Palimpsests and Hidden Agendas: New Sounds from Old

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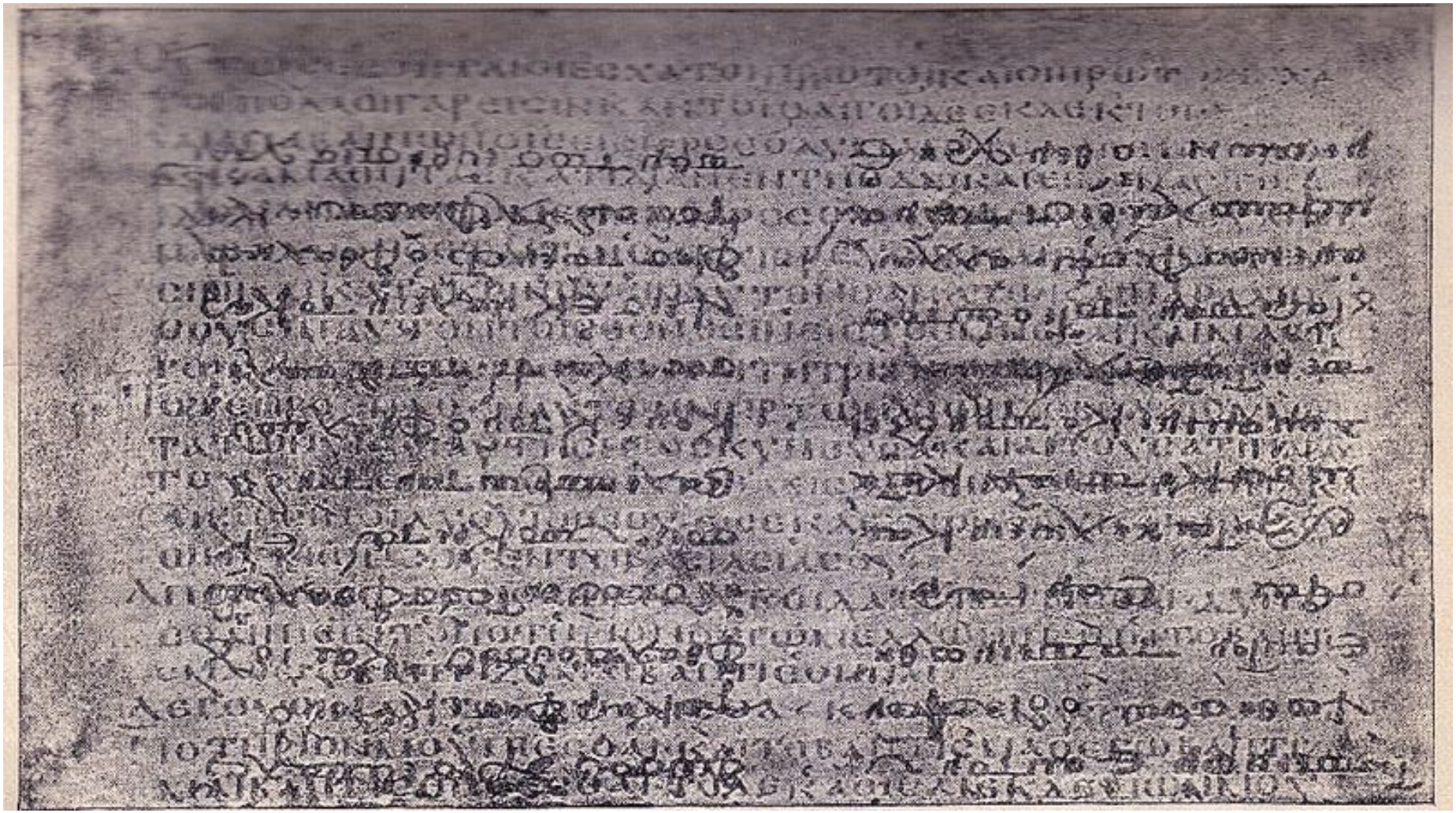
What Are Palimpsests?

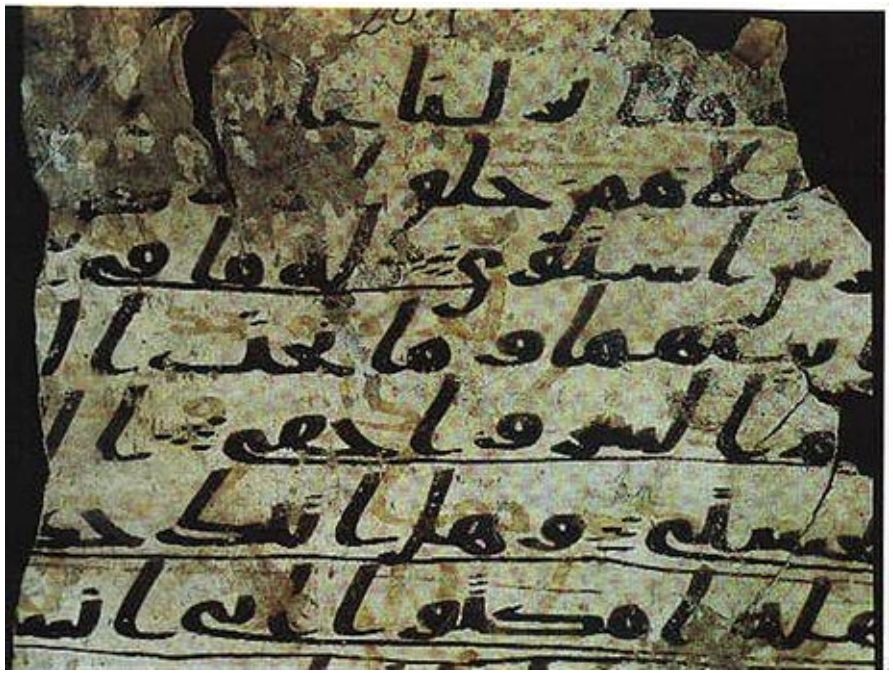
[Original meaning, Merriam-Webster definition]:

1. A manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing.

2. Something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form.



Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (Bibliotheque nationale de France)



Sana'a Qur'an parchments

What Are Palimpsests? - continued

Term has also been used in Academia to mean a bunch of different things:
Freud, Derrida, Postcolonial studies.

Me:
New images (or sounds) based on previous images (or sounds), especially when the source is hidden or partially erased

“Palimpsests make explicit the the process whereby the art of the past is remade as the art of the present”

For What Purpose?

1. Imitation
2. “Homage”
3. Source has form from which other forms can be made
4. “Subliminal” relationship
5. The new can be an accompaniment to the old
6. Conceptual relationship with the source

Sound Palimpsests

1. Similar to FX processing
2. Sound design tool
3. To start “putting some notes on paper.”

Example 1 - Randomized Oscillators

4-voice VocOsc instrument:

- pitch = random partials from fft analysis
- !BPM control for random partial indexes, w/ range and offset
- individual 8ve, volume, pan, and timbre controls

Ex. 2 - Pre-Analyzed vs. Live

24 partials tracked for amp and pitch

2 methods:

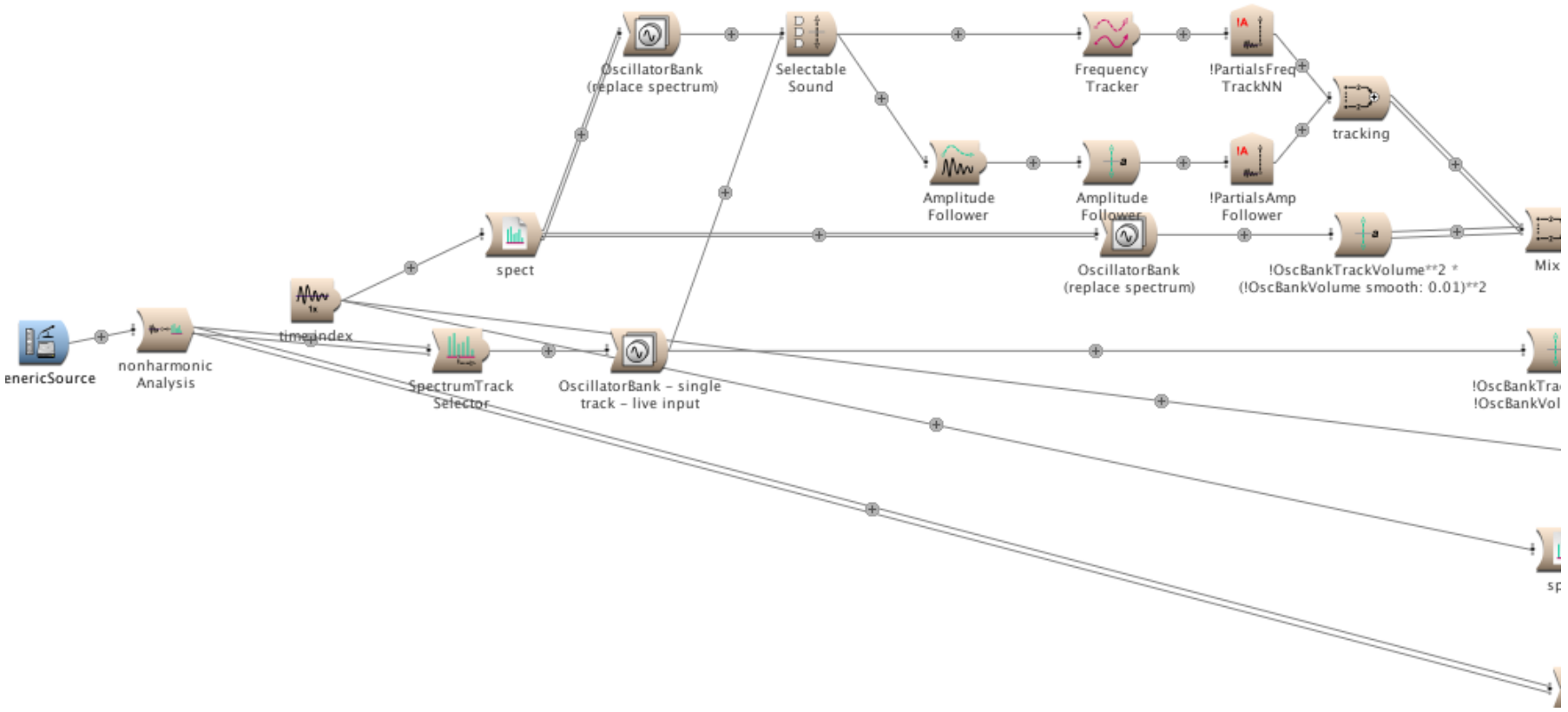
1. Pre-analyzed .spc file played via SpectrumInRAMLog

2. Live input w/ LiveSpectralAnalysis (SpectrumTrackSelector required)

3. Either then goes into an OscBank with one track, followed by tracking objects

Spectrum is played w/ 1 partial with tracking, replicated 24 times

Ex. 2 - Pre-Analyzed vs. Live Screenshot



Global Amps and Pitches used in 24-osc instrument w/ one oscillator per partial

Ex. 3 - 8 loudest / softest partials

Uses live input tracking

VocOsc instrument now:

- has 8 oscillators
- Selects either 8 loudest (most prominent) partials from every 3, or the 8 softest (least prominent / most nonharmonic)
- plays back both with the amplitudes of the 8 loudest partials
- can smooth the NN and amplitude changes globally for all 8 oscillators.

Ex. 4 -Sample playback, w/ groups + FX

Uses samples instead of oscillators

Has 3 settings for the amp tracking:

0 = higher freq bands more sluggish than the low

1 = normal

2 = lower freq bands more sluggish than the high

Each voice can be assigned to 1 of 3 groups, w/ individual:

- submix volume
- solo
- mute
- pre- or post-fader sends to FX

Ex. 5 - Multisample playback, w/ groups

Multisamples instead of samples

Can control sample volumes per instrument

Removed FX

Ex. 6 Modulated Partials

24 oscillators assignable to any of 32 partials

Partial indexes can be modulated via:

0. !AmpFollower (on whole file)
1. !PenX
2. !PenY
3. !PenTiltX
4. !PenTiltY
5. !PenZ

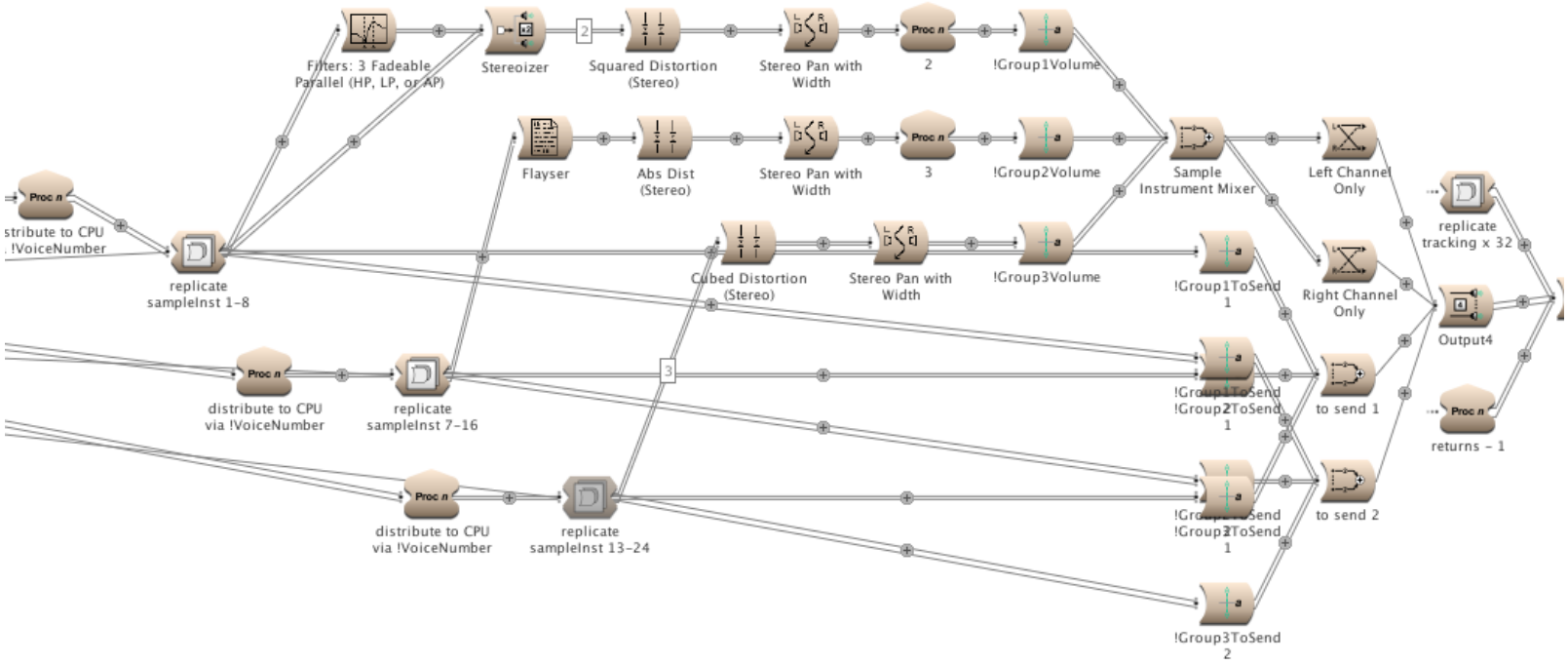
Modulations are scalable and invertible.

Individual oscillator pan and volume are similarly modulatable

Groups hardwired to:

group 1 = osc 1-8
group 2 = osc 9-16
group 3 = osc 17-24

Ex. 6 Modulated Partials Screenshot



Groups into FX: distortion + filter or flayser (flanging/phasor)

Groups' submix volumes can also be modulated by amplitude

Pitch Processing in Osc freq field: range limiting and tuning

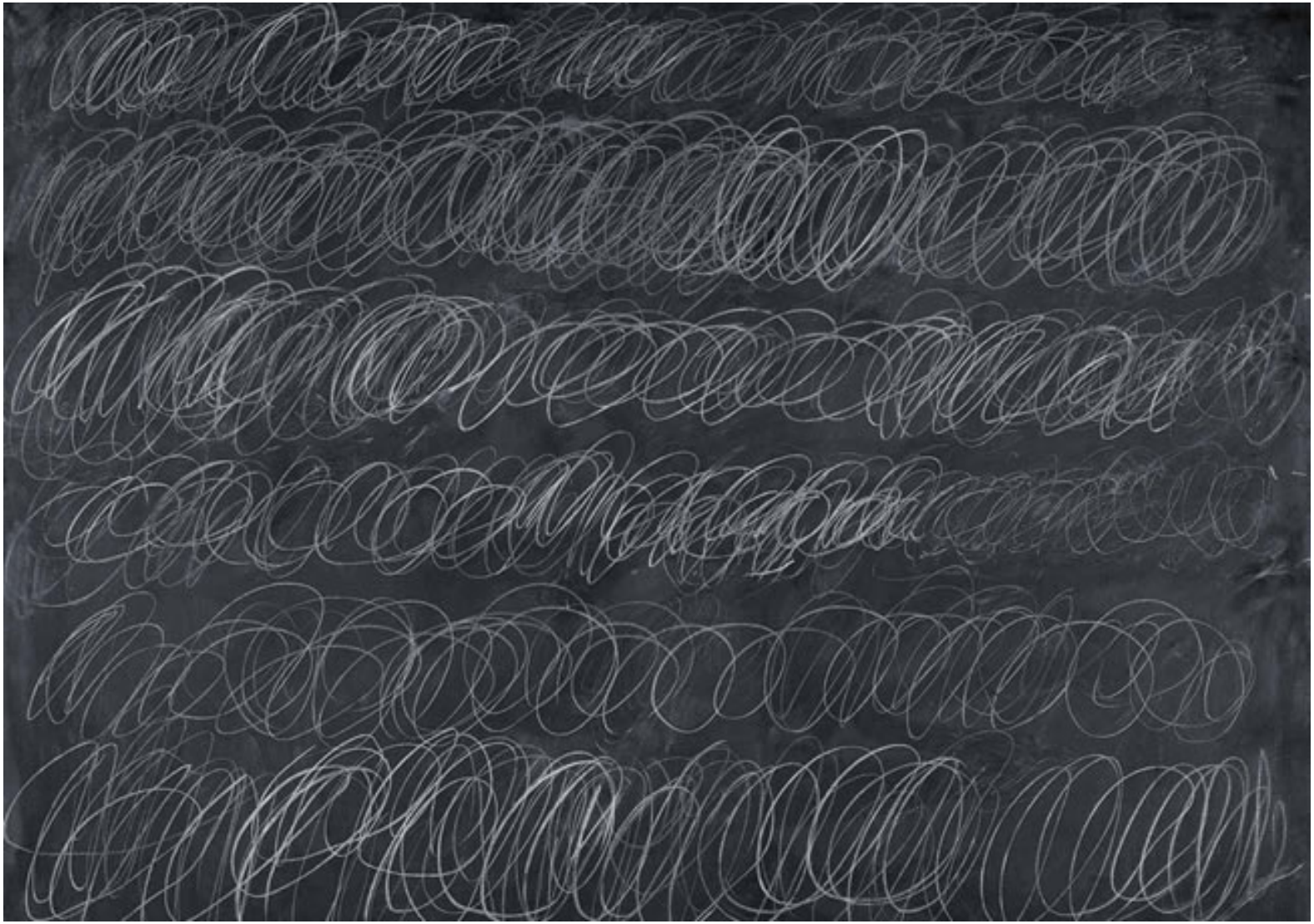
Performance: Altered States of Consciousness

hallucinations
out-of-body experiences
channeling
demonic possession
hypnosis
meditation
dreaming
Near-death experiences
sleepwalking
religious ecstasy

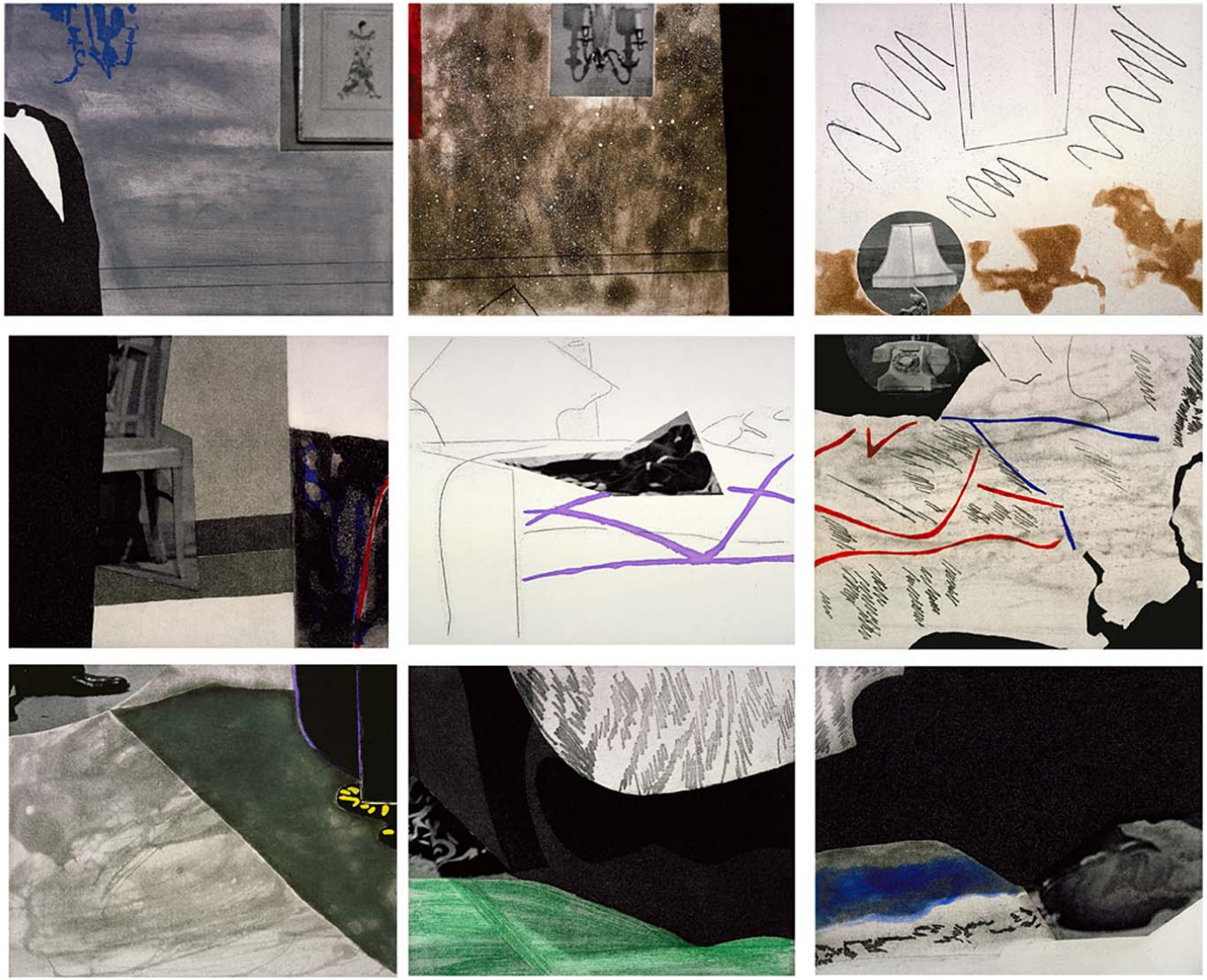
If the conscious mind is a palimpsest of the unconscious mind,
perhaps music is a palimpsest of an altered state of consciousness?

Appendix: Palimpsests in Recent Art

Cy Twombly, *The Castle*, 1958



Cy Twombly, *Cold Stream*, 1966



John Baldessari, *Black Dice*, 1982

"Property of National Screen Service Corp. Licensed for display only in connection with the exhibition of this picture at your theatre. Must be returned immediately thereafter."

BLACK DICE formerly No Orchids For Miss Blandish starring Jack La Rue, Linden Travers and Hugh McDermott.

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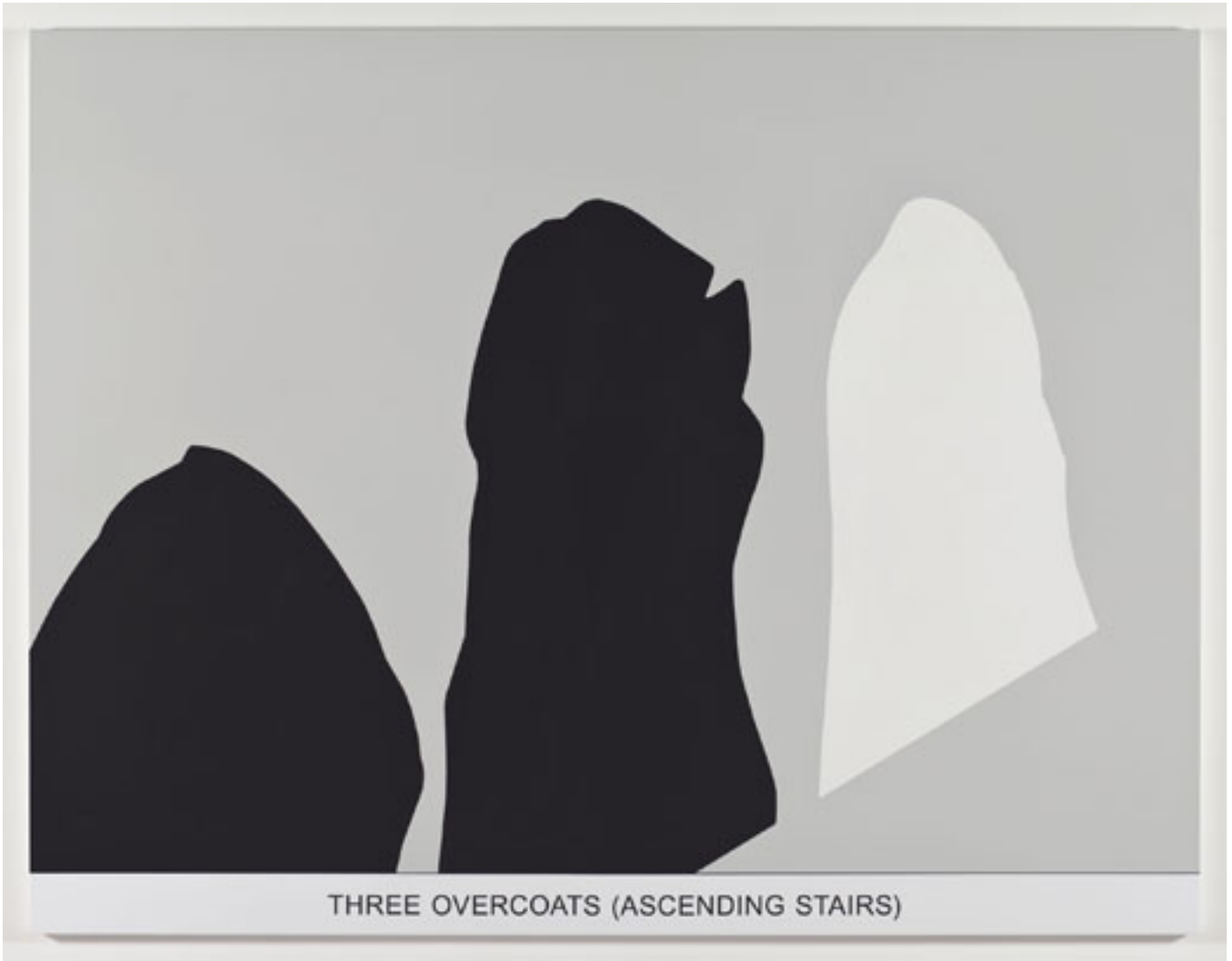
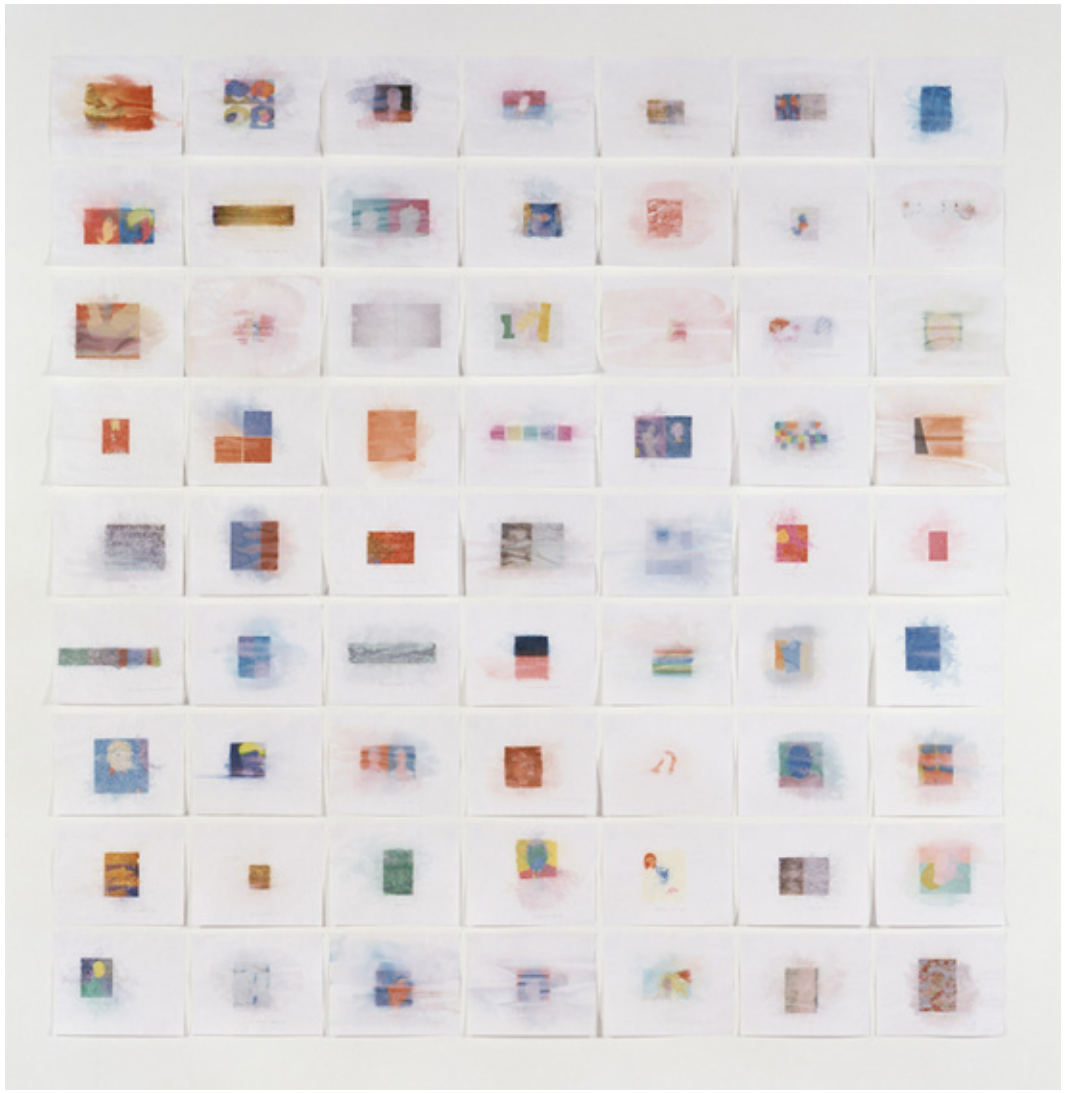
John Baldessari, *Black Dice* lobby card



John Baldessari, *Sediment: Three Overcoats (Ascending Stairs)*, 2010

John Baldessari, *Sediment: Throat, Nose and Spider*, 2010

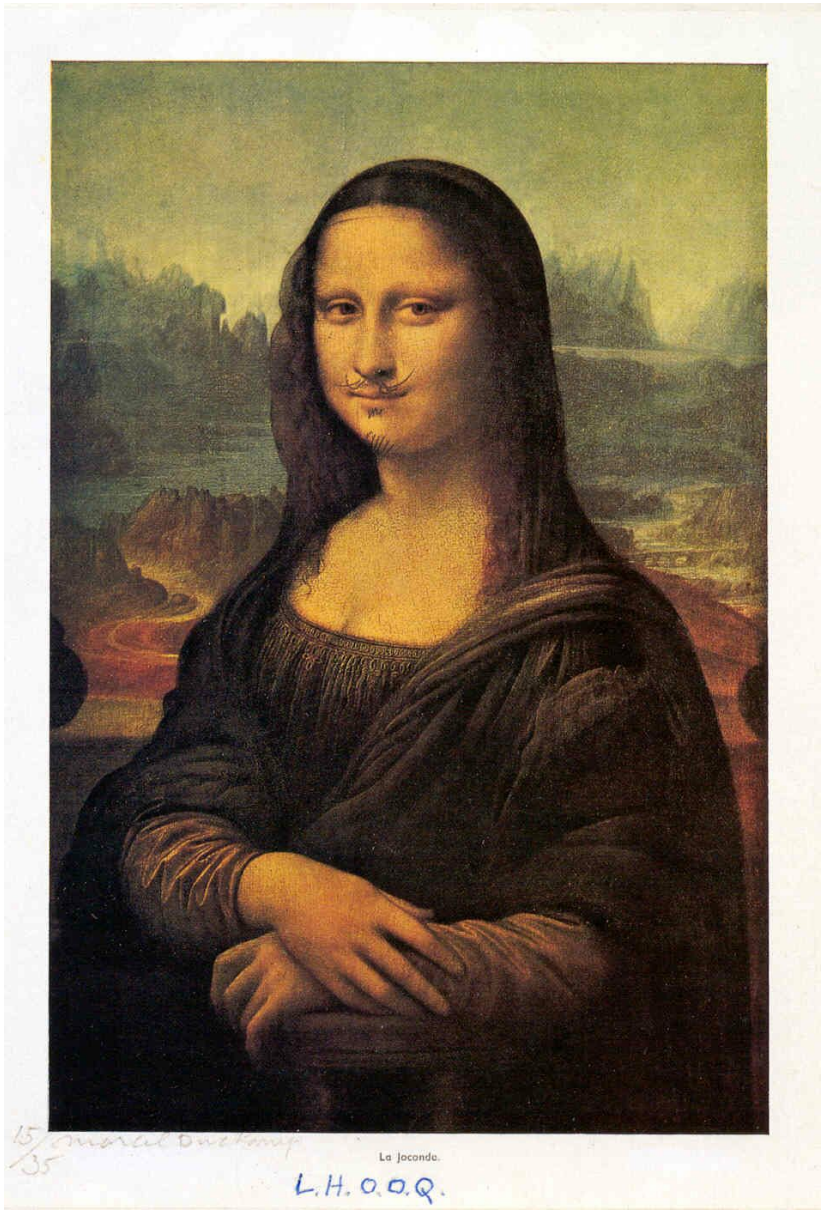


Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled (The Warhol Series)*, 2006

MARILYN x 100, 1962

ELVIS I and II, 1969

Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased De Kooning Drawing*, 1953



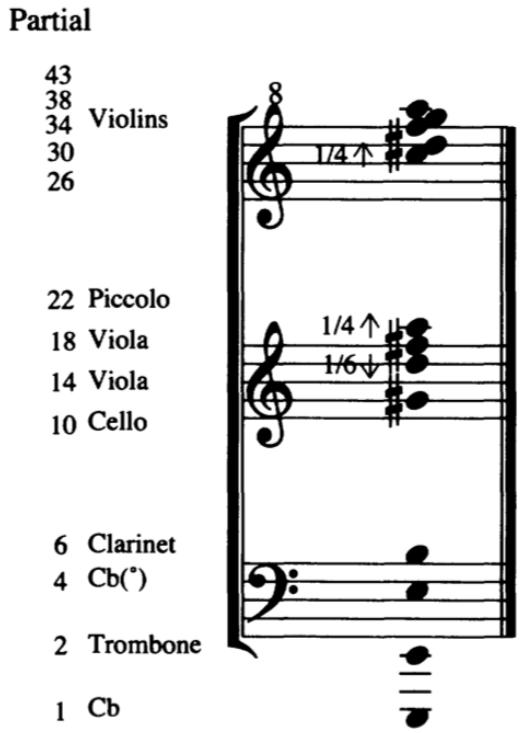
Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q*, 1919

John Cage, *Cheap Imitation* (1969)

John Cage, *Apartment House 1776* (1976)

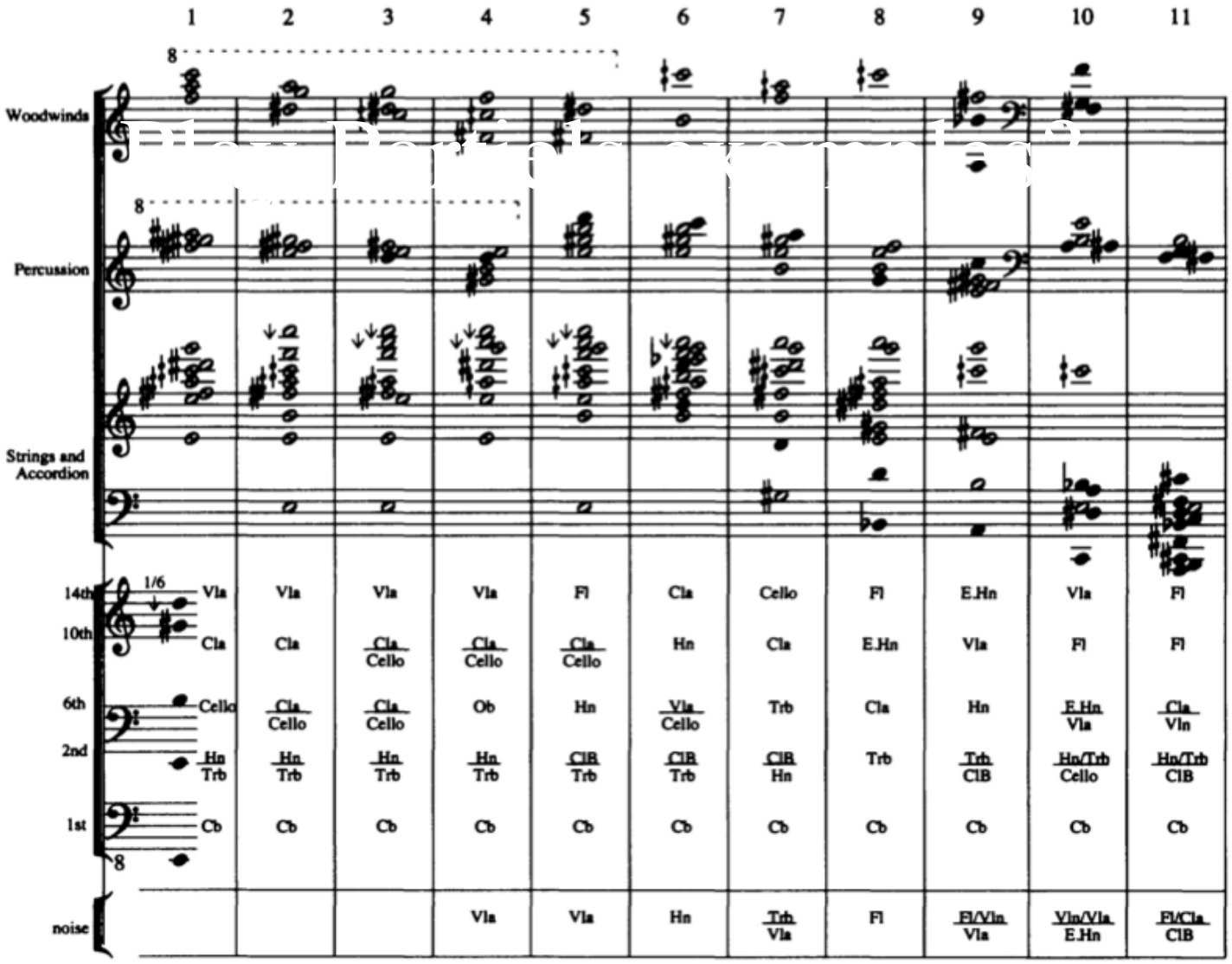
Alvin Lucier, *I Am Sitting In a Room*

Spectral Music - Gerard Grisey *Partiels* (1975)



EXAMPLE 2: THE FIRST HARMONIC STRUCTURE OF *PARTIELS*

Orchestration of sonogram analysis of a pedal low E1 (41.2 Hz) on the trombone.



EXAMPLE 3: PROGRESSION FROM HARMONICITY TO INHARMONICITY IN *PARTIELS*

Thanks to…

Guitar PreAmp by Yasuski

Flayser by Rob Rayle

CristiansCamArpeggiate by Cristian Vogel