

THE DEPARTMENT
OF MUSIC PRESENTS



The Organ Works of John Cage

performed by

Gary Verkade
Carthage College Organist

Saturday
April 19, 1997
7:30 p.m.

A.F. Siebert Chapel
Carthage College
Kenosha, Wisconsin

JOHN CAGE:

SOUVENIR (1983)

ORGAN²/ASLSP (1987)

Some of THE HARMONY OF MAINE (1978)

GARY VERKADE, ORGAN

SOUVENIR, for Fred Tulan and commissioned by the American Guild of Organists, was written in 1983. It has dynamic markings and indications for registration as well as stipulations about how the manuals are to be employed. Completely different from **ORGAN²/ASLSP**, which follows it, and **Some of THE HARMONY OF MAINE**, which precedes it, **SOUVENIR** is essentially melodic. The musical material is derived from the hexachord G - A-flat - B-flat - C - D - E-flat. The construction of this hexachord is the mirror image to that of the hexachord first described by Guido of Arezzo (ca. 991-after 1033) in his Micrologus (1025-28): whereas the intervals of the hexachord (naturale, durum and mollum) of Guido are whole-step, whole-step, half step, whole-step, whole-step, with the half-step in the middle, Cage's hexachord--half-step, whole-step, whole-step, whole-step, whole-step, half-step--has whole-steps in the middle bordered by half-steps. The only notes which do not belong to the Cage hexachord are those of the thrice-repeated fortissimo pedal cluster which utilizes the lowest notes of the pedalboard.

In addition to the hexachord idea, a very old one, Cage employs another very old idea: that of repetition. The form of **SOUVENIR** is ABCA'BCA"BC. The A section is varied at each return, the other sections remain the same, as does the registration.

ORGAN²/ASLSP was written in 1987 for the German organist Gerd Zacher. It consists of eight pieces of which all are to be played in a performance and of which any one can be repeated anywhere in the series. This work was preceded in 1985 by the composition of **ASLSP** for piano. The title is an abbreviation of "as slow as possible" and refers to an exclamation from James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake: "Soft morning city! Lsp!"

Pitches are notated on staves but durations are indicated graphically. There is one staff, sometimes two, for each hand and each foot respectively; as many as six staves must be read simultaneously. The textures of the pieces are richly varied--ranging from one note to twelve. There are no dynamic markings or indications for registration. The organist is therefore free to use the entire palette of colors provided by the organ. In order to do the great variety of textures justice, registrational plans must be worked out that are just as various, just as rich; the help of registrants must be enlisted. Due to the particular arrangement of the stops on the present instrument, six registrants are needed. Though not dramatic in the theatrical sense, the music is never static and always luxuriantly varied.

Some of THE HARMONY OF MAINE (SUPPLY BELCHER) was written in 1978 for organ and six assistants. The first performance of this work was played in 1980 by German organist Gerd Zacher for whom the work was composed. I was one of the only three registrants participating in that performance.

The Harmony of Maine (1794), a treatise on music and choir singing as well as a collection of Psalm settings by Supply Belcher, who lived in the State of Maine, provides Cage with the material for this work. Cage attempted to free the original music from the rules of harmony while at the same time preserving its fragrance and flavor. He utilized chance operations and the I-Ching, an old Chinese book of oracles, to determine which notes of the original should be eliminated and how long those remaining should sound. The result is a music in which each tone, because surrounded by pauses, separated from its neighbors, resonates from its own center instead of being dependent on a theory which orders tones into hierarchies. The independence of each tone is emphasized by each having its own chance-determined registration. The name of the computer used to randomly generate the registrations, found as numbers in the score, is LOLETA. The registrants have much work to do in order to make this music possible. They must be able to react quickly, yet their actions must be smooth and calm, in keeping with the music and with a tempo which can be as slow as one wishes. The settings (the letters found after most titles indicate the meter of the hymn) used by Cage are:

ALPHA C.M.
MAJESTY C.M.
HARMONY C.M.
CREATION L.M.
HALLOWELL S.M.
ADVENT C.M.
TURNER L.M.
SUNDAY C.M.
ST. JOHN'S C.M.
INVITATION L.M.
TRANSMIGRATION
CHESTER L.M.
THE LILLY P.M.

- G.V.

Registrants: Ruth Peck
Melanie Mills
Katie Nagao
Shauna Olson
Geoff Pautsch
John Schubring

JOHN CAGE - excerpts from "An Autobiographical Statement," in John Cage: Writer, selected and introduced by Richard Kostelanetz, New York: Limelight Editions, 1993, p. 237-247.

I once asked Arragon, the historian, how history was written. He said, "You have to invent it." When I wish as now to tell of critical incidents, persons, and events that have influence my life and work, the true answer is all of the incidents were critical, all of the people influenced me, everything that happened and that is still happening influences me.

My father was an inventor. He was able to find solutions for problems of various kinds, in the fields of electrical engineering, medicine, submarine travel, seeing through fog, and travel in space without the use of fuel. He told me that if someone says "can't" that shows you what to do. He also told me that my mother was always right even when she was wrong.

My mother had a sense of society. She was the founder of the Lincoln Study Club, first in Detroit, then in Los Angeles. She became the Women's Club editor for the Los Angeles Times. She was never happy. When after Dad's death I said, "Why don't you visit the family in Los Angeles? You'll have a good time," she replied, "Now, John, you know perfectly well I've never enjoyed having a good time." When we would go for a Sunday drive, she'd always regret that we hadn't brought so-and-so with us. Sometimes she would leave the house and say she was never coming back. Dad was patient, and always calmed my alarm by saying, "Don't worry, she'll be back in a little while."

Neither of my parents went to college. When I did, I dropped out after two years. Thinking I was going to be a writer, I told Mother and Dad I should travel to Europe and have experiences rather than continue in school. I was shocked at college to see one hundred of my classmates in the library all reading copies of the same book. Instead of doing as they did, I went into the stacks and read the first book written by an author whose name began with Z. I received the highest grade in the class. That convinced me that the institution was not being run correctly. I left.

I spent two years trying to establish a Center for Experimental Music, in a college or university or with corporate sponsorship. Though I found interest in my work I found no one willing to support it financially.

In the late forties I found out by experiment (I went into the anechoic chamber at Harvard University) that silence is not acoustic. It is a change of mind, a turning around. I devoted my music to it. My work became an exploration of non-intention. To carry it out faithfully I have developed a complicated composing means using I Ching chance operations, making my responsibility that of asking questions instead of making choices.

My favorite music is the music I haven't yet heard. I don't hear the music I write: I write in order to hear the music I have not yet heard.

We are living in a period in which many people have changed their minds about what the use of music is or could be for them. Something that doesn't speak or talk like a human being, that doesn't know its definition in the dictionary or its theory in the schools, that expresses itself simply by the fact of its vibrations. People paying attention to vibratory activity, not in reaction to a fixed ideal performance, but each time attentively to how it happens to be this time, not necessarily two times the same. A music that transports the listener to the moment where he is.

Cover design by:
Kevin Zdenek

Music Events
Siebert Chapel

Sunday, April 20
Lyra String Quartet
4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 23
Departmental Recital
12:10 p.m.

Wednesday, April 23
Lambda Kappa Recital
Celebrating 150 Years of Carthage
7:00 p.m.

Friday, April 25*
Racine Symphony
with Carthage Choir
7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 26
John Schubring†
Junior Organ Recital
2:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 27
Family Weekend
Springfest Band/Choirs Concert
4:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 3
Bach's Magnificat
Community Chorus,
Chamber Singers, KSO
Reuther Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 4
Peter Rallo, Guitar Recital
Paul Marchese†, Junior Voice Recital
4:00 p.m.

*Public Admision, \$10
(There is no charge for the Carthage Students with ID)
All other events, except the Racine Symphony
and Kenosha Symphony concerts are without charge.

Ushers for Music Events are provided by:
Lambda Kappa Music Fraternity
†Lambda Kappa Member