

MATRICULAPHONY, a percussive circus on Van Meter Ames' A BOOK OF CHANGES
 (title of composition) (adjective) (author) (title of book)

PROGRAM NOTES

My entire recital takes place within the context of a Cage piece consisting only of written directions for translating a book into music. The piece requires the creation of an original title followed by "circus on" and then the name of the book being used. As might be inferred from "circus," the piece becomes a pandemonium of the book's contents. In his directions, Cage calls for reducing the book's words to a mesostic poem (think acrostic but with the spine down the middle. See example on page 4) and finding recordings of all sounds and from all places mentioned in the book. These sounds, after chance-determined manipulation, become the contents of an audio track that makes up the piece. Accordingly, my recital will be an hour of non-stop music and text, both live and pre-recorded.

In the premiere of this piece, Cage used James Joyce's novel, titling his piece "Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake." In my realization, I am using an unpublished manuscript written by late UC philosophy professor Van Meter Ames, which I discovered while working at UC's Archives and Rare Books Library. The manuscript details Ames' friendship with Cage and consists largely of stories from Cage's one year in residence at CCM in the 1966-67 academic year. Cage and Ames bonded over their shared interest in Zen philosophy and the aesthetics of art/music. The manuscript is somewhat dualistic in



Van Meter Ames (left) and John Cage. June, 1966

Photo credit: Archives and Rare Books Library

nature, outlining both Ames' personal experiences and his friendship with Cage. In it, Ames details his life, from growing up in Iowa to being a Fulbright fellow in Japan, while simultaneously incorporating conversations he had with Cage and chronicling the concerts and events Cage organized throughout his time at CCM. For a general idea of the book's contents, examples of chapter titles will suffice: John Cage in Cincinnati, Music & Literature, The Crack of the Status Quo,

Dancers, Dazzled in Italy, Poet in Residence, Feldman and Cage, Ferry Over Into the Beyond, Zen is Nothing, I-Ching, Jeanne Kirstein, The Newport Mix. Hence, the sounds mentioned in the book consist largely of Cage's own music (or music Cage would have talked about. Read: Brahms to Stockhausen to police sirens) and places as wide-ranging as cornfields and Buddhist temples. This cornucopia of sounds is reflected in the hour-long track playing throughout my entire recital, with my playing merely acting as another (live) layer of the track.

Because Cage's instructions for this piece were written over 30 years ago, some translation in terms of the technology to be employed was necessary. Where Cage calls for splicing and layering tape, I worked with Joel Matthys to develop a computer program that would

randomly assign the parameters Cage intended to a folder of digital files that I had gathered and compiled. The recordings being sampled from in this track include my own recordings, CD recordings, and audio found on the Internet and extracted via a virtual sound card. Multiple versions of 60, 30, and 15-minute tracks were generated and then layered on top of one another to develop an hour-long version that continually changes in density and auditory content.

My live layer of this piece will incorporate a variety of Cage's works, some excerpted, others in full. Throughout this hour, you will hear:

The Unavailable Memory Of (1944)

- One of Cage's early prepared piano works written for a dance by Merce Cunningham
- Weather stripping, wood, screws, and rubber, are placed between the strings of the piano to create unusual timbres

FROM Dance Music: for Elfrid Ide (1940)

Movement II

- Written to accompany the dance recital of Elfrid Ide, during Cage's appointment at Mills College
- Previously unknown to percussionists, this piece was discovered by the executive director of the John Cage Trust at Bard College, Laura Kuhn, while she was conducting research at Mills College
- Mvmt II is for four percussionists, using slide whistle, cymbal, toy piano, ratchet, squawker, bass drum, tom tom, and 3 muted gongs

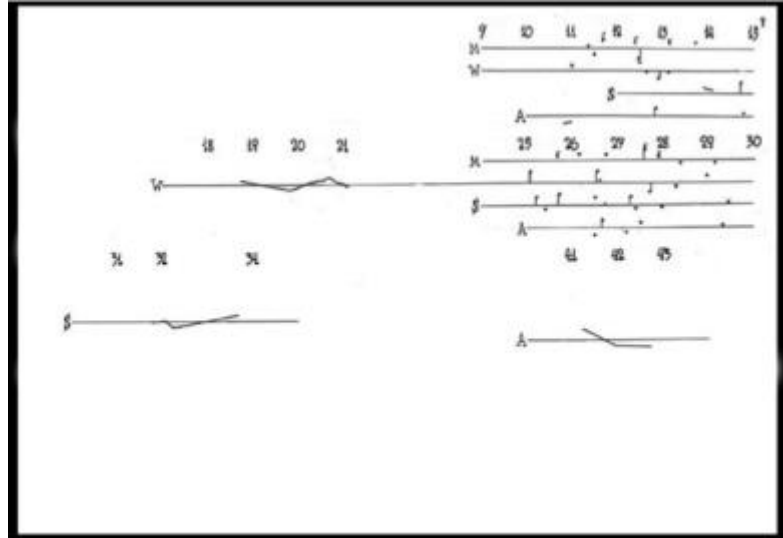
Music for One (1984)

- Music for _____ (the number of people playing) was first created as Music for Three for Percussion Group Cincinnati
- Specific parts were subsequently generated by Cage over a period of years for 17 different instruments
- Four kinds of music make up the piece:
 - a single held *p* tone, preceded and followed by silence, repeated any number of times
 - a number of tones in proportional notation: space = time, which are characterized by a variety of pitches, dynamics, timbres, and durations, within a limited range
 - an interlude of repeated tones
 - silence

This work was conceived for a multiple percussion set-up of 50 different instruments. I, however, have chosen to adapt the piece for solo marimba, using preparations and extended techniques to satisfy Cage's requirements. Throughout the piece, Cage uses an asterisk (*) above notes to indicate "a special sound produced"—i.e. a different beater, timbre, etc. The asterisk occurs 45 times throughout my excerpt and will be reflected in my mallet, preparation, and technique choices. I will be playing 15 minutes of the original 30-minute piece.

FROM 27'10.554" for a Percussionist (1956)
7'07.614" for a Percussionist

Each page of this piece equals one minute. Time is notated in seconds across the top of each line of music. The music is notated in terms of timbre and dynamic. M=metals; W=woods; S=skins, and A=auxiliary (electronics, whistles, etc.). The line extending from the start of each indicated timbre represents the dynamic *mf*, with notes below the line softer than this level and notes above louder (exact dynamic level is determined with respect to distance from the *mf* line). Stems are drawn from notes to the line when it is perhaps unclear to which timbral group they should belong. Hooks on the notes found in the M line indicate "let vibrate." Note placement was determined via imperfections in the paper (one of Cage's chance procedures). White space represents silence.



FROM Trio (1936)

Waltz

- For three players, each with blocks of wood
- Later used as a movement in *Amores* (1943)

Forever and Sunsmell (1944)

- For vocalist and two percussionists, originally written for dancer Jean Erdman
- The singer is allowed to sing in whatever range is comfortable, so long as she sings in a non-operatic style and avoids vibrato
- Title and text are excerpted from 26, one of 50 poems (1940) by e.e. cummings; Cage did not use the entire poem nor did he keep lines in their proper order

Dream (1948)

- A piece written for piano or harp, always with resonance; no silence
- Tones may be freely sustained, manually or with pedal, beyond the notated durations

This rendition is my own adaptation for marimba and vibraphone. The choice of when to switch between the two instruments was largely dictated by the range of pitches required.

Throughout the audio track and my live performance you will hear the mesostics created from Van Meter Ames's *A Book of Changes*. The spine "VAN METER AMES A BOOK OF CHANGES" was used to create the mesostic. Both the spine and the rules for choosing words and wing words were varied throughout the full-length mesostic for reasons of contrast and necessity. Below is an example of a mesostic derived from the text:

seVeral peopl e read ng
 At once
 with maNy voi ces
 Mix
 i rt Enti ons
 wTh
 non-i rt Enti ons
 that is poet Ry
 cAn be why shoul dit say
 shakespeare found ser Mons
 in st onEs
 duchamp in Shovel s
 sAd
 long Bef ore
 cOmposer s
 f Qund musi c i n sounds
 t aKes
 knOwi ng
 Fi nd ng
 musi C
 and wHat is not
 whAt is
 Not life as you live it
 it's not Getti ng
 Easi er to get work done
 it' S hard enough to get t hrough t he news

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Archives and Rare Books Library, and funds granted to me by the Undergraduate Research Council.

About Van Meter Ames:

Van Meter Ames was a faculty member in the UC philosophy department, beginning in 1925, and served as its head from 1959 until 1966 when he retired. Ames was a Rockefeller grantee, a fellow of the UC graduate school, and a Fulbright research professor in philosophy, University of Komozawa, Tokyo, 1958-59. Throughout his career, Ames wrote and published on a vast range of topics including aesthetics, the self, ethics, religion, science, freedom, existentialism, and Zen Buddhism.

About John Cage:

John Cage, born in Los Angeles in 1912, became one of the most notable avant-garde composers of the 20th Century. He studied with Arnold Schoenberg, Henry Cowell, Adolph Weiss, and Richard Buhlig but developed a style that was uniquely his own. Cage believed that any sounds could be music, which led him to compose for found objects, as well as standard instruments. With Zen at the core of his life philosophy, Cage sought to compose without intention and often used chance operations, via the *I Ching*, in his compositional process.

Though most widely recognized for his musical achievements, Cage had a strong influence in the worlds of dance, art, writing, and philosophy. He was the musical director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in New York City, often composing for and performing his music with the company. Evolving from a need for compactness when on tour with the dancers, Cage invented the prepared piano, which allowed him an array of percussive sounds without the trouble of transporting multiple percussion instruments.

In the realm of visual art, Cage produced lithographs, plexigrams, etchings, and prints. Like his music, much of his art incorporated chance operations and unconventional mediums/materials. His well-known works include, *Not wanting to Say Anything About Marcel* (1969), *Score Without Parts* (1978), and *Changes and Disappearances* (1979-80).

Cage often talked about the overlap between music, film, and art. Considering that “the essential meaning of silence is the giving up of intention,” Cage compared Robert Rauschenberg’s white paintings to Nam June Paik’s film with no images to his own piece for timed silence. He became a part of the American underground film scene, working with filmmakers like Stan Brakhage and Stan VanDerBeek.

More of Cage’s philosophy on art, and life in general, can be found in his writings, which include *Silence, M, Empty Words, X, A Year from Monday*, and *Anarchy*. Additionally, Cage’s obsession with mushrooms is evidenced in *The Mushroom Book*, which includes lithographs of mushrooms, as well as hand-written texts on mushroom hunting, identification, and

cooking. In conjunction with all of his other artistic works, Cage's writings involve chance operations and unusual textual and formal designs.