

Kennesaw State University
College of the Arts
School of Music

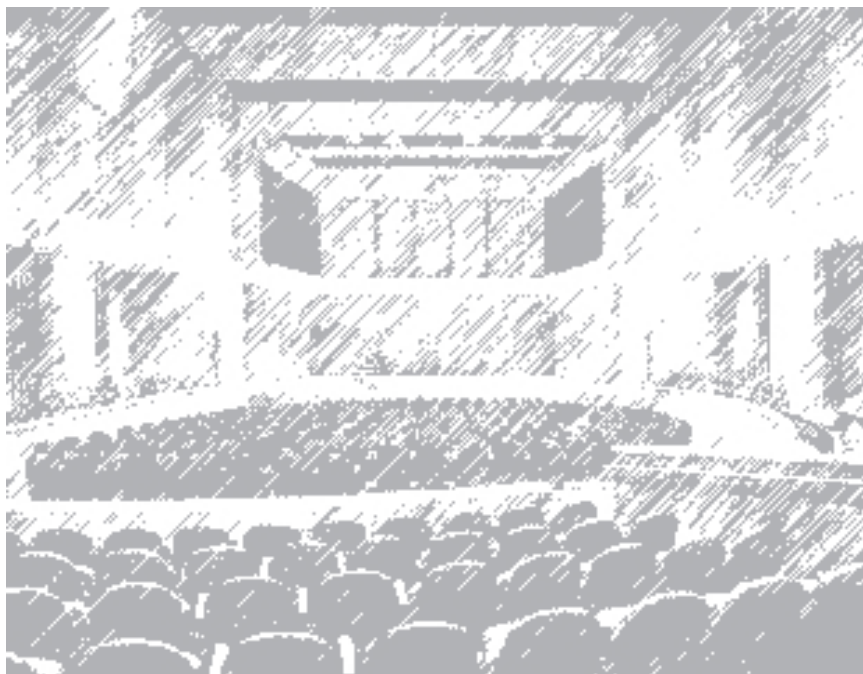


presents

"To Sober and Quiet the Mind: The Music of John Cage"

Senior Recital

Cameron Austin, percussion



Saturday, November 29, 2014

8:00 p.m.

Dr. Bobbie Bailey & Family Performance Center, Brooker Hall
Forty-fifth Concert of the 2014-15 Concert Season

program

All compositions by
JOHN CAGE (1912-1992)

Suite for Toy Piano (1948)

- I. (half note) = 64
- II. Same speed
- III. Slower
- V. (half note) = 64 or faster if wished

A Flower (1950)

c♯omposed Improvisation (for snare drum alone) (1990)

In A Landscape (for piano or harp solo) (1948)

Child of Tree (Percussion Solo) (1975)

Dream (1948)

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Music in Music Education.
Mr. Austin studies percussion with John Lawless.

program notes

John Milton Cage Jr. (September 5, 1912 - August 12, 1992), was a post-war avant-garde composer, sonic innovator, poet, and artist. His journey as a composer began after dropping out of Pomona College's Theology program in 1930 to travel through Europe for 18 months. While traveling from Paris to Majorca, Cage was first exposed to the music of Paul Hindemith and Igor Stravinsky, and soon-after began composing indeterminate pieces using dense, mathematical formulas. When he returned home to the US in 1931, he moved to New York to study with Henry Cowell, who then sent Cage back to Los Angeles to study with Arnold Schoenberg. For the next several decades, Cage traveled and collaborated with acclaimed dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, who was also Cage's romantic partner for most of their lives, and also collaborated with Wesleyan University in Connecticut from 1950 until his death. His contributions to the music world include pioneering the prepared piano, advancing the creativity and complexity of percussion music in both the solo and ensemble setting, and challenging the institution of tonality with innovations in indeterminacy and chance music.

Suite for Toy Piano (1948)

In the mid-1940s, Cage found himself in a brief compositional crisis due to his failed marriage with Alaskan artist, Xenia Andreyevna Kashevaroff, and his ever-increasing doubt of ever being a bona fide composer. Luckily, Cage discovered the spark of inspiration he needed in 1946 after meeting Indian musician, Gita Sarabhai, who taught him the divinity of Indian music and philosophy. After this encounter with Sarabhai, many Eastern philosophies meandered into Cage's compositions, which in his opinion portrayed the true purpose of music: "to sober and quiet the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences."

Suite for Toy Piano was composed for a dance suite choreographed by Merce Cunningham entitled "A Diversion" (a suite in five parts, which may be taken as referring to the legend of Krishna and Gopis). The rhythmic structure is 7-7-6-6-4 when the pulse is 64 to the minute, 15x15 when the measure is 2/2. The duration, eight minutes, corresponds with the eight permanent emotions of Indian aesthetics - the erotic, the heroic, the odious, anger, mirth, fear, sorrow and the wondrous - and their common tendency towards tranquility. The tempo marking 64 relates to the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching, or *Book of Changes*. The slower tempo markings in movement III (54-56) refer to the hexagrams of "abundance and fullness" as well as "travelling and wandering" while the fast tempo marking in movement I, II, and V refers to the hexagram of "completion."

A Flower (1950)

This work is written in a double rhythmic structure, following the structure of the dance for which it was written: 7 x 7 measures of 5/4 (1, 3, 1, 2) and 5 x 5 measures of 10/4 (1/2, 1 1/2, 1/2, 1, 1 1/2). The singer is instructed to vocalize without vibrato, as in folk singing, except where indicated. Transpositions may be made in order to sing in a lower, more comfortable range. Although the instrumentation is specifically written for voice and closed piano (separately), the performer has interchanged the percussive, closed piano part with a set of bongos to perform both parts simultaneously.

cComposed Improvisation (for snare drum alone) (1990)

Only two years before his death, Cage composed three separate versions of *cComposed Improvisation*: the first for "Steinberger Bass Guitar," the second for "One-Sided Drums With or Without Jangles" and the last for "snare drum alone." This work comprises 2 pages of text with performance instructions. Each has 3 time brackets, 1 of which is variable, surrounded by 2 that are fixed. Each time bracket contains 1-8 events (to correspond with the eight permanent emotions of Indian aesthetics) and 1-64 icti (to correspond with the I Ching). The performer performs chance operations to decide the number of events and icti to be played, as well as specifics concerning the use of instruments as well as durations of sounds.

In A Landscape (for piano or harp solo) (1948)

In 1948, Cage composed *In A Landscape*, a work that could be performed for solo piano or harp. Leading up to this composition, he experimented in depth with music for prepared piano, and abandoned any sort of conventional structure, or counterpoint. He simply wrote as if he were composing one long, unaccompanied melody. The rhythmic structure of this supremely lyrical work is 15 x 15 measures (5-7-3), following the structure of the Lippold dance for which it was written. The piece is similar to Cage's *Dream*, but the fixed gamut of tones is more extensive. Resonances are sustained throughout the composition by using both pedals. The sound of the composition is soft and meditative, reminiscent of the music of Erik Satie.

Child of Tree (1976)

Since chance procedures were used by Cage to eliminate the composer's and the performer's likes and dislikes from music, Cage disliked the concept of improvisation, which is inevitably linked to the performer's preferences. In a number of works beginning in the 1970s, he found ways to incorporate improvisation. This work was originally used as music for the choreographed piece by Merce Cunningham entitled *Solo* (aka *Animal Solo/Dance*), with stage design by Sonja

Sekula. While on tour in Arizona with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1975, one of the dancers, Charles Moulton, brought a dried cactus to Cage, placed it near his ear, and plucked its spines. This inspired Cage to use cacti as musical instruments in pieces like *Child of Tree and Branches*. The score consists solely of performance instructions as to how to select 10 instruments via *I Ching* chance operations. All instruments should be made of plant matter, or be themselves plant materials (e.g. leaves from trees, branches, etc.). One of the instruments should be a pod (rattle) from a Poinciana tree, which grows in Mexico. Cage instructs: "Using a stopwatch, the soloist improvises clarifying the time structure by means of the instruments. This improvisation is the performance."

Dream (1948)

This work was originally used as music for the eponymous choreographed piece by Merce Cunningham, following the rhythmic structure of the dance and using a fixed gamut of tones. Throughout, resonances are sustained, either manually or with the use of pedal. The music is essentially a single melodic line, except for the last few bars.

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Faculty Jazz Parliament
Georgia Youth Symphony Orchestra
and Chorus
KSU Faculty Chamber Players
KSU Faculty String Trio
KSU Community and Alumni Choir

about the school of music

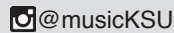
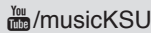
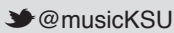
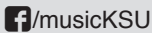
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Michael Alexander
Interim Director, KSU School of Music

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upcoming events

Unless otherwise noted, all events are held in Morgan Concert Hall and begin at 8 p.m.

Tuesday, December 2
Faculty Jazz Parliament

Thursday, January 8
Von Grey with KSU Orchestra

Thursday, December 4
Choral Holiday Concert

Monday, January 12
Helen Kim, violin
with Sakiko Ohashi, piano

Monday, December 8
Percussion Ensemble

Tuesday, January 13
Faculty Recital: David Watkins, piano

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