

DECONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMATIVITY IN ALDO CLEMENTI'S *RICERCARE* FOR SOLO GUITAR

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Imagine, then, an avant-garde creation that is exhibited as a work; it is received according to the *Werktreue* ideal. None the less, it turns out that the creator desired all along to challenge the work concept in producing this challenge. How are we to understand this challenge?[1]

Lydia Goehr's question is certainly pressing. How do we come to terms with the unfamiliar – indeed with the unknown – when it comes to us clothed in habitual guise? How do we even recognize it? And how can we familiarize ourselves with the unfamiliar without compromising its singular alterity and difference, without forcing it into a preformed mould in an act of methodological violence? Pressing questions indeed. These are questions central to the reception of contemporary music, whose exposition of structural integrity all too easily falls prey to the inherent structuralist tendencies of analytic methodology. We must beware, however, that the supposed structural integrity of much contemporary music can be highly deceptive, as Goehr suggests. We must also recognize the extent to which Goehr's challenge is directed towards performers, whose conservatism can be potentially fatal for the deceptive avant-garde creation. Certainly, these questions challenge anyone confronted by the music of the late Italian composer Aldo Clementi (1925–2011). In this article I argue that in Clementi's music, based as it is in contrapuntal techniques, we are faced with just the kind of avant-garde creations guised as works of which Goehr writes. I will argue that Clementi's works present musical forms and processes where musical materials and structures are eroded from the inside, and that his music is based on a double impulse that indivisibly brings together constructive and destructive strategies. This impulse, indivisible and double, comes together and exposes itself most clearly in performance, in the performative enactment of the works, and in the relationship between musical structure and instrumental practice.[2] Nonetheless, I will be careful not to address performativity too hastily, as this easily ends up in a substantialist description of embodiment; indeed I must resist the temptation to 'think in terms of realities that can be "touched with the finger"'. [3] In order to grasp the function of the performative level in the *Ricercare* and its *relation* to musical material, we should first comprehend its material structure. I will therefore turn to the question of the performative in Clementi's solo guitar piece *Ricercare* (2002) after assessing its musical structure, only later turning to the reception of Clementi's work before finally searching out the consequences of Clementi's indivisible intertwining of construction, destruction and performativity.

Material structure and performative challenges in the *Ricercare*

(A - B)

The image shows three systems of musical notation for the first three lines of the score. Each system consists of two staves. The first system has a tempo marking of quarter note = 90 and dynamic markings of *p* and *pp*. The second system has a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The third system has a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

Example 1 *Ricercare*, first three lines of the score. Copyright © 2002 by Sugarmusic S.p.A. – Edizioni Swini Zerboni, Milano. Used by kind permission. All rights reserved.

As in so many other pieces, in the *Ricercare* Clementi creates a dense polyphonic texture which covers a chromatic field on the basis of a long, diatonic melody. In Example 1, which shows the opening of the piece, the initial build up of the texture is clearly visible. The theme is introduced in the bass part and quickly repeated in the alto, whilst the tenor and soprano parts enter with contrapuntal material. Let us take a closer look at how the *Ricercare* and its material is constructed. The basic material is an extended melody based on the common notes of C and G major, the range encompassing a major sixth from G to E (see bass part of Example 1). Though there is a clear reference to C major at the beginning of the second half of the melody, the pitch structure is highly ambiguous as there is no F or F-sharp, which would fix the material as belonging to either C or G major. Also, starting with a rising fourth from B and descending back to B, the melody initially suggests a modal character. The six notes on which the theme is based is formed by two consecutive and structurally identical patterns of two major seconds a minor second apart, thus corresponding to the Guidonian hexachord (see Example 2).

The image shows a single staff of music with two hexachords. The notes are G, A, B, C, D, E. Above the notes, the intervals are marked as 2, 2, 1, 2, 2. Below the notes, the intervals are marked as 2, 2, 1, 2, 2. This illustrates the Guidonian hexachord structure.

Example 2 Hexachords, bass and alto parts

The melody consists of two parts, the second part being an inversion of the first (from the second C on the

second staff; see Examples 3 and 1).

Interval: 5 2 2 1 4 4 2 2 9 7 5 7 5 3 3

Example 3 Melody and inversion

The alto part enters at the end of the first bar, with the theme on the lowered fifth. In terms of pitch content, the six notes each of the bass and alto parts are complimentary and mutually exclusive; together they form the full chromatic scale.^[4] Whilst the structure and character of the material evokes premodern musical reference, this latter point suggests a typically modernist reference, hexachordal complementarity being a central aspect of twelve-tone and serial techniques.

The contrapuntal material of the tenor and soprano exhibit the same internal pitch structure as the bass and alto, as well as the distance of a lowered fifth, thus also sharing with the bass and tenor parts an inherently mutually exclusive and complimentary pitch content. Like the main melody, the pitch structure of the contrapuntal material is also fixed throughout the piece.

Example 4 Hexachords, tenor and soprano parts

The four parts are fixed at individual ranges, chained together by common pitches.

Example 5 Full chain of hexachords

Clementi is careful to expose the pitches that connect the four hexachords. In the opening of the work, given in Example 1, the material is laid out so that the common pitches occur either in close proximity or simultaneously. The first note of the tenor, the C-sharp in the middle of the second bar is taken up in as D-flat in the alto. Likewise, the E of the bass in the third bar is quickly repeated in the tenor, the two parts in performance most likely merging to produce a melodic configuration E-F-sharp-E-A-D. At the end of the third bar, the shared B-flat of the alto and soprano parts is notated as a single pitch with two stems. And even the outer extremes of the material, the low and high G's of the bass and soprano part, connect at the

entry of the soprano in bar three. The guitarist confronts challenging fingering issues already at the entrance of the alto part at the end of the first bar, and these challenges grow increasingly prominent towards the entrance of the soprano at the end of the line. The problem is, in short, that it is impossible to sustain the notes for the length of time indicated by the notation.

The problems occur either because several notes have to be played on the same string, because of impossible left hand stretches, or because the fingers have to leave a note – or the hand has to leave its position – to finger another note. Not only does this cause incoherence and distortions of the melodic material, it also causes the parts to blur into each other and establish new melodic configurations between the parts. In this way, the constructive, destructive and performative levels merge as one multidimensional and heteronomous object. I will return to these problems below.

Aldo Clementi – background and reception

Trained in neo-classicism and twelve-tone techniques, Clementi visited the Darmstadt summer courses in 1956. Dissatisfied and fatigued by the pursuit of novelty and radical developments, he proclaimed the death of music and devoted his work to the fulfillment of this process.^[5] From that moment, Clementi pursued carefully sculpted chromatic textures using complex polyphonic procedures that largely dissolve the expressive details and individual character of the musical material in work after work in what appears as a single melancholic *morendo* spanning almost 50 years. Clementi's notion of the death of music more than echoes Adorno's understanding that twelve-tone music ultimately had brought 'the tendency of the total of European music since Haydn ... to a standstill. [Thus,] composition *per se*, however is also brought to a standstill'.^[6] Like the various other deaths proposed in humanist discourse, Clementi's Adornian death of music should not be taken at face value. As in the work of Samuel Beckett, whose 'I can't go on, I have to go on' resounds in the work of Clementi, Clementi's death suggests a transformation of our conception of music, a transformation towards a more heterogeneous conception of sonic arts.

The reception of Clementi has largely been devoted to the study of the contrapuntal techniques involved in his creations, and in exploring the relationship between his work and the visual arts. Clementi is perceived as a master craftsman who pursued similar aesthetic ambitions in work after work, a coldblooded rationalist whose works are usually appreciated as purified sonic objects. This image is sustained in a number of interesting texts, some of which will be discussed below. This image is certainly not false; nonetheless, it does not explore the full complexity and impact of Clementi's work. I believe there is a different story to be told, from a different perspective – a perspective to which traditional musicological methodology has no access. This is the story told by the performer analyst, situated as a kind of threshold between the notation and sound. This story is certainly one of desperation and struggle, the struggle of realizing that the finely crafted sonic sculptures of Aldo Clementi will have to suffer the inevitable compromise of practical realization. I would claim that in the work of Aldo Clementi, where

strict contrapuntal structures are continually dissolved because of the limitations imposed by the practicalities of musical realization or our perceptive apparatus, the questions of interpretation and performativity are explicitly raised as part of the musical material.

The mature works of Clementi, dating from the early sixties, are all driven by a double-faced creative impulse that feeds on a constructive and destructive drive. This tendency is expressed upfront in a number of works from the sixties, in part influenced by contemporaneous tendencies in the visual arts like *art brut* and *art informel*. A good example is *Variante A* (1963-64) for 72 voices and 72 instruments. In this work, Clementi has constructed an extremely dense polyphonic texture based on canonic principles not unrelated to the micropolyphony of Ligeti or the tight-knit poly-choral polyphony found in sixteenth-century works like the *Missa Sopra Ecco sì beato giorno* by Alessandro Striggio or Thomas Tallis' *Spem in alium*. Given the large forces with which the canon is realized, the details of the material are completely lost in the overall density of the texture. The constructive principles of canonic writing become a means to submerge and obscure the individuality of the material and the single lines. The score is published as one large single page, and in preparing for performance, the conductor is instructed to superimpose different amorphous figures on the page of the score in order to cut out all the material found under the figures. The score is to be repeated three times, each time with different material cut out. In part borrowed from artists like Lucio Fontana and Alberto Burri, the procedure creates an erosion of the material presented in the score which ensures that the relationship between score and performance is disrupted – the ontological status of the work is radically questioned – and that no two performances will be identical. Analogue constructive, destructive and performative strategies form the basis of all of Clementi's works, and the function of performance practice in Clementi's work must be understood as consciously targeted within this constructive/destructive nexus. However, the central – and I would claim, structural – function of performance practice is hardly recognized in the reception of Clementi. In the most comprehensive study of Clementi's music, Gianluigi Mattietti's magisterial *Geometrie di musica*,^[7] the performative passage from compositional structure and analysis to receptive phenomenology is bracketed again and again, the relationship between the structural conceptions of the composer and the listening subject is not questioned at all. Discussing works like the piano piece *B.A.C.H.* (1970) and *AEB* (1983) for 17 instruments, Mattietti highlights the treatment of musical time and performance.^[8] In the former work, a swirling and vertiginous texture is the result of combining chromatic and tonal materials and the instruction that the performer is to play as fast as possible. The performer is also instructed, however, to provide different articulation and a different dynamic profile to the three different types of pitch material. The performer must therefore juggle the demand of rapid execution and articulation clarity, the result being a jagged and unstable temporal flow expressing the mediation between musical material and performative intent. In the latter work, temporality is addressed using subtle

transformations of tempo and rhythmic values resulting in a paradoxical process involving a simultaneous accelerando and decelerando. Again the relationship between the music as text and sound is problematized within the work structure. Though Mattiotti is perceptive of the positive and constructive qualities of such compositorial strategies,^[9] his central concern is the efficacy of the technical and notational means employed. This is also the case where the disposition of the musical material is explicitly related to the idiomatic properties of specific instruments as in *Reticolo: 3 (B.A.C.H.)* for three guitars or *Ezercizio (B.A.C.H.)* for mezzo violin, violin and viola, both written in 1975. In both these pieces the individual strings of the instruments are conceived as separate parts in the polyphonic textures.^[10] The reader is nonetheless left to question whether such a discussion of agonistic energies could not be refashioned so that their inherent disparity is spelled out rather than glossed over.

This tendency is present in all commentaries on Clementi, including the chapter on Clementi in Mario Bortolotto's *Fase Seconda*^[11] and Renzo Cresti's *Aldo Clementi: studio monografico e intervista*,^[12] as well as recent work by Michele Zaccagnini^[13] and Manuele Morbidini.^[14] David Osmond-Smith did address the question of performance in a late paper.^[15] However, Osmond-Smith's interest was directed towards the decline of amateur musicianship as a backdrop for Clementi's conception of the death of music rather than the engagement with performance practice exposed within Clementi's works. In the following, I elaborate on this engagement, which brings together the constructive, destructive and performative. A one-sided discursive turn towards the performative would however be as reductive as the single-minded focus on polyphonic techniques. The central question seems to be the relationship between polyphonic structure and instrumental practice. Against this background I would like to return to the discussion of the *Ricercare*, by analysing the challenges of projecting the polyphonic structure.

Fingering labyrinths

I will discuss in detail two different solutions to one particular example among an infinite number of challenges. We enter at the second half of the last section, page 8 of the score, second stave, second bar (page 8 is given in Example 6).

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'Ricercare, Page 8'. It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system has a tempo marking '(♩ = 60)'. The second system has dynamic markings 'ppp' and 'etc...'. The fifth system has a rehearsal mark 'S. 12658 Z.'

Example 6 Ricercare, Page 8.

At this point in the work, the material presented in Examples 1–5 has been transposed down a minor third. The passage starting with the entry of the bass at G-sharp presents some interesting fingering situations for the performer. For instance, one could choose to give priority to the alto part, choosing a fingering which aims at sustaining the pitches of this part as long as possible (the fingering resulting from the following is give in Example 7). This would make a lot of sense, as this is the sole active part at the beginning of the line and has been so for greater parts of the previous line. Additionally, the alto presents the main material of the work. A traditional way of enhancing melodic coherence on the guitar is to finger consecutive notes on the same string. The only viable option would be to play the alto part on the third string, as the B-flat in the second bar is too low for the range of the second string and using the fourth string is downright impossible when the other parts enter. Thus as we come to the G-sharp in the bass, we encounter a possibly challenging stretch because the G-sharp must be fingered with 1 in IV and the D in the tenor must be fingered with 3 in VII. [16] Why 3? Because in order for the alto D to ring on the B-flat cannot be on the third string but must be fingered in VIII on the fourth string with finger 4. The bass Csharp (IV, fifth string) will be cut short even if the notation indicates a fairly extended duration. This note must be fingered by 1, which is needed immediately afterwards to finger the alto B-flat (still on the third string), thus skipping from IV to III and fifth to third string. The bass C-sharp could ideally be fingered by 2 as this would allow it to sustain the note as 1 fingered the tenor B-flat. However, a stretch of three frets

between fingers 2 and 3 (in frets IV and VII respectively) is too much to ask of normal hands. The tenor A-flat can be fingered with 3 on the fourth string (in VI), the alto D is fingered with 4 and the tenor E-flat with 2 on the fifth string. The end of the bar could easily be fingered on the sixth and fifth strings. In this fingering the C-sharp of the bass is sacrificed in order to achieve continuity in the alto part.

Example 7 Page 8, second line. Fingering prioritizing the alto part. The string numbers are indicated with circled arabic numerals. I have indicated finger-moves with lines, and square brackets indicate notes that are cut short.

But what if we were to give priority not to the alto but to the bass? This would also make a lot of sense, as the bass part has a driving role at the head of each section and propels the pace of the piece (the fingering resulting from the following is given in Example 8). Also, the bass is the last part to remain active at the very end of the piece just a few lines below our example, so highlighting the bass at this point might form part of a strategy to prepare for the end of the piece. This latter argument could be further strengthened by the fact that the tempo remains at 60 for the latter half of the final section (whereas the previous sections all returned to 90). Allowing for sustained bass notes could underscore the subtly melancholic character suggested by this detail as the piece moves towards its end. Again, let us see if the bass part can be fingered on one string. One would have to use the sixth string, as the G-sharp is outside the range of the fifth string (which normally goes down to A). As the D in the alto and B-flat of the tenor need to be fingered as well, so I would choose to finger the D with 2 on the second string and the G-sharp with 3 (on the sixth string). The tenor B-flat could then be fingered with 1 on the third string. The D and B-flat could also be fingered with a barré which would free 2 to finger G-sharp; however, this would not make much difference in relation to the sounding result. In order to finger the bass C-sharp on the sixth string, the hand needs to move up the neck and leave the D and B-flat. Although slightly uncomfortable, it is certainly not impossible to sustain the C-sharp while fingering the tenor and alto parts. The C-sharp would have to be fingered with 3 because two fingers are needed in lower positions to finger the coming D and E-flat of the alto and tenor parts respectively. The B-flat of the alto would have to be fingered by 1 on the fourth string and the A-flat of the tenor would have to be fingered on the fifth string by 4. The D of the alto needs to be fingered with 2 on the third string, and 1 must finger the E-flat of the tenor on the fifth string in IV. Finally, in the bass 3 must finger the B-natural, 1 fingers the tenor C-sharp and 2 fingers the A of the bass. It is certainly possible to sustain the alto D as the bass reaches the B-natural, but 2 must release the third string as 1 moves to the C-sharp and 2 itself must find the A on the sixth string. This fingering would

certainly result in a present bass line, but a number of pitches in the alto and tenor parts would have to be cut short, producing an interesting fragmented counterpoint to the melodic continuity of the bass which would differ from our first fingering option.

Example 8 Page 8, line 2. Fingering priority to the bass part

One could also choose other paths, for instance giving priority to fluency of fingerings or temporal considerations. One could also choose to switch between a number of different strategies. In my discussion I have also left out three elements central to projecting the continuity and individuality of the parts, namely attack, timbre and dynamics. The excerpts clearly indicate a different profile for each part, the elements of which needs to be tackled differently for each string. Attack, timbre and dynamics are closely interrelated, and the rapid change of character from note to note in this work is extremely challenging.^[17] It is inevitable that the parts blur into each other resulting in unforeseen melodic (re)configurations. What I hope to illuminate is that whichever path one chooses to follow in this labyrinth, notes are cut short, timbres blur and lines are broken continuously, and what seems like a beautifully conceived polyphonic structure is necessarily destroyed both because of the internal structure of the material and even further it faces practical realization.

We do not need to go further into such hermetic details, which confront the guitarist persistently throughout the score on a note-to-note basis. The challenge of fingering Clementi's labyrinths are in fact so great that Australian guitarist Geoffrey Morris, the commissioner and dedicatee of the work, asked Clementi to write him another piece to replace the *Ricercare*.^[18] Morris has discussed the problems related to the commission in a text devoted to Clementi's guitar works. Noting that the problem of notesustainability is not only encountered in Clementi's *Ricercare*, Morris argues that it is 'the number of times that the counterpoint is unable to be maintained that is so problematic' in this particular piece.^[19] The central question is of course by what standards this is so problematic. According to Morris, 'in all of Aldo Clementi's music, the pitches are chosen due to compositional logic and not ease of execution or a desire to produce idiomatic music'.^[20] Though immediately convincing because of its foundation in a traditional work/performance dichotomy, one must pause to question Morris's appeal to a notion of the idiomatic, under which lies the subdued appeal to an interpretive ideal based on the notion of *Werktreue*. According to this ideal, which downplays the role of the performer in the creation of musical works, the task of the performer is to render the intentions of the composer as transmitted by means of

musical notation as transparently as possible.[21] I would argue that this ideal is radically challenged by the work of a composer like Clementi. The problem for Morris is the discrepancy between the notation and realization of the work, and the disintegration of the polyphonic structure in performance due to the number of instances where the polyphonic web is breached – that is, the number of instances where the compositional logic is corrupted by idiomatic limitations. Before asking Clementi to replace the *Ricercare*, Morris had suggested to Clementi numerous amendments to the work, one of which was to perform the work as a guitar duo.[22] Although this solution would allow the performers to overcome the problems posed to the single guitarist, it was not endorsed by Clementi on the grounds that a duo performance would alter the nature of the piece ‘where an individual performer illuminates the text’.[23] The fact that Clementi does not subscribe to the suggestion of performing the piece as a duo is telling, as it indicates that Clementi’s interest regarding performance lies not so much in the perfect rendering of musical structure as the problematization of interpretation itself; indeed it suggests the performative aspect as vital to the conception of the work and not simply as a means of rendering an abstract structure audible. That the practice will act as a filter which persistently disrupts the meticulously crafted musical coherence of the polyphonic structure must be seen as internal to the work structure – the inside of the work is permeated by the externality of embodiment which leaves only remnants of the material recognizable.

Contextual interlude: *Ton* and *Tun*

Of course, Clementi is not the only composer to raise the issue of performance practice and work structure. Elsewhere, I have used the term radically idiomatic performance practice to describe how composers address elements of performance practice as part of the conception of composition.[24] The late German composer Klaus K. Hübler is a central figure in the development of this conception of composition. Drawing on the innovative work of his teacher Brian Ferneyhough and others, in a number of works after *Feuerzauber, Auch ‘Augenmusik’*, of 1981, Hübler explored composing using the various elements of instrumental practice as his material. String bowing, fingerings, breathing and other technical elements are targeted as separate parameters, and are notated polyphonically on individual staves, the instrumental practice cast as a network of practical elements that bring together the performing body and the instrument in order to produce sounds. In a short text about his infamous third string quartet, where significant elements of the string practice like bow changes, bowing rhythm and fingerings as well as other practical parameters are treated individually, Hübler described his work as a turn from a *Komponieren des Tons* to a *Komponieren des Tuns*, a turn from composing with sounds to composing with actions.[25] This turn, which describes a turn towards the performative, resonates with my description of Clementi. The turn from *Ton* to *Tun* invites the performer to engage with projecting the work structure on a deep level and take responsibility for the work in performance. Clementi’s work makes clear to what extent the act of performance is also a performative act in the philosophical and more strict sense, an act which brings about meaning. With Foucault we could say that musical performance is a discursive act and not a form of reproduction.

Temporal/textural dis coherence

Let us again return to the *Ricercare*. The question of note-sustainability is closely related to the form of the work and the disposition of the material. As the density of the texture increases or decreases according to the number of active parts, so does the problem of note-sustainability and thus also the musical coherence. The work comes in four sections, each of which is based on two run-throughs of the material. The sections all conform to the same structure of an increase and decrease of textural density and thus present a similar formal pattern. As the texture grows more dense at the beginning of each section, the problem of note-sustainability increases and so does the disruption of (the notated) musical structure. As the polyphonic density decreases the material again becomes more coherent and recognizable. Each section of the work describes an arch where the development of polyphonic and harmonic density is mirrored in the performative erosion of this same density.

Interestingly, this process also affects the temporal aspect of the work – it should be recognized that the *Ricercare* not only targets the question of pitch but also that of musical time. This is in fact a typical trait of Clementi's work as a whole. The difficulties involved in performing the work will necessarily affect the flow of musical time as the player has to move about the labyrinthine fingerboard of the guitar in a particular fashion involving frequent long distance position changes or unusual fingerings. In the *Ricercare*, the transformations of polyphonic and harmonic density result in a disruption of the temporal flow which mirrors the melodic (dis-)coherence. The sections follow a uniform pattern of temporal transformation. The tempo changes from semibreve = 90 to semibreve = 60 (before the second runthrough of the material from the middle of the section) and back to semibreve = 90.[26] This means that when the density decreases towards the end of a section, and the material becomes more coherent and recognizable, the basic tempo has changed without the temporal transformation being clearly noticeable, due to the disrupted temporal flow; one simply emerges from the densely polyphonic texture at another pace. According to a note in the score, the transformations of tempo serve to give an unstable flexibility to the piece.[27] The temporal procedures involved suggest a conscious attempt at problematizing the relationship between musical material, the notation and performance, and creating a work where the two interact to create a special kind of ebb and flow not dictated by a strict (metronomic) compartmentalization of time, but rather by the internal logic of the practice. Morris describes similar challenges in *Otto Variazioni*, the piece that replaced his original commission.[28] We should note such temporal procedures permeate most of Clementi's works, some of which were discussed above.

The undecidable

In Clementi's *Ricercare*, the practical mediation of notation and sound thus follows the large scale ebb and flow of the work. The interaction of notation and sound amounts to a form of polyphony where the two parts take turns in being the most prominent according to the temporal unfolding of this relation. The relationship is not simply contingent, it bears the mark of what Derrida calls the undecidable, a reversal of

two terms which in the act of reversal is exposed as impossible to hierarchize except through an act of violent distortion – the one element is presupposed in the other and vice-versa. This is the basic gesture of deconstruction, a double-handed writing along two separate but interdependent trajectories.

The undecidable is not merely the oscillation between two significations or two contradictory and very determinate rules [i.e. work/practice, or indeed any of the bifurcating dichotomies explored in the analyses] ... it is not merely the oscillation or the tension between two decisions, it is the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule, is still obliged ... to give itself up to the impossible, while taking account of law and rules.[29]

In the *Ricercare*, it is impossible to decide whether the instrumental practice simply serves to render the compositional logic audible, or if the compositional logic in fact presupposes the practice. The traditional dichotomy set up by Morris between compositional logic and idiomatic writing is suspended, undulating undecidably between the two terms: The compositional logic is not merely directed towards creating a chromatic field of varying density but rather in addressing the melodic coherence and temporal flow of the music by implicitly targeting the practice. The undecidability affects the interpretation of the work, and when preparing for my own performances of the *Ricercare*, I always find myself choosing radically different fingering solutions that reconfigure the nexus of musical structure, fingerings and temporal flow. Interestingly, in the implicit problematization of the performative Clementi is brought into close proximity with a composer like Brian Ferneyhough. I will claim that in *explicitly* opening the musical work up to the exteriority of practice – the simultaneous composition of the music as well as the specific practical conditions of the music, the turn from ‘Ton’ to ‘Tun’ – the *Ricercare* of Aldo Clementi similarly operates with ‘two hands, two texts, two visions, two ways of listening’,[30] structuring the practice and the work ‘in a single gesture, but doubled’,[31] that is, it effectuates the movement of deconstruction. Derrida’s work could be seen as an attempt to show how apparent unities are conditioned by their *others*, by alterity, by their own outside – indeed, to traverse the margins of philosophy as such. Significantly, the notion of the undecidable and the decision in Derrida suggests an ethical opening of the subject towards alterity.[32] Outlining a space of undecidability in which both composer and performer take active part in constituting each other, the *Ricercare* exposes the practical constitution of a musical work as a field of negotiation of the mutual interdependency of the subject and other. Therefore, we can say that the turn from *Ton* to *Tun*, the turn from music as abstract material structure towards music as embodied practice to which Clementi subscribes, is also an ethical opening.

One of the paradoxes of deconstruction is of course that the only means to approach such a writing is through philosophical writing itself. This is paralleled in Clementi: the pursuit of the death of music is not enacted along the lines of negating music in any way, but is exercised through a meticulous attention to the details of craft, or to writing. As with Derrida, Clementi’s work is always parasitical, always based on quotations or historical models. This includes performance practice. Clementi’s writing is a form of reading, a form of *écriture*. Derrida says:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms[.][\[33\]](#)

Deconstruction operates not by negating structures but by inhabiting them in order to facilitate an intervention that exposes structural contingency, disrupts and suspends an existing order in favour of a transformation of meaning. Within the orbit of the performer of the *Ricerca*, this intervention is most obviously operationalized in relation to the apparatus of instrumental practice. The structures 'inhabited *in a certain way*' are those of the instrumental practice and their corporeal, aural and historical correlates. This conception of instrumental practice coincides with what Michel Foucault called an *apparatus*.

The apparatus

The term *apparatus (dispositif)* assumes a central function in Foucault's work in the seventies, as the question concerning the subject becomes more explicit in his work. The notion of the apparatus provides the hinge between power/knowledge and individuals in the series of lectures on normalization, governmentality and biopolitics delivered at the Collège de France, and has a central strategic function in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Typically, the term is not explained in explicit terms, but rather is put to use in the studies. In an interview from 1977, Foucault describes the machinery of the apparatus as 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions', explicating that the 'apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements'.[\[34\]](#) The apparatus is further qualified as having a 'dominant strategic function',[\[35\]](#) that is, it partakes in a network of power/knowledge relations in a process of subjectivation of an individual. In a late interview, the process of subjectivation is defined as 'the process by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely a subjectivity, which is evidently not the only given possibility of a consciousness of the self'.[\[36\]](#) The apparatus is a central element in this process. What does this mean? It means, simply, that an apparatus is that by which an individual becomes a (self-conscious) subject.

What I propose is to understand instrumental practice as an apparatus, perhaps even the most forceful apparatus of a classical musician. By this I mean that the acquisition of skills required to become a professional classical musician demands an enormous investigation on the part of the individual, that the time spent learning an instrument not only results in the potential development of instrumental mastery but is also a time spent literally grafting onto the body the cultural ideals embedded in the practice; it is a 'writing of the body'. This idea is not only supported in Foucault but also suggested in recent conceptions

of musicianship and music education, where social constructions of subjectivities have come to dominate.^[37]

The work concept and castration anxiety

Returning to the figure of Geoffrey Morris, he should be seen as more than a straw-man in my argument. He represents tradition and the persistence of the idea of the work, an idea which we relinquish only at great expense. Perhaps the anguish expressed by Morris in relation to the *Ricercare* represents a form of castration anxiety. According to the Freudian Joe Hughes, 'To be castrated means nothing more than to lose a principle of organization: the phallus, or the conjunctive synthesis of partial surfaces'.^[38] Now, in Freud, castration is identified with decapitation – beheading – a loss of organizing principle if any. For us, this loss of a central organizing principle – the work category – is symbolized in the beheading of the 'O' in the turn from *Ton* to *Tun*.

I would claim that Clementi's work, just as that of Hübler, or Ferneyhough, addresses the contingent relationship between musical structure and instrumental practice. And like their work, Clementi's *Ricercare* addresses this relationship between *Ton* and *Tun* as an undecidable and deconstructive bifurcation, indeed as a dissemination of structure within the work-structure itself and not something imposed from without. From this perspective, any assessment of this particular work, and indeed of Clementi's work since the early sixties as a whole, which does not take into account the undecidability of *Ton* and *Tun* must be seen as a violent reduction of the agonistic and articulatory tensions played out in performance.

Thus we can begin to understand Clementi's pursuit of the death of music in a new light. The notion of the death of music must be understood as an opening of the classical work concept and the strict demarcation of the functions of the composer and performer in generating musical meaning towards the undecidability of performance. I would not hesitate in describing this as an ethical opening, to which we should surrender ourselves. Clementi makes clear to what extent the act of performance is a performative act in the philosophical and more strict sense, an act which brings about meaning – both in terms of constituting a musical object *and* a performative subject. With Foucault we could say that musical performance is a discursive act and not a form of reproduction. Indeed, Clementi's work radically challenge's such a conception of musical performance in the way it deliberately feeds on the performative.

Thus we can also see the relevance of Clementi to this journal and the field of performance analysis at large. In devoting our attention, and indeed numerous books, journals and conferences to performance studies, we are all actually pursuing the death of music understood as 'works', we are subscribing to the decapitation of the *Ton* as sovereign and as a community working towards coming to terms with our ingrained castration anxiety. In this sense, we are all the heirs of the work of Aldo Clementi.

Endnotes

^[1] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, revised

edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 259.

[2] In this article, the term instrumental practice encapsulates both instrumental technique and performance practice.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *Introduction to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 228.

[4] Clementi used a similar set of complimentary hexachords in the *Concerto per violino* (1977). See Gianluigi Mattietti, *Geometrie di Musica: Il periodo diatonico di Aldo Clementi* (Lucca: LIM, 2001), pp. 104–06.

[5] Clementi's notion of the death of music parallels 'the death of man' or 'the death of the author', contemporaneously addressed by Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes respectively. Aldo Clementi, 'Commento alla propria musica', in *Autobiografia della musica contemporanea*, ed. Michela Mollia (Cosenza: Lerici, 1979), pp. 48–51.

[6] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed & Ward, 1987), p. 103.

[7] Mattietti, *Geometrie di Musica*.

[8] Mattietti, *Geometrie di Musica*, pp. 48–53 and pp. 106–10 respectively.

[9] Interestingly, Mattietti even relates the elastic temporal conception of *AEB* to Webern's recording of his own arrangement of Schubert's *Deutsche Tänze D. 820* (*Geometrie di Musica*, 107). Webern's 1932 recording with Frankfurter Funkorchester is included in the first release of Pierre Boulez's recording of the complete works of Webern (CD reissue SONY 45845).

[10] Mattietti, *Geometrie di Musica*, pp. 60–63.

[11] Mario Bortolotto, *Fase Seconda* (Milan: Adelphi, 1969), pp. 170–92.

[12] Renzo Cresti, *Aldo Clementi: studio monografico e intervista* (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1990).

[13] Michele Zaccagnini, 'Deus Ex Machina: Uncovering Aldo Clementi's System', *Perspectives of New Music*, 54/1 (2016), pp. 137–78; Michele Zaccagnini, *Aldo Clementi's System* (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2014).

[14] Manuele Morbidini, *Musiques Informelles: il concetto adorniano e l'opera di Aldo Clementi* (PhD diss., University of Siena, 2008).

[15] David Osmond-Smith, 'Temps perdu: Aldo Clementi and the Eclipse of music as Praxis', in *The Modernist Legacy*, ed. Björn Heile (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 123–134.

[16] For convenience I use guitarist shorthand in the following text. Arabic numerals designate left hand finger exempting the thumb: 1 indicates the index finger, 2 indicates the middle finger, and so forth. Roman numerals indicate fingerboard positions: IV indicates the fourth fret, VII indicates the seventh fret, and so forth.

- [17] Andrea Monarda draws attention to the difficulty of timbral and dynamic projection in the *Ricercare*. See Andrea Monarda, 'La nobiltà del contrappunto: Le "Variazioni" per chitarra di Aldo Clementi', *Il Fronimo* No. 180 (October/December 2017), pp. 19–28, in particular p. 27.
- [18] Geoffrey Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', *Contemporary Music Review*, 28/6 (2009), pp. 559–86, here p. 572. Morris' request resulted in the composition of *Otto Variazioni*.
- [19] Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', pp. 572
- [20] Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', pp. 573
- [21] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*
- [22] Morris also suggested performing the work on a ten-string guitar, which could solve some of the fingering challenges. Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', pp. 572.
- [23] Clementi quoted in Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', pp. 572.
- [24] Anders Førisdal, *Music of the Margins: Radically Idiomatic Instrumental Practice in Solo Guitar Works by Richard Barrett, Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus K. Hübler* (PhD diss., Norwegian Academy of Music, 2017).
- [25] Klaus K Hübler, 'Dialektische Kompositorik: ein Anfang. Fragmentarisches zum 3. Streichquartett', *Neuland*, 5 (1985), pp. 146–47.
- [26] The last section, given in Figure 8, does not conform to this pattern. Here the tempo does not return to semibreve = 90, lending a particular melancholy to the the end of the piece.
- [27] Aldo Clementi, *Ricercare* (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 2002).
- [28] Morris, 'The Guitar Music of Aldo Clementi', pp. 573–6.
- [29] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundations of Authority"', in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 230–98, here p. 252.
- [30] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 65.
- [31] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 64.
- [32] Cf. Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism. Derrida and the time of life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
- [33] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 24.
- [34] Michel Foucault, 'Confessions of the Flesh', in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 194–228, here p. 194.
- [35] Foucault, 'Confessions of the Flesh', p. 195.

[36] 'J'appellerai subjectivation le processus par lequel on obtient la constitution d'un sujet, plus exactement d'une subjectivité, qui n'est évidemment que l'une des possibilités données d'organisation d'une conscience de soi'. Michel Foucault, 'Le retour de la morale', in *Dits et écrits II: 1975–1984*, ed. Daniel

Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), pp. 1515–26, here p. 1525. My translation.

[37] See, for example, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance. A Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998); Helena Gaunt, 'Student and Teacher Perception of One-To-One Instrumental and Vocal Tuition in a Conservatoire' (PhD diss., University of London, 2006).

[38] Joe Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 34.