

Programme notes for Cage events, hcmf 2010:

### *Variations II*

Cage's *Variations II* is less a score than a set of instructions to constructing a score, a DIY kit for creating chance-based composition. It consists of eleven transparent sheets, six with a single straight line on, and five with a single 'dot'. The performer is instructed to throw the sheets onto a surface and take the resulting configuration of lines and dots as the score. Measurements are then made by drawing perpendicular lines from the dots to the lines and assigning parameters to each line, such as time, frequency, amplitude, number of events, etc. It can be played by any instrument or any number of instruments.

### *Electronic Music for piano*

If *Variations II* is a DIY kit, then the 'score' for *Electronic Music for piano* is more like a recollection of how the work was made, sometime after the event. It consists of a few relatively clear instructions, some possibilities for performance, and other rather more ambiguous terms and jottings spread across the single page in Cage's rather-more-messy -than -usual handwriting.

For this interpretation, each of Cage's earlier works *Music for piano* numbers 4-19 and 21-84 are used, as is suggested by the score, both in a 12-hour live version and 2 12-hour pre-recorded versions (each of the latter consisting of varying loops of material subjected to different modifications over the 12 hours). Microphones are used to draw in sounds from the performance space as well as create feedback. Sine tones also infiltrate the space from time to time, both very high and very low.

The score suggests that transcriptions of star maps (after the slightly earlier work *Atlas Eclipticalis*) may be made to determine the ordering of controls. I have taken the liberty – inspired by the context of Cage's own visual art, graphic works and the relationship between score and sound – to treat the entire set of *Music for piano* as visual stimulate instead of star maps. Making actual measurements from event to event using a scale of millimetres in relation to the dimensions of the page, every decision relating to this realization can be traced back to the score as document. Thus, the ordering and durations of pages in the live and recorded versions; the amplitude, transmission and distortion of the recorded versions; the amplitude and EQ of the microphones; and the timings and frequencies of the sine tones have all been determined by taking measurements from the page. At times these cancel each other out, whilst at other times anywhere between 1 and 4 speakers may be transmitting up to 7 layers of events. I see this realization as a means to colour the gallery over an extended period, and in particular to work alongside the viewing of Cage's art in similar manner to the ways in which dance and music combine in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

### *Score (40 Drawings by Thoreau...)*

Since some of his earliest works, such as the *First Construction (in Metal)* (1939) the notion of the page as container, as delineating events, was a fruitful one for Cage. The *First Construction* and many of the works of the 1940s are composed of a predetermined number of bars which are subsequently filled with sounds (or rather notations for producing sounds). *Music of Changes* (1951) follows the same procedure but with fluctuating tempi so that there is a mismatch between how it reads on the page and its progression in time. The indeterminate and more graphically notated works of the 1950s also use the page and dimensions of space as containers for the notations, often influencing the placing of events in relation to the page.

In *Score (40 Drawings by Thoreau) and 23 parts*, the dimensions of space on the page, by means of a temporal grid arranged to correspond with the structure of a haiku, contain not musical notation but rather a series of graphics. These are selected from Thoreau's journals, which contain sketches by Thoreau of themes associated with nature, and are then mapped onto the aforementioned time grid. The musicians play the resultant shapes that occur within their part. The instrumental performance is followed by a recording, made by David Behrman, of Stony Point, Cage's base for many years.

### *Atlas Eclipticalis and Winter Music*

Like a number of Cage's works over the 1950s-1970s, these two works, *Atlas Eclipticalis* for between 1 and 86 musicians and *Winter Music* for 1-20 musicians, may be played simultaneously. Both works provide groups of notes spread across the page which may be realised in particular ways: in the former work choices are to be made concerning durations of notes whilst in the latter choices are to be made concerning which clef is to be used for which note in order to create chords of varying pitch combinations from the same notation. *Winter Music* uses much the same method for composition as for the *Music for piano* series, ascribing notes to imperfections in the paper quality, whilst *Atlas Eclipticalis* draws its name from the star charts used by Cage to trace over and consequently map out the placing of notes.