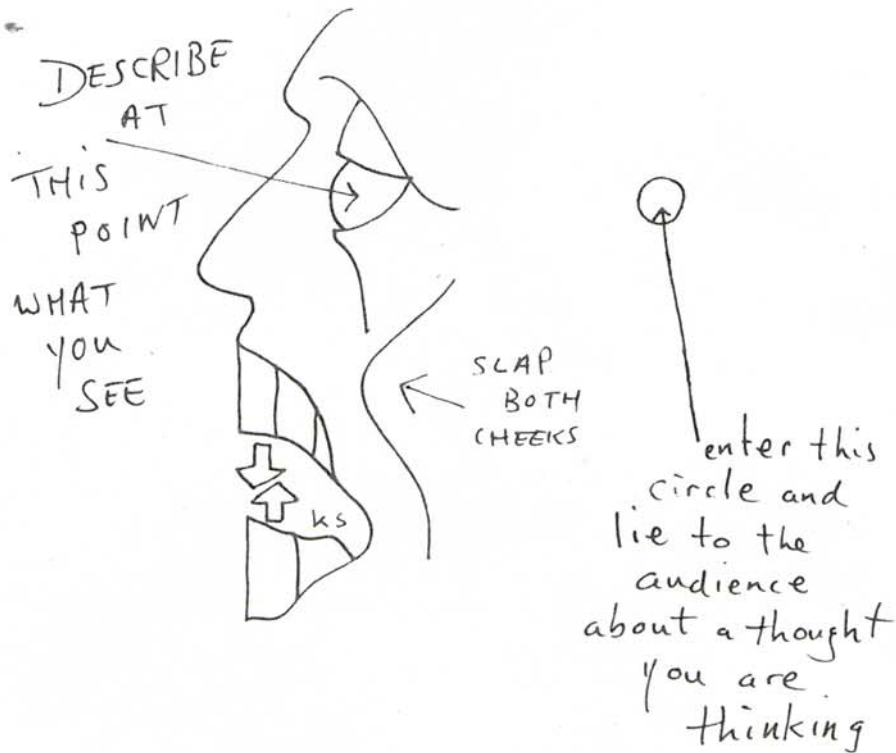


THE PROSE TATTOO

Selected Performance Scores



THE FOUR HORSEMEN

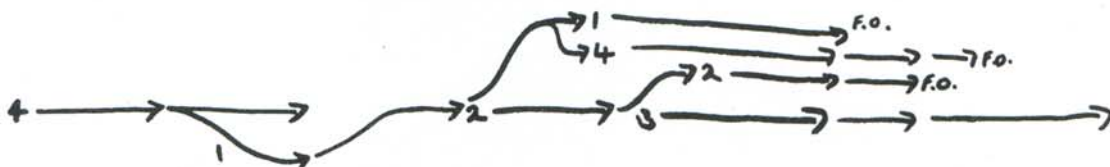
Rafael Barreto-Rivera • Paul Dutton

Steve McCaffery • bpNichol

INTRODUCTION

One of the first problems confronting the group when we formed, after having gone thru the orgasmic preliminaries of screaming our guts out in free-form improvisation, was an issue of notation (& hence structure). We wanted to find a way to write down certain more complex pieces we had ideas for where, tho elements are improvised, other elements were fixed. In acoustic sound poetry there is no fixed tradition of notation. Vive la liberté but vive la certain limitations. We were moving into the whole area out of poetry, not out of music or theater, tho some of us had experience in these forms, and we wanted "readable" texts as an element in performance. Not exclusively but we wanted them there.

Hence the birth of the grid. We no longer remember who came up with it. Like many things in the group it probably began with one person but has been worked with & adapted so that it now belongs to the group. Going thru the earliest texts (ones we performed at our first public reading) the idea is there in everybody's handwriting. "Coffee Break," "Poem No. 1," "Seasons," & the not included "A Motive for Metaphore," different graphings by different hands, all use the grid. The early graphing of "Seasons"



shows some of the problems we were up against. It looks more like a flow chart & was very hard to follow. But does that mean that "Seasons" was first? Probably not. But I think that's the version of the story I like best, because "Seasons" was the first *group* composition. Everybody wrote for it & the recorded version of the piece remains one of the most interesting pieces we've done. And it makes sense, this origin story, because the complexity of the piece means we would have had to come up with a workable notation system to even compose it. So let's say that's the "official" version & go on from there.

The grid has not been our sole method of notation. Like most acoustic sound poets we have used Raoul Hausmann's notion of optophoneticism—sound reading/interpretation of spatially organized text. Hence compositions like "Sixteen Part Suite" & "The Room (A Valentine) Winter's Day." But does this make the scores "visual poems"? In the strict sense no. They are meant to be read aloud &, indeed, in some cases we have deliberately worked against the "pictorial" sense of page in order to foreground the texts' compositional basis as fixed element in an interactive dialogue with the speakers. We have often taken optophonetic mini-texts & used the grid as a way of organizing them as in "The Dreams Remain." And, of course, we have used variations on the basic grid in order to achieve different effects, remembering always that both "page" & "grid" are simply conventions.

This raises another point. The movement from page to page, & the movement from rectangle to rectangle in the grid, are used to the same ends — to notate transition points. The grid does not, indeed cannot, dictate pitch, rhythm, duration or any coloration the performer may put on the text. What it does do is define who's doing what when, with whom, & what elements they have to work with. Thus a combination of optophonetic or grid notation systems, old-fashioned memory work, & extensive improvisation (in terms of both abstract sound & dialogue) have been the basic elements in all our performances. This in itself tells you what is missing from this selection, i.e. many of what we think of as our major pieces — "Mischievous Eve," "Stage Lost," "In The Middle Of A Blue Balloon," "Theme," "Tetralogue," "Mixed Metaphors," & "Paul Dutton's Dream." They are not included for the simple reason that they are not notated. Their notation exists only in our minds & in isolated text elements. And this highlights the compositional reality of the group, which is that the *four* of us have composed the major pieces. These are the real flowering of our twelve year project in collaboration. The texts offered in this collection (with the exception of "Seasons" & "Schedule For Another Piece") are the ground, individually or collectively offered, from which the major work grew. Obviously then they are central to our work but they are not the center. The center is an ongoing compositional workshop in which the four of us take anywhere from days to years to compose as a group and to which we bring fragmentary lines, half-formed ideas, dreams, works in progress, et cetera et cetera, and out of which, thru a kind of bricolage, the compositions take shape. For example "In the Middle Of A Blue Balloon" began as a solo piece by Rafael, grew into an expanded exploration of psychosis performed by the group, was then recorded & the recording has now been worked in as an element in the most recent version with Rafael, its originator, standing silently (almost invisibly) in the background as bp & Paul fight in the foreground & Steve appears to be attempting to watch the original piece on a television whose back is toward

the audience. The solo version of "Blue Balloon" shows up again as an element in "Final Repetitions" (included in this collection under its earlier title, "Strongarm For Louis"). These short descriptions do not do the performed pieces justice but give you some idea of what can happen to a single text.

I repeat that the group compositions are the major compositions. Obviously they are formed by four individual voices but it is that moment of group identity that we have striven for. In an historical sense then this collection runs the risk of falsifying our history, but then print is an inadequate medium for our ultimate goal. Even phonograph recordings and tapes run this risk, as they remove the living performers from the audience's presence, and freeze what should be an ongoing process. This is part of why we insist that the texts are simply scores, simply the tracking of an oral intention, not, in their intention or most basic form, visual poems. The individual group members as improvisors are what bring the pieces alive, much more so than any "composer" we could identify. Composer is an inadequate term for sound poetry. What you do is set up an intentional framework, a scheme of opportunities. And that is why tho we have listed the authors of particular pieces in the index, this list should not be taken as measure of any one person's contribution to the group. No one is more or less important. We have been and remain four idiosyncratic presences and only the *four* of us make up the Four Horsemen. Our strength as individual writers can be measured by our individual writing, but our strength as a group is only measurable by what has happened when we have effectively joined our intentions compositionally, &, ultimately, in the final stage of composition – in performance.

If these scores, then, are simply scores for the use of a single performance group, why publish them? Three of the pieces, "Seasons," "Schedule For Another Piece," & "Headspace" are texts which we have developed into performance pieces. Although the performance pieces only exist in performance, the texts remain interesting & readable. A great deal of contemporary concrete poetry has been created primarily for the eye, but readers have found ways to vocalize it, converting into sound what was originally intended as image. Many of our grids & optophonetic scores can be read as secondary visual poems, visual poems that are by-products of group performance, much in the same way that many visual poems, originally intended for the eye, have generated secondary oral readings. Much of the reader's experience with visual poetry can be brought to these scores; in addition, the reading of scores as visual poems can extend the reader's sense of the possibilities of visual poetry in general: imaged sound can fertilize visual poetry in much the same way as visual conventions have stimulated recent performance art. We will be pleased if we have opened doors to further developments in visual poetry thru our performance work. Readers primarily interested or involved in performance art may find many uses for this book: we hope that they include many we have not thought of ourselves. As I said above, our aim has been to set up a scheme of possibilities. Of course, any performance artists wishing to use these scores in their own work must obtain permission from the Four Horsemen. Inquiries should be sent to bpNichol at 98 Admiral Rd./Toronto, Ontario/Canada M54 2L6, or to the Horsemen via the publisher.

–bpNichol
Toronto
January 1982,
January 1983.

Particular Music

indicates a clear pause



Steve				pom	ppomm
Pavl	teetleet		teetleet		tee tee
✓ Rafael	teetee		teetee		teetleete
bp				ppomm	pom

S				pom pom	
P		teetee		ppomm	teetleete
R	pom			pom pom	lololololololo
B	teetee		pom	ppomm pom	

S	leeeeeeeeeeeeeee		tee tee		
P	pom			pity pom	
R		tee	pity pom		tee tee
B	loooooo				

S	pity pom			tee tee	
P			tee tee		
R		tee tee		ta tee	
B	beddeduuduuduudu				pom

S	pipip		pip		pom
P		pom			pitip
R		pom		pom	pitip
B				pom	pom

S			pitip	pitipom pom	piti pom pom	pit
P	tlick tlick	tlick tlick				tip
R			pitip			tip
B						pit

staccato - 1 ~~moderato~~ - 2
moderato

Rafael	ftzndll	g	krtnng
Paul	eeeeee	eeeeee	eeeeee
Stacc	h	f1stnt staccato	eeeeee
bp#	eeeeee	eeeeee	b

moderato - 1 staccato - 2

Rafael	eeeeee	eeee	eeeeee	k	hkmbd	
Paul	w	mnlpg	zdbk		t#	
Stacc	eeeeee	eeeeee	n	r	jftw	eeeeee
bp	gldg	m	rst	eeeeee	eeee	eeeeee

Rafael	wl ntr	j	mdn v	eeeeee	eeee	eeeeee		
Park		eeeeee	eeeeee	eeeeee		u	e	
Steve	eeee	eeeeee	d		o	i	e	e
bp	l	stfgh	a		e			eee

I Took You To My Dreams

Single voice

I took you to my dreams
and let the stars hold out their hands to you

I took you to my hands
and let my dreams hold out their stars to you

You took me in your hands
and held the stars out of your dreams to me

You held me in your dreams
and took your hands out to the stars for me

Repeat by 3 voices

Single Voice

You took me to my dreams
and let your hands hold out the stars to me

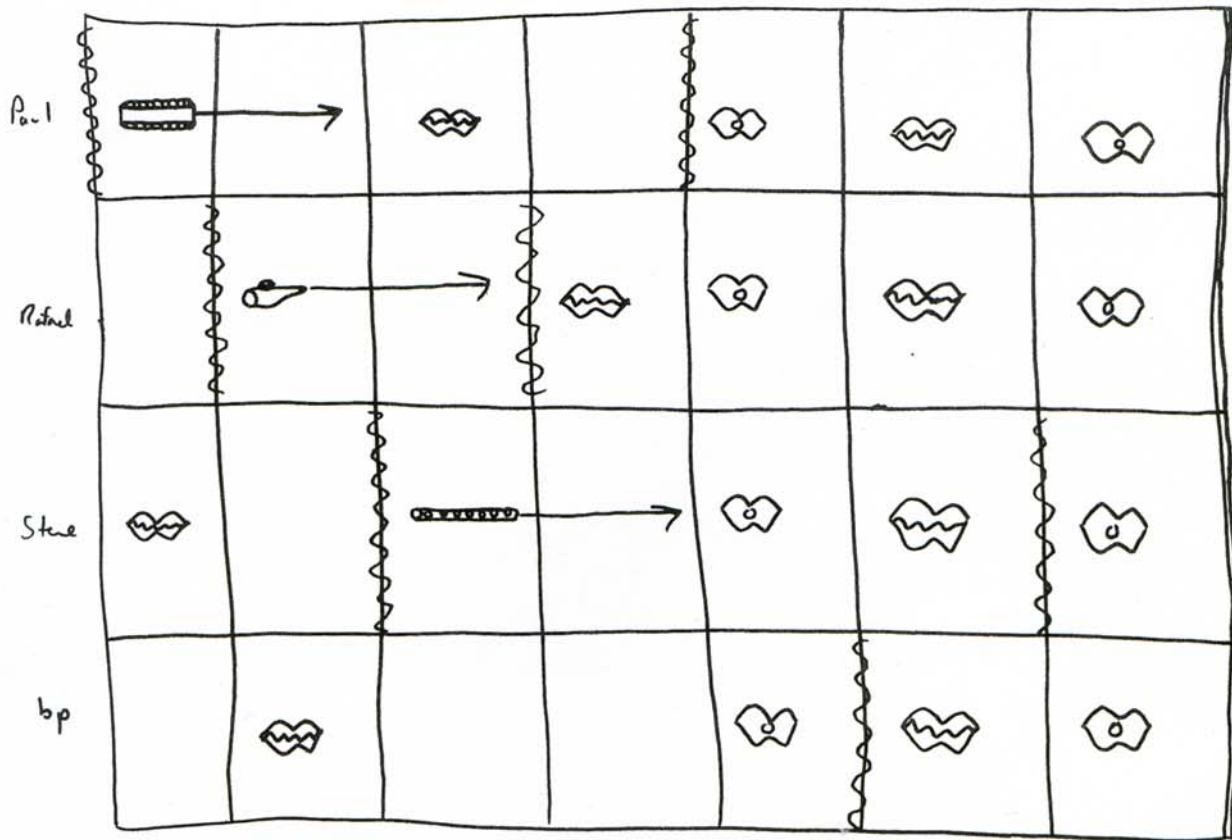
I took you to the stars
and had my hands hold out their dreams to you

Single voice

stars
dreams
hands
took
hold
let



breath




































COFFEE BREAK

1	Sugar Sugar Sugar	A-A-A GER	sugar an anger an sugar an anger an	Sugar shaker sugar an anger an s-g-r shaker	Sugar in anger in shaker is anger an scream an scream an shaker an SCREAM	I shaker in anger an screamin in anger an screamin I shaker an shakin in anger an screamin an anger I-I-I-
2.	Sugar Sugar	guerr → kurrr grrrr urrrrr u-ku-urrr	K-K-K-K R-R-R	EE-EE-EE	CREAM 'ER CREAM 'EM CREAM 'IM	KUUU-REAM EE-AM
3.	Sugar Sugar Sugar	sweet Sweet sweet sweet (good + soft by him) (DINE SWEETLY)	sweet anger (DOVE SWEETLY)		Sugar sugar sugar Sugar Sugar Sugar	shueg shueg shueg shu ger ger ger
4.	Sugar Sugar Sugar		Sugar an		Sugar an cream an sugar an sugar an cream an sugar an cream an cream an	SCREAM

MY OTHER USE: TO HEAR

Sketch/ July 31/79

Paul			(free)	m	whoooo (falsetto)	
Rafael	whoooo (falsetto)	whoooo (falsetto)		n	(free)	
Steve	(free)		whoooo (falsetto)	u		
bp	whoooo (falsetto)		(free)	m		

Paul					bbeeee		
Rafael						whoohh whoohh	
Steve		ehhhhh					
bp			heeeee				

Pieces Of Stop - For Greta Monach (from a dream of Oct. 12/78 - 1st draft, Oct. 16/78, 12 a.m.)

Paul			wup	B			mue
Rafael		D				muc	wut
Steve			G			wue	mup
bp	V				mut		wuc

Paul	wud		mub				P
Rafael	muv			T	wug		
Steve	wub			mud			C
bp	mug		wuv		E		

bp initial