. As Cage said himself in his lectures, he desired to breakdown the structural element of music, while at the same time maintaining his sense of compositional and musical purpose. It seems that chance was simply Cage's method to breakdown the musical structure, but as evident in the previous analysis of this particular musical realization, Cage maintained a strict adherence to the compositional process through the use of musical gesture.