

In the decades after World War Two ended, composers & artists started to experiment with verbal notation as a way to move out of the strictures of a standard notation. Pauline Oliveros, Karlheinz Stockhausen & many others opted to compose work thru linguistic prompts & descriptions, giving space for a sonic imaginary to expand out—as consciousness too was also expanding via the breakthrough of liberation movements & the development of synthetic drugs that would catalyze a counter-culture en masse.

A t(e)x score gives instruction for ways to listen &or to produce sound—whether a pure mental image or some physical event. The expanded field of audible & inaudible vibration becomes the writer's playground since every possible &or impossible sound can be pointed to using the written word.

Since the ambiguity of certain txt scores offers multiple readings<performances, a work begins to dialate to become a prism of interpretation—in a much larger sense than is the classical norm, or even a dub version. Notation no longer serves as the guarantor of sonic self-sameness nor as a pivot of some kind of audible invariance. A perspectivalism of this type is present in the proliferation of scores explicitly written for listeners as opposed to those made for musicians to perform: as much an overturning of traditions of expertise as it is an inversion of that old-hat binary of active & passive. New focal points are drawn to explore sound from—individuated & pluralistic—altho this might just be a symptom of that incessantly inbound shift that leads to a capitalist society of the self, also being minted mid-20th century.

What differentiates txt scores from sonic descriptions are the minimal implications of an enacted gesture, at whatever scale. More often than not, txt scores are in an imperative mood that tasks the reader, or invites the reader to take up directives. These recipes for doing evoke soundscapes to be activated, mediated on, traversed.

#8: txt scores
2025

the deep listening club
lovers & lollypops

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In fictional registers, these actions are to be imagined, ludically dreamt & played as the seed of an experiment in thinking. This style of txt score is blurred into a sonic fiction & tells of a peculiar mood: there is a semiotic gradient that bridges pragmatic vocabularies & the vocabularies of practice, where the former beckons the reader to act & the latter adheres simply to the expression of a more literal mode. A continuum stretched across deed & word.

Word events & speech acts are also doings that form complex hybrids between lexical architectures & audible performances. The 'pataphysical wordslips of Erik Satie, or the programmatic poetry paired to Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* are two precursors of the movements of the modern txt score.

The library of txt scores brings together diverse regimes under a single collection where Dadaist manifestos & Fluxus events, medieval liturgy & sound poetry, magickal spells & new age therapeutics all vie for readerly attention. A txt score before it is performed is a form of conceptual art, a non-cochlear sound art that lies mute & lingers in wait for potential activation. The grammar of such work is often in some future or unrealized tense: writings of a sound event to come. Clearly, any type of (instructional) language can become a way to notate the conditions of sound-making.

The soundworlds made available by such an unbounded form are infinitely varied. All that can be written becomes dormant sonic matter. Acoustics need not enter into the equation. Txt scores make up a literature directed toward a specific sensory mode & explode out into cosmic horizons unheard.

Featured txt scores:

lisa nelson.....[∞ ear] ATTENTION SCORE
pauline oliveros.....ALL OR NOTHING

&

yoko ono.....max neuhaus
erik satie.....la monte young
alvin lucier.....jennifer walshe

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