

A True History of Footnotes Perhaps (Part 2)

In which is related, reconstructed through documents and memories, the true history of *Footnotes* from its resurrection up to the making of the unedited recordings in September, 2014. The birth of the infant thus created is continued in A True History of Footnotes Perhaps (Part 3), and its subsequent life is completed in A True History of Footnotes Perhaps (Part 4). As before, no effort has been spared in ensuring the rigour and consistency of the account herein; the reader can be assured that the truth, in all its glories and its ignominies, is fully revealed below.

You're smiling again, I see . . .

Preliminaries

- 2007 10 23. Michael Edgerton (ME), then teaching at the University of Teesside, comes to York to give a composer's seminar entitled Complexity, Politics, Nonlinearity. Almost certainly he included in his presentation a recording of part of Tempo Mental Rap, part of which SÖ had performed in April 2006, and which won the Kompositionspreis der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart in 2007. ME had been WB's student at the University of Illinois in the late 1980s.
- 2009 01. WB becomes a Fellow at the Orpheus Research Centre in Music, at which SÖ is already serving in a similar capacity.
- 2009, late, or early 2010: In conversation with SÖ, probably arising from a discussion of ME's composition, WB mentions the existence of Footnotes; SÖ requests that he send a score.
- 2010 07 03. WB to SÖ, email: "I finally remembered ... ! ¶ Here's pdfs of the score to Footnotes. If you want hard copies, let me know. (Some scores are A4, some are A3 -- or, more properly, the US equivalent ...) ¶ Movement 'Cotten' has been fairly often played. 'Cage' and 'Crump' were played back during the first couple of years, but not much since. 'Cotten, loc. cit.' had a brief life as music for part of a dance. The other movements haven't been done at all. ¶ I'm grateful for your interest."
- 2010 07 04. SÖ to WB, email: "Thanks Bill, and hey, this is a big piece! Is it intended as a cyclic work? It immediately makes me think of setting up a CD-recording of the whole thing."
- 2010 through 2012: WB and SÖ converse occasionally at Orpheus and elsewhere about possibilities for recording or performing *Footnotes*. At some point SÖ proposes a single CD to contain both pieces (Brooks and Edgerton), and Edgerton is brought into the conversation.

Planning, phase 1

- 2013 01 02 through 2013 01 04: A flurry of emails among WB, SÖ, and ME discuss possible funding for the joint CD, triggered by an upcoming deadline. It is decided to wait, for the moment, and to find an appropriate label first, preferably in the US, given the background of ME and WB.
- 2013 04 01 through 2013 04 17: ME takes the lead in finding a label; he drafts a summary of the project as a kind of proposal, which he sends to several companies, including Mode and Innova. A half dozen respond supportively, among them Innova. WB and ME exchange emails about possible institutional support; WB and SÖ exchange emails about possible recording dates, eventually determining that late December 2013 was the first available option.
- 2013 07 09 or 10: WB and SÖ meet at an Orpheus Assembly and discuss the recording project. WB notes that it needs to be situated as part of a research project if it is to become part of the Orpheus work and if we wish to apply for institutional support. Together they conceive the idea that the recording itself could evidence the stylistic and historical diversity that the piece manifests; SÖ suggests that we're undertaking research into HIRP (Historically Informed Recording Practice). WB agrees to approach JW to act as the "engineering" partner in the research project. (WB leaves Orpheus directly for an eight-day choir tour in Germany that segues into five days at York, ending on July 21.)
- 2013 07 20: WB emails JW (after a quick conversation in passing) to arrange a meeting on 23 July "to discuss a recording project."
- 2013 07 23: WB and JW meet; WB outlines *Footnotes* and the *Rap* and summarizes Stefan's concept for HIRP. JW is enthusiastic. (WB then leaves for the States.)
- 2018 07 28: WB to SÖ and ME, email:

Mike, I'm not sure you were copied in to the brief exchange (later, conversation) I had with Stefan. I had said that it would be good if we could construct some sort of "research" frame around the Edgerton/Brooks CD, and Stefan suggested that we consider, in effect, "HIRP": Historically Informed Recording Practice. This makes perfect sense for *Footnotes*, because the score itself is historically and stylistically eclectic. So one could, as an extreme instance, record the "Cotten" movement on a wire recorder and with the mics that would have been in use in 1930s field work. "Crump," which is a bizarre reworking of electric bluesmen, could be done with 1960s technology; "Cage" is notionally from the late 1940s, and so forth. Stefan had the idea that something similar might be applied to your piece, but I don't know it well enough to talk about particulars.

So now I can report that just before I left for the States (I'm in Illinois at the moment), I had a very useful conversation with Jez Wells, an audio engineer (brilliant!) and technology expert on the York faculty. He's quite excited about the

idea, and immediately began to think about where we would source the necessary equipment. I suggested that an article about the whole process would be a plausible outcome, and he was quite keen on this. All this is very good, because I wanted him to make the recording in any case, and this way it becomes a research project for him, removing the need for a fee. It also greatly increases our chance for some departmental support, which I'll apply for in due course. And it's conceivable that we could build some external funding applications around this, perhaps to entities for which we would not otherwise be eligible (audio engineering societies, for instance).

One likely consequence, though, is that if we go whole-heartedly down this route, we'll need more time to put the project in place. That is, it would be a stretch, it seems to me, to determine what's needed, find the equipment, and raise some money, all before December. We can try (and I will!), but we might want to look to April as an alternative time to actually do the recordings.

Over the next couple of weeks I'll try to draft a simple project description. It would be a big help if you two could have an e-conversation about the ways in which the idea can be adapted for Mike's piece. I think it would be much stronger if we could explore different aspects of the general idea in two different works. But I don't know Mike's piece enough to be able to think how that would work. (btw, Mike, can you send me a pdf of the score?) Anyway, could you have a think about this and get back to me with your ideas? Any thoughts you have about possible avenues of funding would be welcome, too. And if you happen across anything that suggests this has been tried before, let me know—I'll be doing a search, but it's not my field, and I don't quite know how best to proceed.

But it's all good, I think! Onward!

2018 07 28: WB to JW, email:

Thanks very much for that very useful conversation about my piece and the possibility of a "HIR" project. I'm in the States now and I'm just clearing the decks for some real work. (Whew!) Among other things, I'll try to establish whether a similar approach has been taken in the past. I can investigate the musicological channels, but I'm not sure I'll be very effective in audio engineering circles. So if you run across anything similar, do let me know.

I've written Stefan and Mike to ask them for more specifics regarding the application of the idea to Mike's piece. I'll pass on whatever they come up with. My hope is to write up a simple description of the project in the next couple of weeks, to be filled in with specifics about equipment, process, and so forth as the idea evolves.

In the meantime, here's a pdf of the score for Footnotes. The existing recordings of some of the movements are scattered, but I'll put them together and get them to you. I'm not sure how useful they'll be, but you'll have them.

I'd like to make a joint application to the department Research Committee for things like equipment costs, when the time comes. It will be stronger if we can show that we've applied for external funds, of course, so I'll have a look for possible sources. Let me know if anything crosses your path.

I think that's it for now. Be in touch with any thoughts, and thanks for the positive response!

2013 07 29: ME to WB and SÖ, email: "oh, hmmn—weird idea—but kinda nice. Well, since my piece is based on a Zappa rap that was transcribed by the rock god Steve Vai—maybe there's some connection to what the rocks dudes were doing in the 70s and 80s? Yes, I think this could be a good plan, especially since my uni seems not at all interested in supporting this."

2013 07 29: SÖ to WB and ME, email: "Personally I think the idea makes a lot of sense. Also for the Tempo Mental Rap. I imagine producing the rap itself in Zappa style (so in 1980-90s production style) and the variations differently (some in concert hall? and some in studio with different mikes and reverb?) I think this would be musically relevant all the way through."

2013 07 29: ME to SÖ and WB, email: "One issue to consider is the medium the early recordings were made on—for the rap we're talking about tape. But then also the playback system contributed so much to the sound identity. I'm imagining that we will ultimately be recording to some sort of digital system? Do we imagine this has no effect on the sound? Of course the sound wizard at York will address this in a coherent and credible way."

2013 07 30: SÖ to ME and WB, email: "This is a good point! It could be worth considering to make analog recordings just for once! (and to release a double LP...)"

2013 07 30: WB to SÖ and ME, email: "Jez and I talked about this, a bit. I (personally) think it's crazy to release vinyl—too expensive, difficult to market, etc. But it would be nice to preserve as much analogue technology as is appropriate. Jez's thought was that we would use vintage equipment to record, informed by what we can find out about standard mic placement, etc. But the storage medium would be digital, so that we have a reliable copy to which we can return. We would then record the digital file on analogue equipment (r-r tape, acetate, whatever is appropriate) and edit and process using that medium. At the end the final version is converted to digital form (with NO 'improvements!'). The idea is that the digital medium is simply a 'black box' that is inserted between the mic output and the tape input; it does nothing except provide a backup."

2013 07 30: SÖ to WB and ME, email: "Many good ideas there, thanks! Even if there is quite a strong revival for the LP and actually, it might be a good way to market the

recordings I think. But then perhaps not with Innova. Don't think they've been looking at the LP-format?"

2013 07 30: JW to WB, email: "I'm aware of the use of vintage recording equipment in many different projects (e.g. Lenny Kravitz' early recordings, the new Daft Punk album) but not in a systematic way and I'm not aware of any specific projects like this for recording art music. An exhibition on recording culture and technology at the Liverpool Museum was supported by AHRC and English Heritage (<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/exhibitions/thebeatgoeson/thebeatgoesononline/acknowledgements.aspx>) but in many ways this is not a heritage project. If we were going down that route we might need to make more materials available than just the completed CD (e.g. some kind of online archive that demonstrates the technologies used etc.)." He continues with a paragraph about funding: "I've looked at the AES and they only seem to support postgrad students via their grants, not actual students. The British Phonographic Institute doesn't appear to have any funding schemes. Another approach might be to set up a network amongst artists and custodians of recording technology history, to share and use existing technological heritage (a big undertaking for the primary outcome of making one set of recordings though). Perhaps Leverhulme (<http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/funding/RPG/RPG.cfm>) would be a good route, as this doesn't seem to be covered by current AHRC themes?"

2013 07 30: WB to JW, email: "All good thoughts, and thanks for the rummage. Yes, I really don't want to get involved in anything too massive! – just do the job, as it were. I haven't had much time yet to do any systematic searching, but I'll try to get on this in the next few days. I wrote Stefan and Michael as well, and they are thinking about the options, and also about the relationship of all this to Mike's piece."

Planning Phase 2

2014 01 04: WB to SÖ and ME, email:

I've been nearly as busy as you have, I expect, with the result that I've not done anything further to explore funding for the CD. And (I must say) I am more and more of the view that that medium is over and done with. Downloading will be next, with the entire "product" turning to streaming in the next 3-5 years. So saith the oracle ...

Anyway, what will always remain is the sound file, accessed whatever way one will, so the need to make the actual recording remains. With that in mind, I wonder whether we should just do that—book a time at York when you (Stefan) could come over (and maybe you could get back somehow, Mike?) and then just

do the recording. I still like the idea of different “period” sounds for the different tracks of Footnotes, but I can’t see having the time now or ever to chase up vintage gear. So we could fake it with processing—if it sounds tawdry, then we’d abandon the attempt. Mike, you could do something analogous with your track if you wanted.

What are your thoughts about this re-think? There’s nothing particularly innovative or experimental about the project, done this way, which makes it less interesting for all concerned, I realize. But seeing the time I [don’t] have available, I just can’t see how I devote to an innovative, experimental project the energy and hard labour it would require ...

2014 01 04: SÖ to WB and ME, email: “Spontaneous response to your thoughts Bill would be that, agreed, the CD medium may be an extinct species (though not entirely so yet) and many more creative ways may be there to consider: Internet specific versions of pieces, installations, video works, etc. I still like the idea of vintage recording techniques and the further concept of displaying the recordings in a music museum. But it could also be a series of recordings displayed in a conceptual discourse online like in a JAR-publication.”

2014 01 04: WB to SÖ and ME, email: “I like very much the idea of JAR or some similar publication. I certainly could write a couple of thousand words about my piece, and Mike could surely do the same about his. And your perspective would be, as always, insightful and stimulating. If we set a common agenda (“historicity”? “deconstruction”?) the three components could become mutually supportive—or maybe they should remain “modular”, constructed in a way that is somehow analogous to the pieces.”

2014 01 04: ME to SÖ and WB, email: “Yes, I can totally write up something on my piece for sure. The historical era could potentially be traced back to the 70s when Zappa first made his original recordings - but then again without using the historical equipment, this could be hard. Just thinking, what about places like IRCAM, ZKM, EMS or the many academic centers that are involved with what could loosely be termed artistic research? Some of these places may have some equipment in house and may be able to provide some support to the project.”

2014 01 04 through 2014 01 08: A series of emails among WB, SÖ, ME, and JW results in an agreement to record both pieces between September 17 and 24. Also mentioned are possible funding applications and sources for vintage equipment, but no concrete steps in either area seem productive in the short term.

2014 04 30 through 2014 05 20: In conversation and by email SÖ and WB agree on a schedule for September: WB will meet with SÖ in Malmö on the 13th and 14th for some preliminary rehearsals; they will travel to Orpheus for an Assembly on the 15th and 16th; and they will reconnect at York on the 17th to record on the 18th through the 21st. They decide implicitly to postpone recording the *Rap* because

ME (who is now in Asia) would not be able to be in York in September. WB communicates the pertinent parts of this schedule to JW, who confirms his availability. A separate email thread confirms that SÖ will be at York on June 16 through 18, for a scheduled pair of Orpheus study days on subjectivity—the first project in the then-new Orpheus research cluster run by Catherine Laws (CL). JW, SÖ, and WB agree to have a planning meeting on June 17, followed by dinner.

Planning, part 3

2014 06 17: JW, SÖ and WB meet at 17:30 for slightly more than an hour.

2014 06 18: JW to SÖ and WB, email:

Here are the notes from our meeting:

We'll record everything with a set-up that gives us flexibility in terms of mics, takes, processing etc that we choose for each individual piece

Cage

Prepared guitar --> low acoustic output
mono era vinyl (early 50s)

Cotton

Includes foot tapping, so will need some kind of floorboard material (possibly podium used for speeches, although that might be hollow which probably wouldn't be ideal from a resonance point of view). [We might want to consider whether to do the tapping separately, if this is loud there might be significant bleed into guitar mics which will reduce options later on].

Crump

Electric guitar (record clean signal and use NI Guitar Rig). Evocation of 1970s Nashville nightclub (e.g. BB King).

ibid

Two guitars played simultaneously. The positioning should enable use of back to back cardioids on each guitar.

Cotton, loc. cit.

This will probably be played on an electric guitar via NI Guitar Cab to offer control over volume (possibly via a volume pedal). The intended location is the Spanish countryside, this could be implied via a soundscape recording.

Cage, passim

Three guitars (recorded separately). There are 12 units of material, these can be recorded individually (possibly each one on each guitar) and put together at the editing stage.

Please let me know if I've missed anything, or there are any comments you wish to add. I've booked the studio control room and floor for 12 hours per day (just to be on the safe side - we might want to trim that down as arrangements get firmed up), Wednesday to Sunday inclusive.

2014 07 14 through 2014 08 25: In a series of emails, WB asks colleagues for assistance locating "a 12-string guitar (the big, boomy American type)" for use in the recording session in September. He is directed to Colin Elsworth, the department's guitar teacher, who makes several helpful suggestions, but none of these solve the problem.

2014 08: SÖ prepares for the recording.

Pre-session recording: "Cotten, *loc. cit.*"

2014 08 27: SÖ to WB, email: "Here's a quick question. I wonder if the fretless glissentar could create the right kind of nostalgia in Cotton loc sit. Just recorded a quick test. If we decide to go for it I'd record it at home since it is just a line signal, then we can fiddle with home to build it into a space, and also work on the dynamics."

2014 08 27: WB to SÖ, email: "I'm happy with this sound, but let's try to factor the process into the overall 'historically informed recording' agenda—which means that I wonder whether and how Jez should be involved. You're not going to record it before we meet (a couple of weeks now!), though, are you? It would be good to have a session on it first. And by the way (I'm only now thinking about what's coming up . . .), is it possible that we could record or video our workshop/rehearsals or whatever? Again, I'm thinking ahead to possible publications."

2014 08 28: SÖ to WB, email: "Good point about documentation. We should set up a camera for the sessions in Malmö for sure! I'll see if we can book a space at the Inter Arts Center that weekend." Later that afternoon: "And . . . as for loc cit, I suggestion we bear the option of the fretless guitar in mind but record it some other way, right now I am thinking the most obvious version, on 6-str classical, see how we can fiddle with the post production of that and if not happy, I make a fretless guitar recording at home and we have a go at that later. Simply put, I am beginning to think that it may be possible to work out a sound also for a classical guitar recording that would work really well." WB to SO: "Fine with me. Post-production I imagine an (old fashioned, analogue) radio station that drifts into and out of range. So some (very gentle!) white noise comes and goes . . . as do we all!"

2014 08 29: SÖ to WB, email: "Now I think we are really getting somewhere! I really like this drifting radio signal idea. Beautiful! So if we produce the recording like an old

Segovia 1920s recording and then process it like you describe below I think we have something very poetic. So Segovia also becomes a stylistic reference. Makes sense? (I think we should archive this discussion for later!) This also means that the glissentar idea is only for archive use. This is a much more convincing approach, the nostalgia you express with the fretless would point more towards ECM-aesthetics which would have very little to do with Footnotes.” WB to SO: “Sounds great to me! Lots of rubato . . .”

Planning, part 4

- 2014 08 28: In an email exchange, WB and SÖ make travel and housing arrangements. WB to SO: “I’m still on the hunt for a 12-string—it’s proving ridiculously difficult. I’ll put Naomi Leveton on the job—she’s indomitable . . . but if all fails, it can be done on acoustic.” SÖ to WB: “Indeed, we can live with many different solutions with instruments I think. And a steel stringed acoustic (6-str) could replace the 12-str.”
- 2014 08 28: WB to Naomi Leveton (NL): “I’ve been trying to locate a 12-string guitar to use in a recording session from 17 to 21 September. It’s proving impossible to get hold of anyone from here—I’ve been at this, futilely, for a couple of months now . . . Would you be willing to chase this? York is, I think, not going to be a source—the stores in town don’t hire instruments, and the local guitar teachers haven’t suggested anything that is actually practical.” NL accepts, and subsequent emails discuss budget and short-term practicalities.
- 2014 08 31: SÖ to WB, email: “Have been trying Crump on the 12-string today and I realize that this is how it should be recorded... You get a beautifully singing tone on the slide stuff. So the 12-string logistics we have to figure out one way or the other. Unfortunately I don’t think a 12-string is part of Juan’s collection either. Another thought, I would consider recording the electric guitar materials for Cage passim when we meet in Malmö. Hopefully we should be able to make time for this. Since it is just line signal, it will make no difference if we do it with Jez in York or earlier on and we can then steal time to work on the sound and the shaping of materials instead with him.”
- 2014 09 01: NL emails WB to list several options for obtaining the 12-string instrument, with pricing, contact details, and instrument descriptions. WB to SÖ, email: “I put Naomi on the 12-string problem and she has located several options, of which the best would seem to be: Big Fish Rentals in Manchester have a Yamaha APX-5-A 12 string acoustic that they rent out for £50 a week . . . Do you know this guitar (this model) and would it suffice for our purposes? Or would the instrument here be better: <http://www.guitarzone.co.uk/view-product/Freshman-FA1DCE12-12-String-Acoustic-Guitar?> That company has a second-hand instrument (this model, I

think) that they would also rent. This is a bit more distant, geographically, and would involve a couple of journeys, so it's not as convenient—but if it's better, it can be gotten with no real problem. Any views?" SÖ to WB: "I haven't played either of these models but my guess is that the Freshman might be a better option, though I cannot guarantee it would really be worth the trouble. I had a quick check on stores here but don't think there is anywhere I could quickly go to check them. For 'Cotton' you need one which is rather easy to finger barre stops on. You might even ask them about this!" WB to SO: "Thanks for the quick response. I asked Naomi to inquire about the barres, and I told her that unless the answer was positive for the Yamaha and negative for the Freshman, to go with the Freshman. She can make an automobile run to pick it up and deliver it, so there's no problem there. I'll let you know if anything changes." SÖ to WB: "This sounds promising, many thanks! I more and more think the 12-str is needed for the piece."

2014 09 01: SÖ to JW and WB, email:

Here's an update on the plans for the recording of Footnotes. I think we should expect more thoughts to pass by in the coming two weeks... Bill and I meet up in Sweden on the 13th to work through the material. If not before, you will certainly hear from us by then! I paste all your notes but have exchanged those that have started to drift...

Cage

Prepared guitar --> low acoustic output
mono era vinyl (early 50s)

Cotton

Includes foot tapping, so will need some kind of floorboard material (possibly podium used for speeches, although that might be hollow which probably wouldn't be ideal from a resonance point of view). [We might want to consider whether to do the tapping separately, if this is loud there might be significant bleed into guitar mics which will reduce options later on].

Crump

As I've been working on this piece I am now thinking we should record on a 12-str acoustic. I guess this situates the piece a little earlier in blues history? Might be more or less contemporary with "Cotton" but different style. Any thoughts on this Bill?

ibid

Two guitars played simultaneously. The positioning should enable use of back to back cardioids on each guitar. The main guitar here will be 6-str classical and the "resonance instrument" with the harmonics probably steel string (or 12-str as in the "original", ibid is a variation on Crump)

Cotton, loc. cit.

Bill and I developed this into the following new concept: we record 6-str classical guitar, produced in “Segovia-style” (early 20th Century classical recording) but post-produce it as a radio broadcast, like Bill put it: “I imagine an (old fashioned, analogue) radio station that drifts into and out of range. So some (very gentle!) white noise comes and goes . . .”

Cage, *passim*

Three guitars (recorded separately). There are 12 units of material, these can be recorded individually (possibly each one on each guitar) and put together at the editing stage.

New note here: I am thinking we might do some recordings of electric guitar on before hand. If so, I'll send them to you so we can start thinking of how to amp them etc.

2014 09 04: NL and WB exchange emails about the delivery and return of the 12-string instrument, and WB invites NL to join everyone for dinner during the recording sessions. WB and CL exchange emails confirming housing arrangements for Stefan and payment arrangements for NL and the guitar rental.

2014 09 05: SÖ to WB, email (in response to a query from WB about travel arrangements): “I decided to play it safe and have a late flight out from Manchester in the evening of the Sunday. So we can work in the day of the Sunday also. I'm sure this project will bring a lot of rather exciting post production and it would be great to get started on it together (we don't want Jez to have all the fun on his own, do we?)”.

Pre-session recordings: “Cage, *passim*”, part C

2014 09 05: SÖ to WB: “Have been working on the C part of Cage Passim and wonder how you feel about this version. [Attached is audio file 2014 09 05 Cage passim C ver1.] I quite like it myself and it might work as it is, or perhaps with some tweaking. But the jazzy approach to it could be quite welcome in the larger frame of the piece, don't you think? N.B. this is just the line signal. We should leave to Jez to amp it... The two first lines are in time but the third drags a bit. Might be musically convincing though.” WB to SO: “I like the idea, but maybe it should be a bit more extreme?—both in sound (more mellow) and tempo (faster), kind of like a wholly demented (but relaxed!) Django Reinhardt? Then it would just breeze through, as if someone opened a window, then closed it.” SÖ to WB: “I'll give that a try. Hmm ... much of the sound you can create in the amping, but the guitar could have a little more bass register itself. Faster: I'll have a look at how to make it sound a little more virtuosic. I've been rather careful when mapping the pitches and eventually it didn't come out too idiomatic in the end, but yes I'll have a go at

it again with those two ideas in mind!” SÖ to WB, later: “Attached is a new version which I like much better myself. You were right about a more mellow sound. And it is now it bit more fluent I think.” [Attached is audio file 2014 09 05 Cage passim C ver2.] SÖ to WB, twenty minutes later: “Or actually, check out this slightly improved version instead!” [Attached is audio file 2014 09 05 Cage passim C ver3.]

2014 09 06: WB to SÖ, email (continuing the preceding thread): “Dynamite! I REALLY like this! (not that that matters . . .!).” SÖ to WB: “Cool, I like this version too! Shall I send this in high res to you and Jez for download?” WB to SO: “If you’re happy with it, let’s go with it.” SÖ to WB: “I like this last version. Will send it to both of you.” SÖ to JW and WB: “Attached is the first little piece of a rather big puzzle: the C part of Cage Passim is now recorded and attached with this e-mail. Bill and I have worked a bit on versions of it the last few days over e-mail and this now seems pretty good. Of course we have only a hunch of how it might into the greater form of the piece but I believe it should be amped to sound like a Wes Montgomery or something kind of guitar solo (the attached is of course just the line signal).” [Attached is audio file 2014 09 05 Cage passim C ver3.]

Pre-session recordings: “Cage, *passim*”, part I

2014 09 06: SÖ to WB, email: “I had a go at ‘I’ today. I think it is good to record it with a steel stringed sound but it demands a small fretboard to make some chords possible. Hence I tried it on a Godin electric guitar which also outputs a kind of steel stringed ‘acoustic’ signal. I put some reverb on just to make listening a little nicer... Is this a good tempo? This music has a very particular sense of rhythm. Nice piece!” [Two subsequent emails the same day note technical errors and attach corrected files, so the ultimate attachment is file 2014 09 06 Cage passim I ver2.] WB to SO: “This is lovely! Thank you, Stefan . . . Two suggestions: I think the tempo could be quite a bit slower (though that depends somewhat on how the other parts of the movement feel)—I think of it more like Handel than Mozart—kind of a dignified ‘andante’—walking with heavy robes on, not so buoyant . . . And that might make possible a bit more precision about damping sounds when there are rests. I can’t remember now exactly what the compositional method was, but it had something to do with splices and overlays. (I can’t remember the source material either! — but then, it was thirty years ago!) Lines and phrases that have expressive potential (or expressive ‘reality’) just get chopped off—others crash into the scene. Something like that, anyway. The stops and starts should feel more arbitrary . . . even a bit irritating or unwelcome . . .” SÖ to WB: “Thanks, I’ll try it a bit slower! I wasn’t sure because it is quite intriguing with the dance rhythms...”

2014 09 06 WB to SÖ, email (continuing the preceding thread): “Just listening a bit more closely . . . The last five bars are compound meter—five groups of five sixteenths—and the little circles that follow the noteheads are Ben Johnston’s notational convention for adding a quarter of the value (as a dot adds half the value). So a quarter-note followed by a little circle is a quarter tied to a sixteenth . . . In at least one instance (3 before the end) you’ve read the circle as indicating a harmonic—a perfectly reasonable thing to do (!), but not the intention. There shouldn’t be any harmonics in this fragment except the ones in bars 3 and 4. (I have no clue why I wrote those!) The slower tempo should also help define the metric modulations more clearly—at the “dance” tempo, the three tempos feel a bit too much the same . . .” SÖ to WB: “Ah, thanks! But the pulse is the same in all three though? The modulations make you go from divisions in 3, 4 and 5 in the same pulse. Right? I’ll skip the extra harmonics in the next recording... Speaking of which, I think you actually wrote the two harmonics for technical reasons. The part writing is otherwise not technically possible. And I have added one more in bar 8 for the same reason. Will have another go at it tomorrow. I quite like the sound with this guitar. Seems good since it carries clearly and we want more steel string guitar for balance in Cage Passim as a whole. Or what do you think?” WB to SO: “Of course you’re right about the metric equivalence . . . sorry! But I still wonder if the three meters can be felt more clearly somehow . . . I think I remember that, writing it, I was hoping for a kind of lopsided feel in the last section . . . And of course you’re also right about the harmonics—I would have figured that out eventually! (As I did thirty years ago!!) But if one is necessary in bar 8, I should correct the notation. I will be sending this score off to Frog Peak for publication once we’re through with the recording—so anything you find that should be incorporated in the score (in all the movements), PLEASE let me know! Yes, I like the sound very much. Nicely austere. (btw, another thought would be to eliminate the one spot in your recording where there appears to be vibrato—bar 5, I think—keep it severe and unaesthetic . . .) PS: Just realized that I put a footnote in the score explaining the circle notation that I just wrote an email about! Boy . . . it really WAS a long time ago . . . ! PPS: And that is convincing evidence that I should MISTRUST my recollections—so I dunno about that ‘lopsided’ business . . .” SÖ to WB: “of course I should have read the footnotes properly... As for editing the score, indeed, let’s work through it at some point after the recordings (and asap after them... so that I don’t get thirty years older and start inventing my fingerings anew). Great with the sound. If so, I’ll aim at making the real recording of the piece tomorrow. Note taken about the vibrato. I’ll cut that out.. but perhaps keep the notated rhythmical proportions after all. More tomorrow!”

2014 09 07: SÖ to WB, email: “Here’s ‘I’ again in tempo 56. Speak more later.” [Attached is audio file 2015 09 07 Cage Passim I tempo 56.]

2014 09 08: WB to SÖ, email (continuing the preceding thread): “I really like this! (I especially like the moments when stopping the sound is audible—that is, I can hear the finger come down on the string.) So this is pretty much set, I think, unless you want to do more with that effect (so to speak). And now of course I remember that the source material is Cotton! Which is why, I think, I wanted a slower, less dance-like tempo . . . and the sense of (mildly) brutal interventions (silences) . . . so thanks for accommodating me!” SÖ to WB: “Great! I like this one too. When you put them side by side, the slower version has many qualities. Can have a quick think about it tomorrow morning but in principle I think this one good. I’ll have a listen to the dampening in particular...”

Pre-session recordings: “Cage, *passim*”, part F

2014 09 07: SÖ to WB, email: “Attached is an image of the score I have for F. Does it make sense? It has a couple of Cagean silences. I am thinking now that we could record it once on electric guitar when you are here and then, if we want and have time, we can record an acoustic version in York.” [Attached is image file 2014 09 07 Cage *passim* F score.]

2014 09 08: WB to SÖ, email (continuing the preceding thread): “I’m not at my house (and obviously, don’t have my pdf files), so I can’t check my instructions for section F . . . which (of course) I remember only vaguely. But this seems certainly plausible to me, and you’re an old hand with this sort of problem, so go with it. The main thing (from my perspective) is to give each block of material (each ‘letter’) a distinct character, and that seems fine thus far. Let’s do as you suggest—record it this coming weekend and then maybe do a second version at York.” SÖ to WB: “I think it may be good to have this one (and a couple of more movements) as playroom for structuring the choice of instruments and the nature of the materials in the piece as a whole. So let’s aim at two different instrumentations and see where we go in the end!” WB to SO: “That’s a VERY good idea!”

Planning, part 5

2014 09 08: JW to SÖ and WB (picking up the thread started by SÖ on 2014 09 01): “Just catching up on all this, will let you know I have any comments.” WB to JW and SO: “I’ve been meaning to write with comments on Stefan’s excellent summary email of a couple of days ago, but just to say (now) with respect to this final movement, of which this fragment is the first, well, fragment . . . If we can situate the other five movements very clearly with regard to acoustic-chronologic space (which is our objective, I hope!)—so that we have a 1930s pseudo-field recording

(‘Cotton’), a 1950s blues club (‘Crump’), and so forth . . . then this final movement (‘Cage, passim’) should really mix things up, especially with respect to the perceived chronology. It really wants to be a collage–assemblage–of very distinct materials. Some of these, though, can evoke all or part of the earlier movements–so, for instance, the fragment P, Q, R should be as consistent as possible with the movement ‘Cage.’ My point is that Wes Montgomery is a perfectly plausible sound image for fragment C, and that would suggest a 1940s/50s studio or club for sound quality. But Django Reinhardt would also be a plausible sound image, which would suggest a 78 from the 1920s. We won’t know what we need–to maximize diversity–until we have all of ‘Cage, passim’ and can think through the alternatives. So don’t spend much time playing around at this point–unless you just can’t wait!”

Pre-session recordings: “Cotten”

2014 09 08: SÖ to WB, email: “I may also have another track for you to listen to tomorrow. I made a test with Cotton today on a Line 6 Variax guitar, modelling a steel string. I had meant to use the 12-string it models but the 6-str sounded better. I thought I’d try this for several reasons, one being the barre chords that are hard to make work on a western guitar... Good to have the convenient size of an electric guitar there. Or a classical guitar but that is all the wrong sound. I need to work on it a little in the morning tomorrow because I was held up by other things but I have it set up and will send a version (with clicktrack) tomorrow. If this one turns out to be good we might record just the foot!! More tomorrow, and looking forward to pulling the whole recording together. This is some piece of guitar music!”

2014 09 09: SÖ to WB, email (continuing the preceding thread): “Attached is a recording of Cotton, bounced with clicktrack, so that the foot part could easily be added. Obviously, we can easily create more rubato in the pauses and foot tapping whenever needed. Still seemed good to do the picking part in tempo with some occasional uncertain rubato... This is an experiment with a Line 6 Variax guitar that models a Western guitar. My hunch is that this could work pretty well when produced to sound like a historical recording. What’s your gut feeling?” [Three subsequent emails the same day note technical errors and attach corrected files, so the ultimate attachment is audio file 2014 09 09 Cotton Variax ver4.] SÖ to JW: “Haven’t had time to discuss this with Bill yet but I thought I’d drop you a soundfile of a recording I just made of ‘Cotton’. This is a Line 6 Variax, modelling a 6-str western guitar. There are some advantages in playing the piece on a smaller fretboard so I wanted to give this a try. Wonder if with some EQ and then postproduction to sound like a 1920s field recording it could work?” WB to SO:

“Wow, this is quite amazing! Brilliant playing . . . so good, in fact, that it gives me pause . . . in the sense that the virtuosity and dexterity somewhat works against the ‘historically informed’ ‘amateur’ field-recording quality that we’re after. I wonder if I set the tempo too high? How would you feel about dropping it back to somewhere around 120? So that you can play a bit more heavy-handedly—with, for instance, the bass notes? I do want it to be enthusiastic and engaging . . . maybe I was too ‘clever’ with the writing . . . don’t want it to be ‘cute’ (not too much, anyway!) and do want it to be a little baffling, like a series of wrong turns in a middle eastern city, where mostly things don’t go where they seems to be going . . . but every now and then you get to a familiar landmark . . . Try it at a slower tempo and see how it feels . . . (the two previous performers never got it up to the notated speed, for sure, so I’ve not ‘heard’ what I wrote until NOW!) As for the sound . . . this might work, but I did always imagine a bigger, heavier sound (Lead Belly, Doc Watson, that sort of thing). Of course, most of those guys were flat-picking, and Elizabeth Cotten herself is more soft and subtle . . . Gosh, this really IS an exercise in historical re-creation . . . as in: what WAS I thinking???!” SÖ to WB: “Hey, the historical exercise is exciting! At first I meant to ask about the tempo but then just decided to have a go at it... Since my own Variax is broken I borrowed this instrument from a friend. Can do so again, but perhaps good to let Jez have a go at this one for a start just to see where we get with historical post production machinery? I’ll be travelling the next few days so no more recordings before we meet. Can think of tempo for Cotton in the weekend. Looking forward to further enquiries!” WB to SO: “All good. I’ll have a think, too . . . and try to review the other movements as well . . .”

Pre-session session in Malmö

2014 09 11: SÖ to WB, email: “I’m sorry to say that I have caused a slight earthquake in the working process on footnotes: when boarding a flight on Kastrup I was on the phone and a bit distracted (poor excuse, I know). I realized only when about to disembark that I had left the plastic bag with the full score for footnotes by the gate. I have made every possible attempt to secure its current status but still without success. Lost property in the airport goes either to the airport’s lost and found service OR to the Copenhagen police. There is no trace of my orange bag at lost and found. The police are not very cooperative. They notify you by e-mail within three weeks and refuse to give any information over the phone. I have indeed tried to argue with them but without success. So, my question is very simple. Is it possible for you to bring a new full copy of the score along on Saturday? I will take me an hour or so to mark some of the movements again but apart from Cage Passim C (which is already recorded) I don’t think we will suffer

any severe loss from the absent original notes that I have pencilled in. Sorry about this but I hope it can be sorted, AND that I will eventually retrieve the originals. There are some useful materials there for future work (performances and writing).” WB to SÖ: “It’s SOOOO easy to do that . . . I’m always terrified in airports, with all the setting-down-picking-up of stuff . . . I’ve been rescued a few times, but in a similar situation once (no phone, though—just distraction!) I lost a plastic bag with a full set of partly corrected proofs . . . Anyway, I’ll try to get to this today, but it may not be possible. But I will have along a full set of (paper) masters, full-size (A3), so can we make a copy in Malmö, if I don’t get to it here?” SÖ to WB: “we can surely find a copy machine on the Swedish end... Looking forward to seeing you AND the score again on Saturday”. WB to SÖ: “This might (or might not) be a better solution. Attached is a fresh scan of all the piece. It’s ‘raw’—the images need to be cropped, and so forth, and maybe I can get to that on the plane. But you can print from the scans, and that will mean (a little!) less paper for me to bring over . . . okay?”

2014 09 13 through 14: WB is with SÖ in Malmö; they rehearse on the 13th, after something of a struggle to print the score, and they record and create “Cage, *passim*,” units E and F on the 14th, processing the files using LogicPro.

2014 09 14: WB emails NL to ask her to find a “plain-vanilla, nylon-strung classical guitar? It doesn’t have to be a wholly brilliant instrument – just serviceable.” This will be used as the second instrument for “*ibid*”; WB writes by way of reassurance that “ it will be retuned slightly and used to play harmonics only—that’s it! Then we’ll tune it back up and we’re done.” NL finds an excellent instrument that York UG Jack McNeil owns and is willing to loan.

Post-production experiments

2014 09 14: JW to SÖ and WB, email (picking up on SÖ’s email with attachment on 2014 09 06): “I’m downloading [Cage *passim* C] and will try a few things on it.”

2014 09 15: JW to WB and SÖ (continuing the preceding thread): “Here, as a very quick experiment just to see if I’m thinking in the right area, is an ‘analogue tape recording of Wes Montgomery in small a club’ attempt. I’ve used materials that are to hand and I’d expect to be more choosy about everything: the noise (need to add some 60 Hz mains hum), the amp sound (doesn’t yet seem quite warm enough, although I’m listening on quite bright speakers), the audience noise (a bit too polite, and I’m not even sure you want applause), the tape distortion (a bit too harsh) etc. etc. It’s in stereo (which I think is OK for fifties and spatial presentation will be one very clear way of making the jump from 30s to 50s). All comments welcome!” [By YouSendIt JW sends audio file 2014 09 15 Cage *Passim* C experiment.]

2014 09 16: WB to JW and SO: “Stefan’s in the next room (we’re both in Belgium now), but I’ll write so we’re all in the conversation . . . This is fabulous!—I love it! And the applause is good, I think. Stefan has suggested that this might be the first segment in the ‘Cage, passim’ movement—which might work wonderfully, though we have to look at the whole structure before we can be sure. If that’s where it came, we’d probably want to extend the audience run-up to the guitar sounds, just to establish the ‘location’ more completely (we might want that anyway, depending on what the context is). And I wonder if the applause should be audibly faded out, as it might have been on a commercially released ‘live at . . .’ LP. But this is all tweaking, and the sort of thing that really can’t be decided until the whole sequence of segments is in place. I especially like the overall sound. I think the tape distortion is probably just about right—we have to remember that the contrast between formats and ‘sounds’ is part of the concept, and consequently some features might need to be slightly exaggerated. So you’re probably right about the amp sound being warmer—also, perhaps, a bit more distant, since my memory of those LPs is that the mics were really “in” the audience rather than on stage. But again, this is all tweaking—and I’m not using speakers or even decent headphones to listen, so my comments are more conceptual than experiential (if you get my drift). A note to us all: we must take care not to throw anything away! Let’s track the whole process as thoroughly as we can, since Stefan and I are both quite excited about some kind of publication to follow, above and beyond the recording itself. Jez, we’d want that article or chapter to be co-authored by the three of us, so bear that in mind as you document your own part in the process. Thanks, Jez! This is already an exciting week, and we’re barely started!” SÖ to JW and WB: “Hello all and thanks Bill for this summary of our conversation at breakfast... May I add that one thing I really like about this first test is that it opens up for designing the whole of Footnotes as a sound art piece. So perhaps one really could have a rather long stretch of audience before the guitar enters, and, as a way to start brainstorming on other settings and materials, what if we’d find some snippets of Cage speaking, for instance in studio settings. He could be passing by some of the tracks produced to sound like they’re in a 1960s radio studio... But he could also be out of doors, for instance passing by the field recordings... but then in a later one, let’s see what may happen with ‘Crump’ in that respect. It is a tricky one since the piece is sonically very delicate. We want to capture all the detail of the guitar sonorities while still locating the audio quality quite early in the recording history. Speaking of which: did you get the bounce of guitar without clicktrack for Cotton? Could be interesting to see how it might sound if produced as a field recording as we discussed before. It may very well be that we do not use this version but it would be good to have a look at it to see how it might work. Bill and I discussed some ideas for how to make that piece work and we now believe we have a better understanding of it... the concerns have to do

with tempo and we think it should start slower and irregularly and eventually work its way up to full speed when the ragtime quote really gets going.” JW to SÖ and WB: “Yes, I’ll certainly make sure I make a note of everything we do and try. Some things might require some bespoke signal processing routines to be written which we could approximate during this week but I might need a little more time afterwards to hone—but these are the challenges that will make the project so interesting. I completely agree that we may need to exaggerate things to make the intention and effect clear. One approach might be to do the exaggeration at the start and ends and then reduce them a little in between those points. [About Cotton,] No, I haven’t got that yet.”

Recording in York

2014 09 18 through 20: WB, SÖ, and JW record all the movements of *Footnotes* except for some sections of “Cage, *passim*” that SÖ has recorded or will record in his studio in Sweden. Various emails are exchanged among the three, NL, and CL about practical matters such as schedules and meals.