



Graphic Score Assignment (SP23)

DUE: March 16, 2023

Background:

Beginning in the 1950s, composers began to experiment with their musical notation. Composers were greatly inspired by abstract artists at the time and adopted similar visual elements into their music. During this time, composers were also interested in improvisation. Composers created “**graphic scores,**” which are visual representations of music from which musicians were to improvise.

Another way to think of a graphic score is to think of Rorschach inkblot test: these are ink blots that psychologists would show their patients, and the patients would tell the psychologist what they saw. In this analogy, the inkblot would be the graphic score; the patient would be the musician; and, assuming that the psychologist made the inkblot, then the psychologist would be the composer.

Directions:

Create your own graphic score! Examples of graphic scores are given at the end of this document.

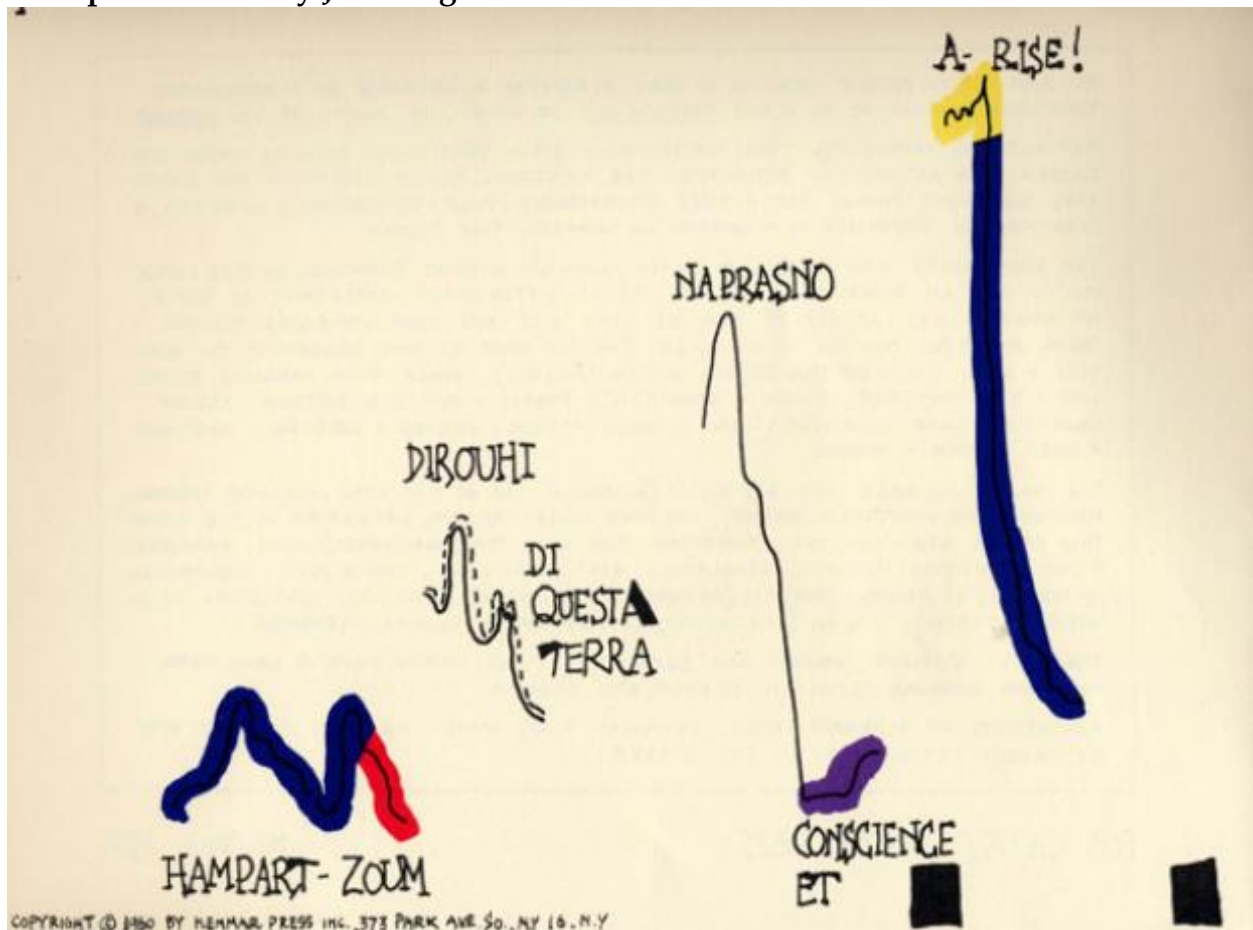
The objective of this assignment is to convey some information about pitch, rhythm, and other musical parameters to the performers who are visiting our class on March 16. You will be composing with gestures, colors, and your own markings. You should ask yourself, “If a musician saw this picture, what type of noise would they produce?”

Please submit a draft of your graphic score on Blackboard before class; it would also be great if you brought a physical copy of your score into class. The two cellists who are visiting will look at your graphic scores, talk to you about them, perform them, and, as a class, we will make a few graphic scores together.

Try to have some fun with this assignment and be creative!!!!

Examples of graphic scores are below, with commentary:

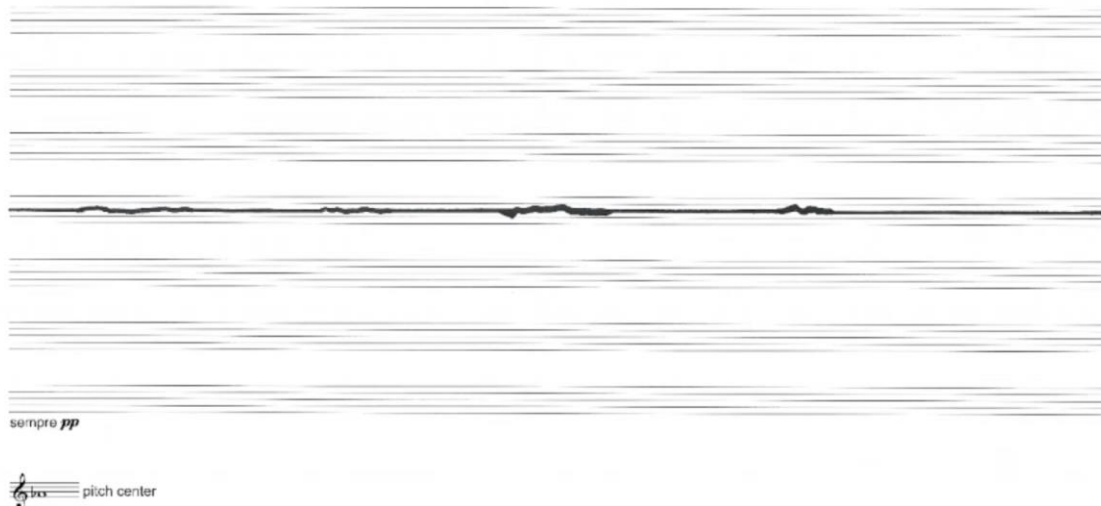
Example 1: "Aria" by John Cage



This is meant to be sung, with the lyrics notated on the page. On the left, we see a blue line that goes up, down, then up again, before coming down and switching to the color red. A singer might interpret that as having one vocal quality on the blue part (i.e. loud and belting) and then switching to another vocal quality on the red part (i.e. whispering).

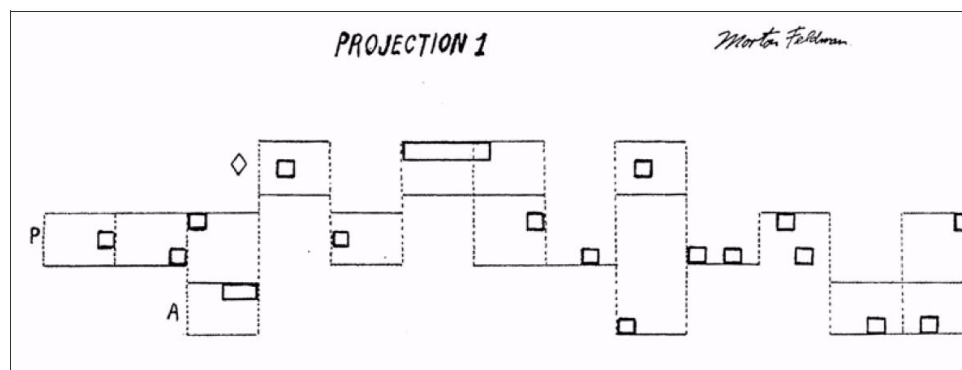
Example 2: "Graphic Score No. 1" by John Teske

no. 1



John gives a pitch in the bottom left corner (in this case, it is an A-flat). The black line that you see is a contour line, indicating extremely small fluctuations in pitch. This graphic score is meant to be a meditation, focusing on a single pitch. [You can listen here.](#)

Example 3: *Projections 1* by Morton Feldman



This is meant to be read from left to right. Each horizontal line indicates a pitch that the musician may choose. The boxes indicate some sort of event. The vertical dotted lines help you measure how high or low the next event is.

Example 4: *Pithoprakta* by Iannis Xenakis

You should [listen and watch the recording here.](#) I think this graphic score is self-explanatory.



Example 5: *Picnic* by Cilla McQueen

Picnic

i
ii
iii
iv

for violins, oboe, bass guitar

The image shows a musical score titled "Picnic" by Cilla McQueen. It consists of four staves, labeled i, ii, iii, and iv. The notation is highly abstract and colorful, using various shapes and colors (red, blue, green, yellow, brown, purple) to represent musical elements. The score is intended for violins, oboe, and bass guitar.



Example 6: Three graphic scores by Wadada Leo Smith:





Wadada Leo Smith:



Wadada Leo Smith

