

21M.262: (11/30) CAGE (1912–1992)

1. Early life: interest in Schoenberg, but rhythmic patterns mostly recall Stravinsky and Bartók.
2. **Helen Chou presentation:** Prepared-piano music (including the Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano 1946–48)
3. Nonintention as a concept: the ambient piece, *In a Landscape* (1948). Composing music with a pen: it is impossible to make a mistake.
4. Structuring time: a leftover concept from serialism? Many of Cage's pieces (both before 1949 and after) employ complex divisions of the time of the piece (6 : 3³/₈ : 5 : etc.)
5. Aleatory
 - a. From Greek word "alea" or dice.
 - b. Aesthetics
 - c. Forerunners: Mozart Dice Game
 - d. Embrace of "whatever sound comes along" (Morton Feldman)
 - e. *I Ching*
 - f. *Music of Changes* (1951) – chance charts
 - g. *Imaginary Landscape no. 4* for 12 Radios (1951)
 - h. *TV Köhn* (1958)
 - i. *4'33"* (1952–1956)
 - j. Dance works with Merce Cunningham
6. After 1949: Two kinds of indeterminacy: Indeterminate with respect to composition, indeterminate with respect to performance.
 - a. Among the indeterminate with respect to composition were pieces (musical and not) we discussed: *Music of Changes* (coin flips and the *I Ching*), *Atlas Eclipticalis* (the piece where the notes are the position of stars on a star-chart) and the answers to questions for the *Lecture on Nothing*, and the text of the long poem *I-VI*.
 - b. The **sound** of the prepared-piano is indeterminate with respect to performance.
 - c. *4'33"* contains elements of both of these types: the length of the piece was determined by chance operations (indeterminate with respect to composition) while the sounds heard in the piece vary from performance to performance (indeterminate with respect to performance)

7. Late Works

- a. Poetry: *I-VI* (1990)
- b. *Diary: How to Improve the World (You'll Only Make Matters Worse)*
- c. Return to consonance
- d. Time bracket pieces: *Five* (1988)

8. Influence:

- a. Small uses of indeterminacy are common in contemporary composition, esp. in new tonal works
- b. Gave a theoretical justification and philosophical grounding to improvisation and other musical forms which vary from performance to performance.
- c. Largest influence: the New York School, Open Form and Fluxus: next class!

9. Course Evaluations

On the general evaluation, could you mentally replace anything that asks about “Reading” with “Reading, Listening, or Score Study” and then use the subject specific questions below to be more specific:

Subject Specific Questions for 21M.262

29: Reading (text) assignments contributed to the subject: 1 – 7

30: Listening assignments contributed to the subject: 1 – 7

31: For the reading do you wish you had (1) More primary source materials; (7) More secondary source materials (i.e., more from Morgan), or (4) balance okay.

32: The Wikipedia assignment was useful/enjoyable as a replacement for a standard paper (can you make 4 or 5=as useful; 6 or 7 more useful; 1–3 = less useful).