

# marker



## Noise annoys, music can be amusing and silence is a rhythm too

"Marker" is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate. Feedback from you will be really welcome, whether as a noise artist, participant, violinist, trainer, observer, tabla player, scratcher, nose scratcher or something completely different.

*[Instead of reading this article, you could decide to just sit still for four minutes and thirty three seconds].*

**What do you call the space where training takes place? Your choices could include:**

- | the conference centre
- | the plenary
- | the working room
- | a room called Arvo Pärt, Ludwig van B, Don Van Vliet,
- | Debussy or some other classical composer
- | the BIG room
- | the subterranean concrete bunker
- | molim jedno pivo
- | the forest
- | the mind
- | our super creative circle

Wherever it is and whatever it is called: what do your ears tell you when you open the door? how does it sound inside? what are the sounds that can be heard inside that space? do you bother about it?

"That is my goal: time and timelessness are connected. This instant and eternity are struggling within us. And this is the cause of all our contradictions...."  
**- Arvo Pärt**

August 29 1952, the place is a concert hall in Woodstock (yes, that one near New York), the occasion a benefit concert for an artists welfare fund. A young pianist called David Tudor places the handwritten score by composer

John Cage and a stopwatch on the piano and sits down. He marks the beginning of the world premiere by lowering the keyboard lid and then sits motionless until 30 seconds have passed and then raises the keyboard lid and turns the page of the score. He repeats the process for 2' 23" and for 1'40", making a total of 4'33". At the end of the performance the audience are in uproar; one of them stands up and says "Good people of Woodstock, let's run these people out of town". For those who had bothered to listen, the wind in the trees could be heard in the first movement, the rain on the roof in the second. Some people felt that Cage had been trying to create silence, meaning "an absence of noise". No. But he did want to give people an opportunity to open themselves up to the sounds around them and to rethink maybe their ideas about "what is music". It is important to stress that every "note" of the piece had been composed by Cage.

Perplexingly, over the last period, I keep coming back to the notion of "silence". What is it? Does it exist and could it help us in our training?

Perhaps one of the most often cited theorists on silence, Bernard Dauenhauer posits silence as a complex, positive phenomenon that is not simply the absence of something else. Joddy Murray sums this up seeing Dauenhauer build a well-developed account of both the phenomenon of silence and its ontological significance by assuming that silence is always connected with discourse. **The ontological issue is not whether silence makes sense, but just what sense does it make.**



Maybe its possible to see here a kind of plea for meditation breaks in training courses. No; not really. But maybe it could help, in our packed course programmes to just stop for a little while and not make any intentional noises; and just think about what we are trying to achieve....

*[You might want to allow yourself a little pause here].*

Always, if I am working alone, and nearly always when I am working as part of a team there is this at the top of the list of technical requirements for a course: CD/cassette player (or "ghetto blaster"). Oh, this is so useful! And I am still surprised by some people asking me "what do you want that for? you're supposed to be doing a serious job of work here, not organising a disco..." It is nothing revolutionary. But it can help so much in changing an atmosphere, in switching a mood, massage reflections, brighten up the day, positively annoy some people, or quite simply give them something to listen to....

- | How about these as a kind of top twelve?
- | Gorillaz: "Clint Eastwood"
- | Caesaria Evora: "Miss Perfumado"
- | Pascale Comelade: "Trafic d'abstractions"
- | Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band: "Big eyed beans from Venus"
- | Vlado Kreslin: "Marko Skace"
- | Agnes Buen Garnås & Jan Gabarek: "Twelve Moons"
- | Brigitte Bardot: "Harley Davidson"
- | T-Rex: "Get it on"
- | The Offspring: "Pretty Fly"
- | Miles Davies: "Tutu"
- | Tom Waits: just about anything
- | The Fall: "Bill is dead" or "Repetition"
- | A participant: their favourite right now!

What are these pieces? They are the absence of a dead feeling in your training space.

**You got any good ones to share with others?**

### Connecting references

**Laurie Anderson (1981):**

O Superman, Warner Bros Records 7-inch single

**Clive Bell (July 2002):**

"Akio Suzuki's Odds and Ends" in The Wire – Adventures in Modern Music, Issue 221

**Deutsch-amerikanische Freundschaft (1980):**

Kebab Träume + Gewalt, Mute 5, Mute Records 7-inch single

**Joddy Murray (2001):**

Silence in Discourse Studies: A Bibliography  
<http://morrismurray.net/silence.htm>

**Larry J Solomon, (1998):**

The Sounds of Silence, John Cage and 4'33"  
<http://www.azstarnet.com/~solo/4min33se.htm>

**David Toop (2000):**

Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound, Hayward Gallery.

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