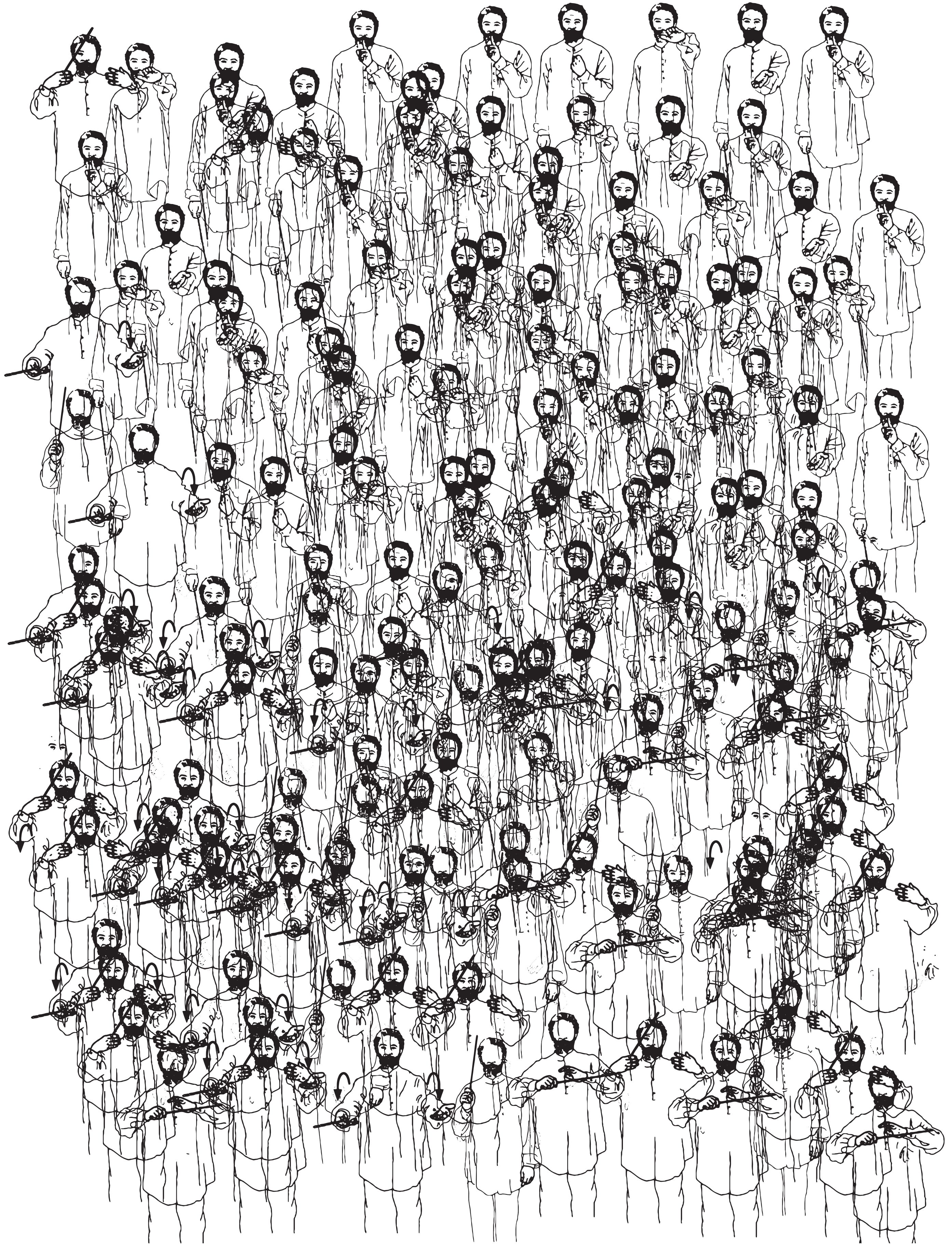


# The Extra Dimension of Reinvention



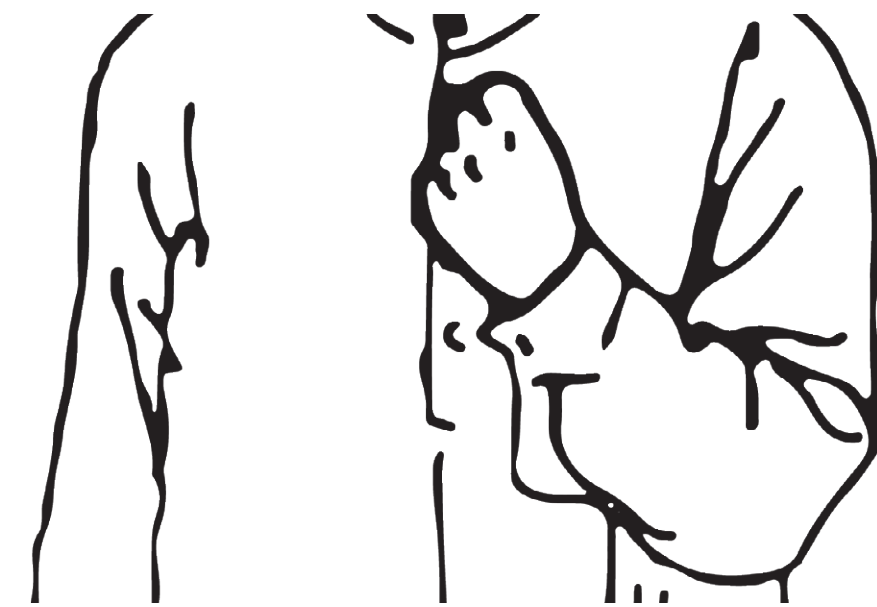
fields harrington, Katherine McKittrick, Melvin Gibbs,  
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HxH (Lester St. Louis and Chris Williams)

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The Kitchen at Westbeth  
163B Bank Street, 4th Floor  
Loft



The following text is the accumulation of loose notes and fragmentary thoughts. Spending time with The Kitchen's archive, the documented history of Butch Morris that lives online, and the writing of Katherine McKittrick prompted me to ask: what does correspondence have to do with the legacy of Conduction®, how does absence figure into the desire to develop a vocabulary of gestures and signs, what is the common ground between reinvention and Conduction®, and what is the economy of Butch Morris' lexicon gestures?

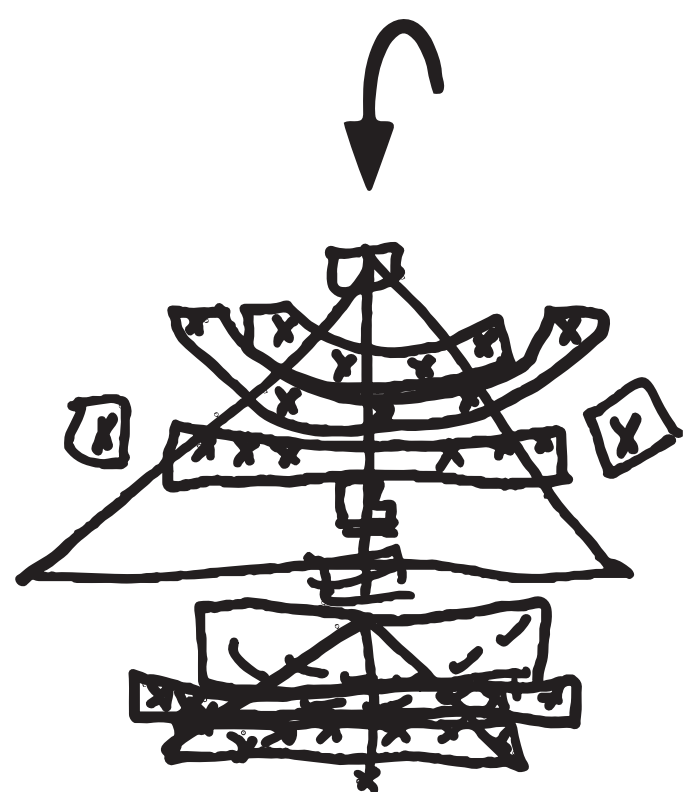
I've been watching Butch Morris perform on YouTube; rereading the 1985 press release for his performance *Current Trends in Racism in Modern America: (A Work in Progress)* (1985) on The Kitchen's archive; and listening to him demonstrate and explain the concepts, methods, and systems of Conduction® on Soundcloud. Today I wanted to launch myself down a rabbit hole of his documented history again to listen to him explain what drove him to develop his method Conduction®. In a video on YouTube titled *Lawrence "Butch" Morris documentary short about the art of Conduction®*, Butch talks about the significance of "real-time development." Taking the symbolism of notation and applying it to real-time activity is important to the conductor, musician, and audience.



He says that he "mines" music and sonic information. He mines it and then refines it. The mining of sonic information is a real-time activity that produces a new social logic of collective imagination in the collective intimacy, transmission, and correspondence. and turn in many ways at any given time based on the find flexibility in notation. Butch wanted to modify write he posed a question to his teacher regarding the scenic-musical score. The teacher's response emphasized that the score, they would have explicitly written it in the notation. Notation is absent is through Con-For Butch "liter-information, could orientation of the



ensemble of musicians and the conductor. This particular mining is a Butch was concerned with the process of construction that can move instrumentalists in the ensemble. Butch believed that he needed to ten scores in real-time. When Butch was attending conducting classes, nario where a conductor wished to return to a previous moment in the if the composer intended for the ensemble to revisit a specific point in notation for the composition. Butch didn't need to be specific as notation. of expression. The interpretation of notation needs to be broadened. It duction® that the break between improvisation and notation is bonded. al movement," or the real-time literal sonic interpretation of graphic be understood by the musicians in the ensemble by the alignment and baton as it corresponds with the conductor's body.



I wanted to think Butch Morris' method of Conduction® through a lens of reinvention. Which part of Butch's history do I want/need to be in dialogue with? Initially, I found myself consumed by the invention of his signs and gestures. I wanted to understand why Butch decided to invent a vocabulary of signs and gestures. Not language because according to Butch, music was the language and Conduction® was the vocabulary. What was absent in notation and written compositions for Butch that led him to invent a new social logic or an extra dimension? I should note here that improvisation alone was not enough to produce the music that Morris wanted to develop and hear. Improvisation needed organization, guidance, and structure. Butch was committed to reconciling the gap between the traditions of improvisation and notation. I wanted to know how Butch's Conduction® overlapped with Katherine McKittrick's ideas around reinvention. McKittrick states in her book *Dear Science and Other Sto-*

ries, "The reinvention of black life and community, and inventive rebellion against an entire belief system, including a sanctioned these reinventions and inventions transform an im-able and valuable and expressive form of black the absence he found in notation led him to ditions of the written score and conduct reimagining somehow could be tethered Butch expresses the absence of a sys-in his essay "An Extra Dimension." He scales of evaluation call for a new so-intimacy in the immediacy of creation. notation and improvisation? To what end in one or the other tradition? Conduction® it is a response animated as much by regard potential available to us: enhanced musician-within the arc of the performance, the evolution of a tween conductor and ensemble, instrumentalist and con-composer and the audience that enters this encounter."<sup>2</sup>



rious practices, regardless of scale, clearly demonstrate a revolt order of consciousness, that negates black humanity; possibility—black humanity—into an imagin-life."<sup>1</sup> I wonder how Butch's observation of rethink, rearrange, and disrupt the tra-improvisation; and if this process of to McKittrick's writing on reinvention. tem that fits with his creative impulse states that "New requirements and cial logic; one that governs collective Why sustain the differences between do we make music in ways that 'fit' is my response to these questions, and for proven forms as by a will to evolve the ship, discovery of structure and substance musical practice based on new reciprocities be-ductor, instrumentalist and composer, and between

Conduction® is a gestural lexicon that developed over time. Its meaning shifted weight through time and space marked by a language that was invented out of necessity. Is there an economy of this necessity? Is there an economy of Morris' gestures and signs? Is the time-space of Morris' lexicon of gestures in relation to, or a site of, politics?<sup>3</sup> What does the repetition of Morris' gestures look like without accumulation? How does Conduction® become an embodied dialogue? How does it become an embodied correspondence between conductor and musician?<sup>4</sup> I'm not interested in understanding the efficiency and management of Morris' gestures and signs with these questions. I'm also not thinking about the commerce or the financial conditions of his gestures and signs. I'm invested in trying to know how Morris' gestures become inscriptive and have the volume to script, write, and transcribe sonic information. Perhaps, there is a concern with the intentional use and development of his gestures to convey meaning, communicate non-verbally, construct a ground for spontaneous collective intimacy, bring attention to acts of collaboration<sup>5</sup>, and refuse feelings of impossibility.

—fields harrington



<sup>1</sup>Katherine McKittrick, "I GOT LIFE / REBELLION INVENTION GROOVE" in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 150–168.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence Butch Morris, "The Extra Dimension," in *The Art of Conduction: A Conduction® Workbook* (New York: Karma, 2017), 34–36.

<sup>3</sup>Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on gesture, 1992," in *Philosophers on Film from Bergson to Badiou: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christopher Want (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 1–30.

<sup>4</sup>Maxe Crandall, and Selby Schwartz, "Radical Movements: Gender and Politics in Performance," *Movement Research Critical Correspondence*, December 14, 2017. Accessed July 16, 2023, <https://movementresearch.org/publications/critical-correspondence/radical-movements-gender-and-politics-in-performance>.

<sup>5</sup>McKittrick, "I GOT LIFE / REBELLION INVENTION GROOVE."