THE CHORAL MUSIC OF JOHN CAGE

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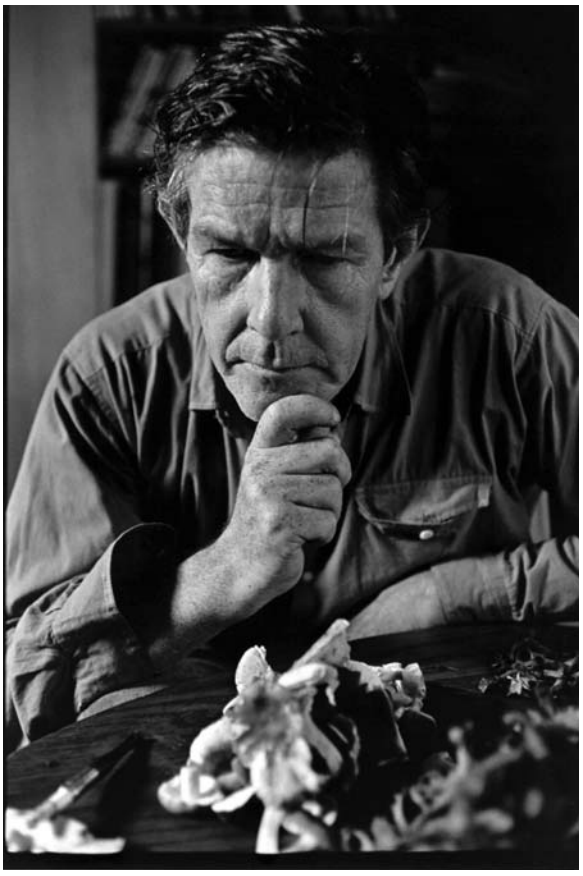
Although most musicians know the name John Cage, few have fully explored the musical output of Cage's innovations. Most often acknowledged regarding his composition, *4′33″*, Cage's other works (including pieces for prepared piano, traditional piano, percussion ensemble, solo instruments, toy piano, gamelan, found objects, electronics and voices) and his lectures and philosophical writings deserve performance and a more thorough examination by all artists.

In this centenary year of Cage, there have been many representative concerts, including an extended festival in Washington D.C., gallery exhibits, and readings celebrating Cage's output as a composer, writer, and artist. Many of the performances feature Cage's well-known instrumental works and, although there have been performances of his vocal works, notably *Alarm Will Sound* staged a complete performance of *Song Books*, few choruses have fully embraced the vocal works of Cage. For many musicians trained in the Western classical tradition, Cage, although known, is often derided or ignored. As choral musicians, we may hesitate to approach works written by someone who acknowledges, "I don't have an ear for music, and I don't hear music in my mind before I write it. And I never have. I can't remember a melody."[1] Yet, Cage's music is ideal for choirs for just that reason; it takes us into new realms of vocal possibilities. His works are not composed top-down, with a clearly defined memorable melody that will provoke Ohrwürme [ear worms] but they will, to use R. Murray Schafer's term, provide ear-cleaning.[2]



THE CHORAL MUSIC OF JOHN CAGE

John Cage (1912–1992), the son of an inventor, had a tremendous impact on art in every form. A prolific composer, writer, philosopher, orator, and performer, Cage's legacy is vast and varied. In addition to his artistic output, Cage was an avid amateur mycologist and helped revitalize the New York Mycological Society. All too often though, Cage is summarily viewed and dismissed through the lens of his most famous work, *4'33."* This work, sometimes referred to as the *Silent Piece*, is significant, both in Cage's musical *oeuvre* and in the music of the twentieth century. However, to look only at this work, when considering Cage's musical contribution, misses the point of Cage's music. One way to view Cage is through his love of sound. Just as Arnold Schoenberg[3] advocated for pan-tonality (rather than the more commonly used term, atonality), Cage eventually embraced an idea of sound equality: "Impose nothing. Live and let live. Permit each person, and **each sound**, to be the center of creation."[4] (empahsis mine) In Cage's works, there is not a hierarchy of sound. Sounds are neither good nor bad; they simply are. This openness to sound and silence has led many to avoid Cage's music, assuming that it is merely chaotic noise or nothing. One need only read comments of any YouTube performance of a John Cage piece to see the antipathy that many feel about his work. Yet, the popularity of Cage, as evidenced by the interesting and varied centennial celebrations, speaks to the enduring nature of his music.

Cage's use of indeterminacy and chance in his compositions paved the way for much of the aleatoric music that choirs embrace today. Although Cage didn't have students that carried on his ideas *per se*, his influence on composers and performers is widely acknowledged. When asked, "John Cage, what does he communicate?" Yoko Ono responded: "History of Western music can be divided into B.C. (Before Cage) and A.C. (After Cage). I was a lucky girl to have bumped into him in my roller coaster of life."[5] Many contemporary choral composers have embraced the ideas of time brackets, aleatoric principles, and a duration of silence as a musical idea, all concepts present in the works of John Cage.

Cage's friendships and interactions with Schoenberg, Cowell, Virgil Thomson, e. e. cummings, Peggy Guggenheim, Merce Cunningham, Pierre Boulez, Marcel Duchamp, Yoko Ono, and John Lennon, make him a pivotal figure in the shaping of twentieth-century artistic thought. As biographer, David Nicholls writes, "With the possible exception of Andy Warhol, no American artist working in a field other than popular music has had such an enormous impact on global culture."[6]

PHILOSOPHY AND COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

Just as an appreciation of Bach's choral music can be enhanced by an understanding of Lutheran theology, so too is an appreciation of Cage's music amplified by acknowledging the philosophical context. Many of the pieces suitable for choral performance are from the later years of Cage's work and thus more fully reflect the ideals and philosophies that he learned and developed throughout his life. In 1946, Cage met Geet Sarabhai, who had come to New York to learn about Western music because she was concerned about the impact it was having on traditional Indian music. From Sarabhai, Cage learned, "the traditional reason for making a piece of music in India: 'to quiet the mind thus making it susceptible to divine influences.'"[7] Cage embraced the idea of music serving, not as a mode of communication or as an emotional expression, but as a tool to calm the mind, and to open the pathway to divinity.

The idea of music as a way to "quiet the mind" (meditation, contemplation) harks to the role of music in the early church. Recall the Council of Trent's concern that complex polyphony would distract from music's purpose of serving the church's function. Or, look further back, to Pythagoras and the Music of the Spheres.[8] In fact, if, as Cage writes, "music is continuous and it is we who turn away,"[9] then his music, reflecting awareness of the ongoing music (silence, music of the spheres, divine sound, call it what you will) is perhaps the ultimate musical expression. Cage explains, "when I write a piece, I try to write it in such a way that it won't interrupt this other piece which (sic) is already going on."[10] At the same time that there is a process of connection or awareness of the larger world

in Cage's music, there is also a quest for disconnecting, for not engaging the emotions. Cage's music is not meant to communicate or represent. The following interchange, from *Conversing with Cage,* sheds light on Cage's philosophy:

> Question: A great many people would be baffled by the suggestion that they should respond neither emotionally nor intellectually to music. What else is there?
>
> Cage: They should listen. Why should they imagine that sounds are not interesting in themselves? I'm always amazed when people say, 'Do you mean it's just sounds?' How can they imagine that it's anything but sounds is what's so mysterious.[11]

Cage's music is both universal and intimately personal. His worldview was vast and his music reflects a deep caring for society, both as individuals, and society as a whole.[12] Although only *Four²* is scored for SATB choir, his vocal works are often voiced such that the performing ensemble is indeterminate.[13] Although this view can seem to give license for any interpretation, it's important to note that Cage's directions are intended to support a truly musical performance. It may seem that Cage's ideas push live performance beyond the breaking point, into absurdity. There are recordings and accounts of performances where the performers dissolved the music into misunderstood chaos.[14] Yet, although Cage espoused a total acceptance of all sounds, he expressed disappointment and anger when performers misinterpreted his works. This ambiguity of performance, (how, in fact, can someone incorrectly "make a gift of an apple or some cranberries to a member of the audience?")[15] can be intimidating, but if one fully embraces the joyfulness of Cage's work, and his inherent love of sound and humanity, the answers of performance practice become clearer.

CAGE'S CHORAL WORKS

The "choral music of John Cage" is a deceptive title, since there is only one purely choral work in his output. But, in the words of Cage, "Almost anything I say is going to be misunderstood."[16] Interestingly, although much is written about and by Cage, these works, excepting *Song Books* and *4'33"*, are seldom referenced in scholarly discussion. Perhaps it is because the later vocal works (*ear for EAR, Four², Litany for a Whale*) so clearly represent Cage's style and philosophy that they scarcely need analysis or deconstruction. They are the summation of Cage's philosophies as expressed in music.[17]

ENSEMBLE PIECES

Four² – SATB choir, composed for the Hood River Valley High School (1990)

This late work is the only choral work in Cage's catalogue. Composed for a high school choir in Oregon, Cage uses the letters in the state's name to create a sound world. One of the many so-called "number pieces," *Four²* provides choirs with a chance to listen to each other in new ways. Most of the "number pieces" involve a tone or short, melodic fragment and a duration during which one starts and stops the sound (Figure 1). Some of the prime examples of the number pieces are *101* (for 101 orchestral players), *Four* (for string quartet) and *Two* (for flute and piano, the first number

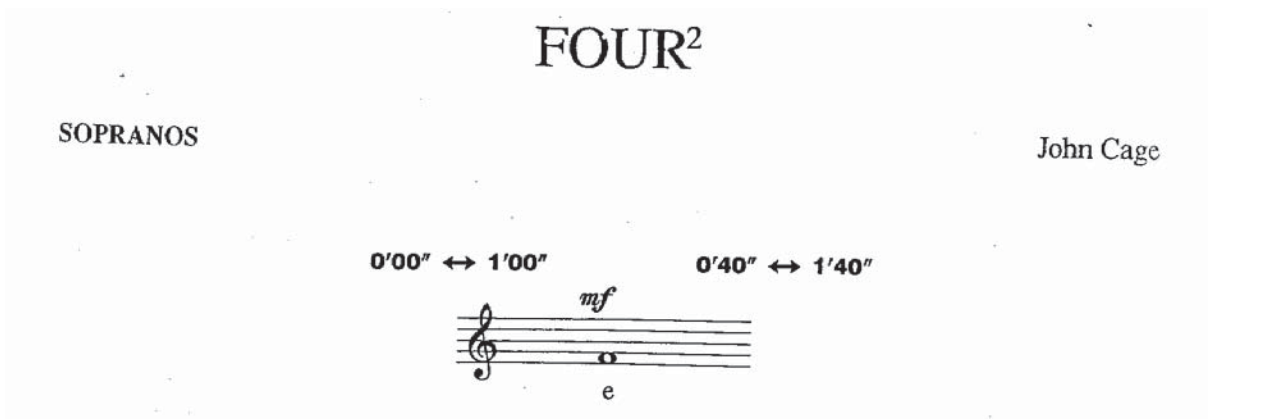


Figure 1. First entrance, Soprano part, *Four²*, John Cage,

piece). *Four*[2] is a remarkable work; although it can sound very easy, in essence elongated tone clusters, working on this piece engages a choir in the rehearsal/performance process in a different way. Often performed without a conductor, (section leaders can cue the changes, or each singer can have a stopwatch), for most modern choirs, *Four*[2] is an adventure into new performance models. This work is easy to listen to, as indicated by Cage's wry comment about the number pieces: "After all these years, I'm finally writing beautiful music."[18]

***ear for EAR* (Antiphonies): widely separated single voices, one visible, the other(s) not (1983)**

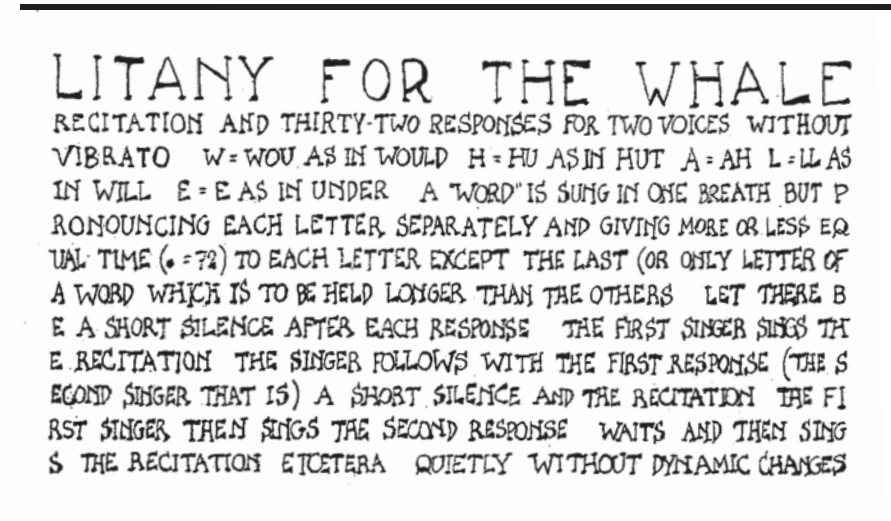
Composed for the tenth anniversary of *EAR Magazine* (1983) *ear for EAR* is reminiscent of antiphonal responses of the Roman Catholic tradition but reframed in a twentieth-century context. *EAR Magazine* was published from 1973 to the 1990s and featured articles and reviews about new music. The small range (a perfect 5th) makes this work possible for almost any choir. The directions can imply two singers, or allow for any size choir or group of singers to bring this piece to performance. It seems to call for a cathedral-like acoustic, allowing for a long sound decay, but Cage specifies neither the acoustic nor the placement of singers. As in many of Cage's vocal works, the only text is a series of letters, in this case, "e," "a," and "r." The recording by Mode Records (1998) is a lovely interpretation of this work in the choral context.

***Hymns and Variations* – 12 solo voices, amplified (1979) (SSSAAATTTBBB)**

This work provides a window into one of Cage's other compositional techniques; the subtraction process, which he had used in the work commissioned for the U.S. Bicentennial, *Apartment House 1776*. The subtraction method takes a preexisting melody (or piece) and through chance operations, Cage determined which few notes would be used. All the notes that are not chosen become silence (rests). In *Hymns and Variations*, Cage used two of William Billings' hymns—"Old North" and "Heath"—and repeated the subtraction process five times per hymn. The original four-part chorale structure is still present, although the majority of the notes are silent. The twelve soloists perform from a score that is traditionally notated except the silent measures are not dictated in traditional format of measures with rests, rather the singer sees white space—nothing—until the next entrance. This work does not seem conducive to choral performance, since Cage indicates amplified solo voices.

***Litany for the Whale* – 2 voices (1981)**

Similar to *ear for EAR* in the responsorial writing, *Litany for the Whale,* when performed as written, is a twenty-five minute duet. However, this haunting music can be adapted for choral performance. There is nothing in Cage's writing that justifies a choral adaptation, yet this luminous work, when performed by more singers, invites the audience into Cage's world in an intimate yet public way. The directions from the score (Figure 2) detail the call-and-response nature of the piece. For choral performance, it could be performed in unison, using one caller (a soloist or the conductor) who sings the recitation (Figure 3) and the entire choir could perform the responses. In this type of performance, the choir achieves a chant-like experience, similar to when a choir performs Gregorian chant or the monody of Hildegard von Bingen. An alternative, although not necessarily sanctioned interpretation, allows for the opening call-and-response as written and then proceeds into a fuller, more active performance. Each singer joins consecutively, singing a pre-determined response number. For example, singer A sings response 2, while singer B sings response 3. The recitation is sung, then


LITANY FOR THE WHALE

RECITATION AND THIRTY-TWO RESPONSES FOR TWO VOICES WITHOUT VIBRATO W = WOU AS IN WOULD H = HU AS IN HUT A = AH L = LL AS IN WILL E = E AS IN UNDER A "WORD" IS SUNG IN ONE BREATH BUT P RONOUNCING EACH LETTER SEPARATELY AND GIVING MORE OR LESS EQ UAL TIME (♩ = ?♩) TO EACH LETTER EXCEPT THE LAST (OR ONLY LETTER OF A WORD WHICH IS TO BE HELD LONGER THAN THE OTHERS LET THERE B E A SHORT SILENCE AFTER EACH RESPONSE THE FIRST SINGER SINGS TH E RECITATION THE SINGER FOLLOWS WITH THE FIRST RESPONSE (THE S ECOND SINGER THAT IS) A SHORT SILENCE AND THE RECITATION THE FI RST SINGER THEN SINGS THE SECOND RESPONSE WAITS AND THEN SING S THE RECITATION ETCETERA QUIETLY WITHOUT DYNAMIC CHANGES

Figure 2. Directions from *Litany for a Whale*, John Cage copyright 1983 C.F. Peters, reprinted with permission

Figure 3. Recitation from *Litany for a Whale*, John Cage

singer A sings response 4, singer B sings response 5 and singer C sings response 6, etc.

Although Cage did not indicate that a choral interpretation of *Litany for the Whale* is a valid performance, for someone who recounted, "I am for the birds, not for the cages in which people sometimes place them,"[19] perhaps he would have approved of the liberties taken. Cage devotees may disagree with this interpretation and although this author recognizes this is not what Cage indicates in the score, if a choral performance of *Litany* brings Cage's music to a new audience, perhaps it justifies the liberties taken. The title is the source of the text. As in *ear for EAR,* Cage employs a word, (in this case "whale") and the letters become the text. The origin of the evocative title is unclear since this work is rarely referenced in interviews with Cage.

***Five* – ensemble/solo voices (1988)**

Another number piece, *Five* is scored for any five voices or instruments. Most logically performed as a quintet, with one singer per part, this challenging work is an interesting addition to a concert. *Five* can be performed by any instruments or voices with the prescribed ranges, but the associated challenges, including a leap of a fourteenth make this work appealing for solo singers. Although not indicated in the score, singers typically perform this and all of Cage's works non-vibrato.

***Living Room Music* – 2nd movement, 4 part speech choir (1940), movements 1, 3 and 4 for found objects i.e., news papers, magazines, tabletops etc.**

Many early performances, of Cage's percussion works were for his community of friends and small dance companies, and the directions, "any household objects or architectural elements may be used as instruments"[20] speak to the communal aspect of Cage's early music-making. The second movement is for spoken choir and is reminiscent of Toch's *Geographical Fugue* (1930), a work Cage had heard in performance. It can be excerpted and performed chorally. The Gertrude Stein text is set with challenging rhythms that warrant a clear, crisp performance.

SOLOS

***Song Books* – selections (1970)**

Based upon the relevance or irrelevance of the statement "We connect Satie with Thoreau," the "songs" cover a wide array of material. Some are fully notated songs in the traditional sense, accompanied by rhythmic tapping on the piano, or other means. Others are theater pieces or electronic events. When approaching *Song Books*, Cage

determined, through chance operations, that he was to write ninety additional songs to be added to the two pre-existing vocal solos, *Solo for Voice 1 and Solo for Voice 2*. Chance operations decided° whether each song would be relevant or irrelevant to the statement. A choir might not be the appropriate vehicle to take on a full performance of *Song Books* (most performances are presented by contemporary instrumental/theater ensembles), but some of the notated solos are ideal for young singers, particularly "The Year Begins to Ripe."

***5 Songs* (e .e. cummings) (1938)**

Scored for mezzo-soprano and piano, some of these settings are conducive to young choirs. Although the practice of youth choirs performing works originally conceived as vocal solos is not appropriate for every choir, or every situation, there is a growing popularity with art songs published for unison youth choir.[21] Of the songs in this collection, "little four paws," and "in Just—" are particularly successful with unison treble choirs. Both are rhythmically interesting and encourage musical independence because the accompaniment provides little in the way of harmonic support (Figure 4). As an introduction to both e.e. cummings and John Cage, two giants

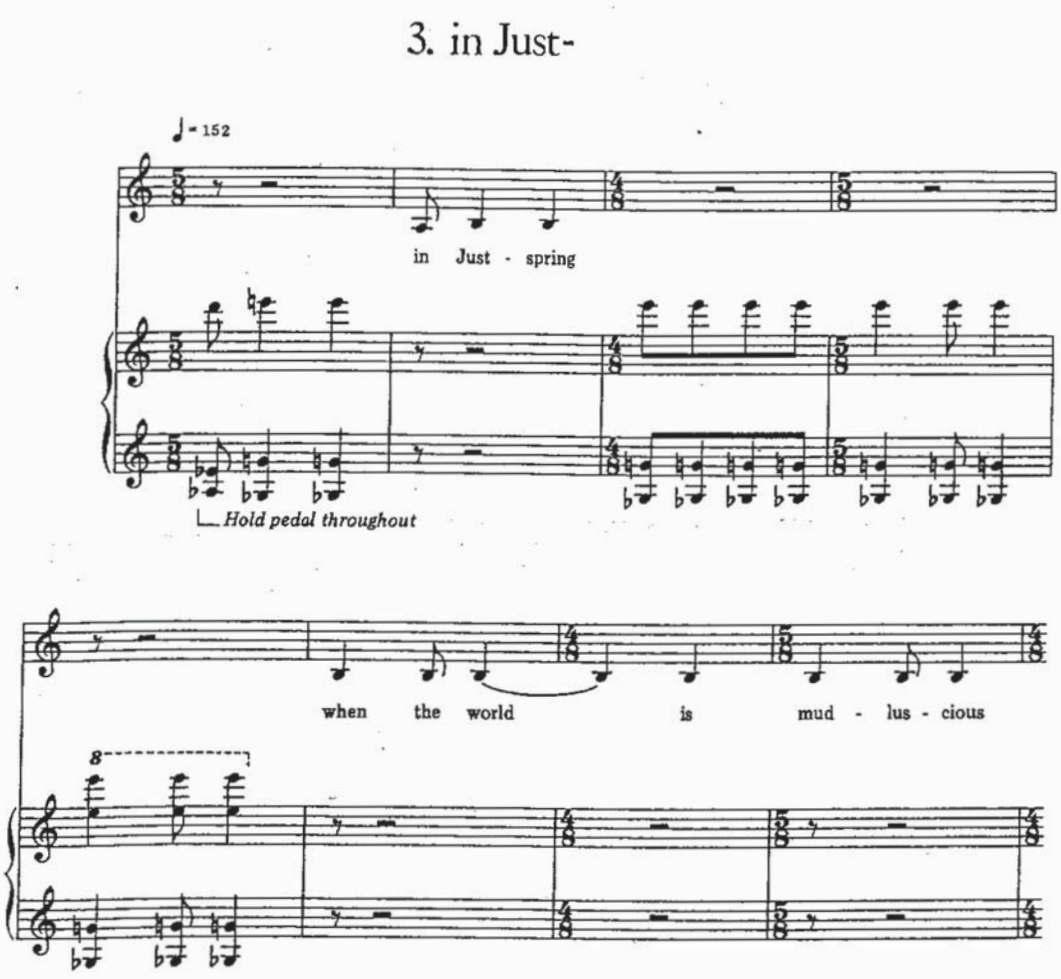


Figure 4. "In Just" from *5 Songs*, John Cage
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of twentieth-century American culture, these songs are a delightful challenge.

HAPPENINGS

Musicircus/Sculptures Musicales/Scottish Circus (various dates, 1976–90)

Cage's concept of a *Musicircus* serves a definite purpose; it is not merely a chance to make noise together, it is an opportunity to present a community of sound and in this new sound world, hear known music in a new light.[22] Whether one chooses to perform *Scottish Circus* (performances of all traditional Scottish music) or a John Cage *Musicircus* in which all music performed is by John Cage, a "happening" occurs. In an era in which the Occupy Movement has reawakened communal events, *Musicircus* is extremely relevant. The parameters of Cage's Happenings seem open-ended, and in some ways they are. If one follows the directions, you are creating a unique sound world that is ephemeral, never to be heard again. The *Musicircus* is an event of simultaneous performance; similar to a plate of food from a church buffet; each person brings something to the table and the combined elements create new, interesting tastes that were previously undiscovered. In interviews, Cage provided additional rationale for the *Musicircus* concept.

> Question: Let's get back to the happenings. Those not produced by you continually run the risk of being bound by a single center—that of the organizer.
>
> Cage: While in my own happenings, everyone must be in the center.[23]

So even in the chaos of a *Musicircus*, Cage was creating an opportunity for the individual to be centered, to be central to the music. For many choirs today, a *Musicircus* can be an introduction to group improvising; how to listen and respond to the sounds around you in an artful way, simultaneously being aware of your individual sounds while being part of the whole world's music.

4'33" (1952)

The so-called *Silent Piece, 4'33"* scarcely needs an introduction.[24] As musicologist, James Pritchett writes,

> It is a piece that has become a sort of icon in post-war culture, like Warhol's soup cans: a punch line for jokes and cartoons; the springboard for a thousand analyses and arguments; evidence of the extremity of a destructive avant-garde that appeared in the 1950s and 1960s.[25]

When David Tudor premiered the work in 1952, the timings were set, based upon Cage's chance operations (movement I – 30", II – 2'23", III – 1'40"), yet when one reads the current published version of the score, the timing, the one seeming constant in an otherwise uncertain piece, is not printed. The score currently published by C. F. Peters is the "Tacet" score in which each movement is marked tacet with no specific timing indication; as Cage explains,

> implicit in this piece which is called *4'33"*, and which has three movements, implicit in it is that the movements can be of any length. I think what we need in the field of music is a very long performance of that work.[26]

What then is this piece? Why then, should a choir perform this work? What does it bring to the choir and to the audience? Is it merely a joke, or is it just a philosophical exploration of the definition of music? Why should people pay money to hear nothing? Many historians, critics, musicians, and scholars have puzzled over this piece since its premiere. Cage had first posited the idea of *Silent Prayer,* as a work to be sold to the Muzak company so that when on elevators or in department stores,

there would be a piece that aired that was mostly silence, "it will open, with a single idea which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape or fragrance of a flower."[27] Although this piece didn't come to fruition, the seeds of *4'33"* are evident in his descriptions of this idea.

Cage acknowledged that there is no such thing as silence. After visiting an anechoic chamber at Harvard in 1952, Cage was surprised to hear two sounds, upon asking the engineer, he learned that the higher tone he heard was his nervous system, the lower tone, his blood circulating through his body.[28] Additionally, Cage was influenced by the visual art of Rauschenberg and his all-white and all-black canvases. Cage felt that to not compose *4'33"* would leave music behind the visual art world. Pritchett describes that in a museum exhibition in Barcelona celebrating Cage's works, there was originally intended to be an empty room, analogous perhaps to Cage's *Silent Piece.* If one visits the Orangerie in Paris that houses Monet's series of *Water Lilies,* there is likewise an empty room. Monet indicates that this entirely white vestibule is necessary and allows for a decompression space between the city and his work.[29] Elsewhere in the visual art world, there is appreciation for white space. In *4'33"*, Cage musically extended the concept of white space beyond societal comfort.

Where else, in the Western world, do we appreciate silence (or at least stillness, if we are foregoing the argument that pure silence doesn't exist.)? Even for noteworthy events when we are in our deepest grief, a "moment of silence" is just that, a moment. Cage's *Silent Piece,* whether it lasts for four minutes and thirty three seconds or longer invites a group to be together in a wholly different way; breathing the same air, seeing each other, but not being distracted by standard modes of communication. Recall that Cage wrote his music with respect to the music already going on. He heard the music of silence and respected the musical quality of silence, much as an artist respects the white canvas as part of the painting.

In performance, many scholars and critics try to find a solution to the "problem" of *4'33."* "How do we the audience, deal with the silent piece?"[30] asks James Pritchett, and he provides two clear answers of how to engage as an audience member.[31] Yet, Cage's own thoughts and writings about the subject provide a more personal answer. When interviewed, many years after the premiere, Cage remarked that he encountered and worked with *Silent Piece* every day; that it was part of his daily music-making. These two quotes by Cage summarize the joy in silence and perhaps provide a rationale for performing this work.

> But what really pleases me in that silent piece is that it can be played any time, but it only comes alive when you play it. And each time you do it, it is an experience of being very, very much alive.[30]

> We need not fear these silences,—we may love them"[31]

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES

For some performers, the instructions for each piece can be an impediment to performance. Written in Cage's personal style, the directions are not as precise as most conductors and singers are accustomed to. Spending a little time reading any of Cage's brilliant writings (*For the Birds, Silence, A Year from Monday* etc.) may help clarify the performance practice issues in the sense that when you immerse yourself in Cage's thought processes, the musical conclusions become more self-evident. It's clear from anecdotes that although Cage's directions may seem open to interpretation, that he is not condoning chaos nor giving the performers permission to do whatever they desire.

There are two excellent recordings of Cage's choral works. Paul Hillier and the Theatre of Voices (with guest artist, Terry Riley) released a recording titled *Litany for the Whale* that includes many of the solos, *Five* and *Litany.* Mode Records, as part of the Complete Works of John Cage, released *Choral Works I* featuring Ars Nova, conducted by Tamas Veto. This album includes the first recording of *ear for EAR,* two versions of *Four*[2]*, Hymns and Variations* and more. Because many of Cage's vocal works use a limited vocal range, with flexible voicing, they are ideal for young choirs, choirs with uneven section sizes, and professional choirs interested in stretching the musical expectations of both singers and audience.

CAGE'S LASTING INFLUENCE

In his lifetime, Cage's work transcended barriers; he was respected and admired in the dance and visual art worlds, his lectures were memorable, "even a kind of surrealist standup comedy."[34] The recent recording of *4'33"* by British rockers/pop stars as a fundraiser for charities and a form of musical protest about the commercialization of music, speaks to the relevance of Cage's work today.[35] His music continues to provide enjoyment for all manner of performers and his beliefs about people, his philosophies and lectures continue to inspire; "It

is essential that we be convinced of the goodness of human nature and we must act as though people are good. We have no reason to think that they are bad."[36]

Whether we perform Cage's works or use them as a reference point to compose, create, improvise and perform new works, we should remember this bit of advice: when asked to summarize himself and his work, Cage quipped, "Get out of whatever cage you're in."[37]

NOTES

1 Duckworth, William. *Talking Music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers*. Schirmer Books: New York, 1995. 7.

2 Schafer, R. Murray. Ear-Cleaning: *Notes for an Experimental Music Course*. Berandol Music Limited: Toronto. 1967.

3 Cage joined Schoenberg's classes in California in 1935. There are varying anecdotes of the Schoenberg/Cage relationship, recounted in Nicholls, 17–18, Dickinson 31–32. See also, Hicks, Michael, "John Cage's Studies with Schoenberg," *American Music* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 125–40.

4 Cage, John. *For the Birds*. Marion Boyers: Boston. 1981. 100.

5 Blau, Max. "Thirty-Three Musicians on What John Cage Communicates," NPR Music, September 5, 2012.,<www.npr.org/2012/08/30/160327305/33-musicinas-on-what-john-cage-communicates>.

6 Nicholls, David. *John Cage*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 2007. 2.

7 Kostelanetz, Richard. *Conversing with Cage*. Limelight Editions: New York. 1987. 41.

8 See James, Jamie. *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science and the Natural Order of the Universe*. Springer-Verlag: New York. 1993.

9 Duckworth, 15.

10 Ibid.

11 Kostelanetz, 234.

12 "The important thing is to see the world as a single place, as Buckminster-Fuller does, and to see our problems as global and to, as quickly as possible, free the world from the quarrels of nations and make it a single place that starts out with intelligence to solve its problems." (Kostelanetz, 260).

13 "We need first of all a music in which not only are sounds just sounds but in which people are just people, not subject, that is, to laws established by any one of them, even if he is 'the composer' or 'the conductor'" quoted in *Conversing with Cage,* 257.

14 Recording of Cage's live performance of Empty Words, Milan, 1977, released on cramps records and New York Philharmonic 1964 performance of *Atlas Ellipticals* in which the musicians derided the piece and destroyed equipment. See Nicholls, 78 for more information.

15 Solo for voice 89, from *Song Books*.

16 Duckworth, 25.

17 "At the time he wrote *ear for EAR* Cage was 71; his musical technique was so much a part of his being that composing was like breathing." Pritchett, James. "John Cage: Choral Music (a timeline)". ©1988. <www,rosewhitemusic.com/cage/texts/choral.html> 6.

18 As quoted in Ross, Alex, "Searching for Silence: John Cage's Art of Noise," *The New Yorker,* October 4, 2010. 60.

19 In response to the query if the title *Pour les Oiseaux* [For the Birds], for a collection of interviews, was a joke. (*For the Birds,* 11).

20 Cage, *Living Room Music*. C. F. Peters: New York, 1976.

21 For example, Debussy's *Beau Soir* and Mozart's *Un Moto di Gioia* have recently been published by Boosey & Hawkes for treble choirs.

22 Recounting a conversation regarding Cage's reaction to Handel's *Messiah*."I had just heard The Messiah (sic] with Mrs. Henry Allen Moe, and she said, "Don't you love the 'Hallelujah Chorus'" and I said, "No, I can't stand it." So she said, "Don't you like to be moved?" and I said, "I don't mind being moved but I don't like to be pushed." When asked, "Is it possible to listen to *The Messiah* [sic] in such a way that the sounds can be taken simply as themselves?" Cage answered, "I think so. But you'd have to listen to a lot of other music at the same time, in some kind of *Apartment House* situation. Then it might be very entertaining. You can get rid of intention by multiplying intention. That's what's at the basis of my work with Musicircus." Recounted in *Conversing with Cage,* 234.

23 *For the Birds*. 52–53.

24 For an excellent chronology, history, and context of the work, see Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's* 4'33". Yale University Press: New Haven. 2010.

25 Pritchett, James. "What Silence Taught John Cage: The Story of *4'33"*, 2009 <www.rosewhitemusic.com/cage/texts/WhatSilenceTaughtCage.html> 2.

26 Kostelanetz, 100.

27 As quoted in Gann, 126. See Gann, 127–34 for further details of the Muzak proposal.

28 This visit is recounted in Gann 160–66, and *For the Birds*.

29 "vous entrez dans une salle entièrement blanche. Elle a été dessinée par Monet afin de créer un 'sas de decompression entre l'agitation de la ville et son oeuvre" from Musée de L'orangerie Museum Guide.

30 Pritchett, *What Silence taught John Cage,* 14.

31 In Pritchett's estimation, one can either "pay attention to the acoustic quality of the ambient sound we hear during the piece," or "think about the concept of silence, whether silence even really exists, the philosophical significance of a composer making a work that contains no willful sound, the composer's silence as a metaphor for any of a number of things, the political implications of putting the concert audience in this position." *What Silence Taught John Cage*, 14.

32 *For the Birds*. 153.

33 Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Wes-leyan University Press: Middletown, CT. 1961. 110.

34 Ross, 57.

35 See <www.cageagainsthemachine.blogspot.com> for more information. "Our campaign started as something of a joke, and that's how a lot of people see *4'33"*, but the truth is that John Cage thought very long and hard before composing it, and had some genuine ideas behind the piece. Anybody who tells you that it's "the emperor's new clothes" doesn't know what they are talking about. Your experience today is about being in the here and now, and as musicians and creative people you will all understand that music is made up of more than just formal notes and arrangements. Here today, we are doing something special, we are stopping and appreciating the space between things, the unintentional sounds that make up our world." – Dave Hilliard, creator of Cage Against the Machine. Comments given to performers prior to recording session.

36 Kostelanetz 264.

37 Ibid.