



Contents is a collection of musical text scores written daily by Raphaël Belfiore over the span of exactly one year, between May 22nd 2020 and May 22nd 2021. Among the resulting 366 scores, some can be realized as music, sound and various other media while others are abstract sketches and spatial arrangements of typographic symbols.

The collection has previously been presented partially on several occasions, either as book prototype, a lecture-performance, a film or a public reading. On the occasion of the collection's publication in book form, it is presented in a more exhaustive way in the Druckereihalle im Ackermannshof. It involves not only the scores themselves, but also their performance in various forms such as audio or audiovisual works, prints and a multi-media installation.

The collection was not originally intended as an art project, but started as a personal writing practice similar to a notebook. It remained untitled and largely ignored for some time after its completion and its meaning was only found in retrospect. The title "Contents" is the result of this retrospective interpretation and describes different aspects of the collection.

Firstly, it refers to the way the writing process changed over time. During the first weeks, the scores occurred every day spontaneously. Naturally, this situation did not last and the decision was eventually made to keep writing under any circumstance. One consequence of this was the appearance of graphic scores made only with typographic signs. They were an emergency solution to keep the flow of scores going. This decision led to an extensive change in mentality, from a quality-oriented thinking to a quantity-oriented one and the final principle of the collection was thus fixated: at a regular daily rate, a text score with a certain degree of novelty should be written. As a title, "Contents" expresses this idea in a minimal way: the simple presence of some content is more important than its precise character.

Secondly, the collection was written during the period of lockdowns, in which all information available was formatted as "audiovisual content" on the Internet. Despite its extremely indeterminate name, online content exists and behaves in specific ways. Notably, it is organized in streams, flows, lists, etc... and has often a specific function: catching the attention of the viewer. Moreover, since each element co-exists with a lot of others in a series, it must not be too intense or too complete in order for the flow of content to be consumed and circulate endlessly. It must therefore be short, fragmentary and easy to understand. Moreover, its is quantitatively evaluated: the quality of content is equal to the number of people who interact with it. "Content creation" involves therefore a sort of logistification of creativity in order to deliver specifically formatted productions at a consistent rate.

Many scores in the collection refer to online content in one way or another. Some of them use it as a source (like using content from specific social media or platforms) while others demonstrate principles stemming from it (like "reaction" or "commentary" videos). More generally, a lot of scores also deal with the general topic of art in the age of the internet like advertisement, copyright, surveillance and behavioral control as well as their counteracting. It is even reasonable to consider the very principle behind the writing of all of these scores as being content creation rather than traditional art-making.

The collection's coming into existence can be seen as the reaction of a particular subject to encountering an extreme amount of content. Writing was in this context a way to order and incorporate a part of this quantity into manageable units. In hindsight, the collection can be understood as an accidental and indirect documentation of a situation which does not only concern the pandemic, but more generally contemporary forms of thinking and maybe even the fate of art in general. It should not, however, be considered a critique or a pure refusal of "content" or "content creation", which could perhaps be a further step in the project. The aim is at this stage is to survey aspects of contemporary transformations in thinking at a pre-critical level to outline it and possibly understand something from it.

The present exhibition aims to propose a selection of realized scores that go in the direction of this interpretation. Some of these were realised for the first presentation of the project in 2022, while others have been created specifically for the occasion. The initial choice of scores to be presented here has been made without trying to reduce the heterogenous collection to a single unified topic or narrative. It presents scores involving a variety of topics and strategies that somehow relate to each other through the notion of "content". The function of this leaflet will be to make these associations easier while presenting the original score in each case.

Three different ways to present the collection in an understandable way. "Contents" is present in the exhibition as a book which can be consulted or acquired (A). The scores are not copyrighted and can be performed and used in any way the buyer wants. Since the collection has no original material form, a book is not to be understood as its final manifestation. For this reason it is also presented in two other ways. It appears as a single line of endlessly repeating digital text (B). Also, it is printed on a single sheet of paper (C) in order to offer the viewer a synoptic view of it as a totality.

## 97

Merge together every page of score of an entire work/series/genre or even output of a composer and present it as a concrete poem.

2 double-sided printed plastic sheets (2m x 2.4 m)  
Realisation: 2024

Four versions of this text score printed on large format plastic sheets are presented in order to follow its four mentioned variants. Each realisation deals with the question of the logistics and circulation of musical writing in a different way. On a perceptual level, all four can be considered experiments in extracting various qualities from big quantities.

### a) Raphaël Belfiore - Contents

In order to create the proposed variant on a series of works, "Contents" is used, this time presented as an unintelligible totality in which all the scores are laid on top of each other. An explanation of its links with logistics and circulation can be found in the book's preface.

### b) Graduale Romanum 1974

The Graduale Romanum is here understood as a entire genre as it contains all the notated pieces of the Gregorian repertoire for the Mass according to the Roman Rite. Because it is a collection of short pieces with a daily structure, it can be considered a sort of counterpart to Contents. Its presence here is due to the fact that neumatic writing, since its discovery, has been a standardizing and unifying element in western musical practice and can therefore be seen as one of the most important steps in the history of musical circulation.

### c) Entire available works of Edgar Varèse

Edgar Varèse is here understood as one of the founders of western music's avant-gardist "international style". By operating a sort of synthesis between Europe and the U.S. his oeuvre is a specific testimony of early modernist circulations. The use of Varèse here is also a pragmatic one. Dealing with huge collections of score pages simultaneously is a technical challenge for home computers.

### d) Maurice Ravel - Boléro

An urban legend says that every 10 minutes, a new performance of Ravel's Boléro starts somewhere in the world. Following this, every page of score is distributed diagonally to model its multiple simultaneous instantiations on a global scale. An interesting consequence of this: the piece is so well-known that its form is even recognizable as a pseudo 3D-object from this graphical configuration.

## 263

Take any album, select and isolate the one sound that is the most representative of its entirety. Present multiple results of this idea applied to different albums together. The name of the albums may be hidden.

CD, 25 tracks

Realisation: 2024

25 albums of "pop" music between 1957 and 2022 have been processed according to this score. It is possible to consider this a study of the notion of "vibe". Opposite to the idea that music happens only over time, the interesting aspect here is what happens almost immediately when one listens to music. The "vibe" as a vague, barely conscious feeling of ambience is a capital aspect of music's contemporary uses in marketing and entertainment.

## 316

Treat the holes of instruments as potential ears. (Write music to be listened to from this perspective.)

Multi-media installation

(2 CCTV cameras on microphone stands, 1 flute, 1 trumpet, 1 renaissance trombone, 1 bass recorder, miniature microphones, beamer).

This is the most adventurous score implementation in the exhibition coming from two recent projects with Swiss ensembles (Proton & Lemniscate). These projects themselves stem originally from scores in the collection. In both, the question of the concert as a situation of surveillance is investigated using analog surveillance cameras and one of their specificity: the timecode. This is expressed here using musical notation, the notes referring respectively to the current hour, minute and second. The

sound heard is the exhibition live sound captured through musical instruments. Put in a somewhat silly but effective way, this installation enacts in a musical way the fact that content is watching you as much as you watch it.

## 310 + 327

Absurd noise reductions. + Apply noise cancellation processes to Helmut Lachenmann's *Pression*.

Video (07 min. 36 sec.)

Realisation: 2024

Two scores that deal with the technique of noise reduction on recordings are combined in one realisation. The question of what is "information" and what is "noise" and whose decision it is is a tricky question that is almost always political. The legendary piece *Pression* by Helmut Lachenmann, dealing explicitly with these questions is re-actualized here in a period of growing use of machines to single out and discard noise. The recording is processed by professional grade programs trained to recognize the human voice. The software, forced to extract "meaning" out of "noise", delivers its own hidden meaningful discourse out of Lachenmann's tumultuous piece. The term absurd has been taken here in its etymological sense, as the feature of something that comes out (ab-) of deafness (surdity).

## 65/77/86/130

4 F4-prints

Realisation: 2024

Four graphic scores interpreted on the 21.03.2024 by Frantz Lorient are presented as large format prints on the walls of the exhibition space.

## SCREEN 1 : Solo Performer

This selection of videos presents three entries of the collection that involve a solo musician. Each score can be seen as a "musical modelization" of a different situation relating to content consumption. Nr. 174 deals with involuntary attentional traces while 283 refers more clearly to biometrics and the tracking of movement. Quite differently, 304 addresses the performativity (and performability) of contemporary images.

### 174

Films of musicians imagining in detail themselves playing their favorite piece whilst trying not to move. Listening to the piece simultaneously is possible.

Video (07 min. 26 sec.)  
Realization: 2024 / performer: Tatiana Timonina  
(recording: Franz Benda, Flute Concerto in E minor, Allegro con brio)

### 283

A musician is equipped with various contact microphones over their clothes and body. They play quite a demanding found piece. Only present what the contact microphones have recorded.

Video (06 min. 27 sec.), musical subtitles  
Realization: 2024 / flute: Tatiana Timonina (piece performed: Tōru Takemitsu, Voice — The legend says that Takemitsu wrote this piece in one day.)

### 304

Show a performer still images that present people playing the same instrument. Ask them to try and deduce the sound from the images.

Video (02 min. 26 sec.)  
Realisation: 2022 / guitar: Killian Perret-Gentil

## SCREEN 2: Piano pieces

### 284

Put objects on the strings of a grand piano. Scan their shapes using chromatic scales. Each object is a different piece.

Video (08 min. 27 sec.)  
Realisation: 2022 / piano: Canberk Duman

A straightforward realisation of the score with a piccolo, a cymbal, a clarinet, a guitar, a violin and a snare drum. The pace of the scales have been determined in the following way: for each situation, the time necessary for the most interesting acoustic event to unfold is taken as the measure for the preceding and following notes of the scale. This score can be considered as addressing contemporary issues of machinic perception with a traditional machine. The piano is mobilized here as a tool for visualization through "rational" gestures of discrete and sequential steps.

### 203

Compose a new fugue consisting of all of the occurrences of the main tonic of every fugue in J.S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier.

Video (07 min. 16 sec.)  
Realisation: 2024

This implementation includes both WTC volumes. The original dynamics in the found MIDI files used have been maintained. The score can be seen as an exercise in statistical listening. It gives an answer to the question : how to listen to a collection as a totality by isolating a relevant and specific aspect about it. Besides, the use of this specific hand-made model of automatic piano here is a clin d'oeil to Peter Ablinger's viral speaking piano video, which uses the same one.

## SCREEN 3: Code, Subtitles, Interfaces

This selection of scores realised in self-referential ways revolve around the question of textuality in the context of online content since it can be at the same time coded as text, presented as text and translated into another text simultaneously.

87

Record yourself explaining the concept of an instrumental piece. Create computer-assisted orchestrations of the recordings with the pieces' original instrumentation.

Video (02 min. 47 sec.)

Realisation: 2022 / speaker: Raphaël Belfiore

343

Record a song with each word recorded in a different place. The reverberation of each location determines the rhythm. The pitches are deduced from what is heard on the site.

Video (01 min. 07 sec.)

Realisation: 2022 / voice: Maxine Yolanda

353

Take this score, dictate it to a speech recognition algorithm ten times, each time selecting a different language. Perform together and as slowly as possible the results with human or non-human native speakers.

Video (01 min. 41 sec.)

Realisation: 2022

## SCREEN 4: Graphic Scores

56 / 61 / 125 / 129

Videos

(02 min. 31 sec.)

(42 sec.)

(02 min. 46 sec.)

(08 min. 52 sec.)

Realisation: 2022 / viola: Frantz Lorient

A selection of the first filmed interpretations of graphic scores from the collection co-developed with Frantz Lorient. Particular effort has been put into respecting the textuality of these pieces through the application of formal writing conventions (paragraphs, for example). As another way to emphasize their textual nature, the scores are adapted as subtitles.ß

concept, realisation:  
Raphaël Belfiore

exhibited works with:  
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## Performances & Book Vernissage

21.03.2024, 20:00

Program:

### Interpretation of graphic scores (30 min.)

37  
48  
56  
65  
77  
86  
107  
126  
130

Frantz Lorient, viola

A new series of interpretations of graphic scores. It encompasses the first and the last one in the collection and proposes a sort timeline of their evolution. Some of them are performed for the first time while others already exist as video performances on a screen in the exhibition. In their case, the scores are given a new interpretation, differing from the ones recorded. The idea of subtitles for the videos in order to emphasize the textuality of the scores has been adapted to become surtitles during the performance.

– pause –

### Contents: lecture-performance (60 min.)

This lecture-performance aims to propose a survey of the collection exactly 1400 days after its writing started. It implies looking back at the conditions of creation of the piece and building step by step a actualized interpretation on the collection. While mostly a lecture, it is also a performance as it is also realisation of at least three scores in the collection (133/162/207). It also contains materials that were prepared for the exhibition but eventually not included in its final form.

Raphaël Belfiore, speaker