

September 2012

about this thing

The Transbay Creative Music Calendar is a volunteer-produced free monthly journal for non-commercial creative new music in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to our comprehensive listing of upcoming events, we publish articles and reviews about local music and the people who create it. We talk about a wide range of modern music, including: experimental, improvised, noise, electronic, free-jazz, outrock, 21st century compositions, and sonic art. Each month, 1,000 copies of the Transbay are mailed to individuals and hand-delivered to over 45 performance venues and public locations throughout the Bay Area. Contact us for a free subscription.

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Sonatas and Interludes (selected) (1948) for prepared piano

sfSound's Sonatas Interludes Transcription Project (2012)

The City Wears a Slouch Hat (1948) percussion, sound effects, and actors

Aria with Fontana Mix (1958) for voice and ensemble

Theatre Piece (1960)

sfSound presents
the music of
ChAnGEs

Variation XI of a Festival celebrating the John Cage Centennial

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20 2012 7pm!
SFMOMA theatre :: 151 3rd st :: san francisco :: \$10 [\$7 members]

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CONCERT REVIEW BY AMAR CHAUDHARY / CATSYNTH | AUGUST 21

John Cage, The Music of ChAnGEs: Variation VIII

Today we review **The Music of ChAnGEs: Variation VIII**, a concert in a yearlong series by **sfSound** celebrating John Cage's centennial. This particular concert, which took place at The Lab, featured some of Cage's more adventurous and experimental compositions, including works involving electronics and noise elements. These more conceptual pieces involved use of simple electronics, household objects, or unexpected musical sources. The scores are mostly based on sequences of instructions with absolute or relative time scales. In addition to 4'33" (which was not on the program), these are among the most celebrated examples of Cage's music, but also among the more misunderstood and even reviled. I fall unequivocally on the side of celebration of these more radical and pioneering works, and thus I was privileged to be able to participate in this concert myself as well.

The pre-concert and intermission music featured an interpretation of *One3* by **John Leidecker** (aka **Wobbly**). The piece contains the instruction to "arrange the soundsystem so that the whole hall is on the edge of feedback, without feeding back. The result is an abstract texture that goes from silent to occasionally quite loud at the unstable boundary, but the sound was also blended with the ambience of the conversations and commotion in the hall.

The formal concert opened with *Radio Music*. In this piece, each performer is given a written part with a sequence of AM radio frequencies to which to tune his or her radio (traditional analog broadcast AM/FM radios are required to perform this piece, no internet or digital-broadcast radios allowed). What, if anything, is audible on those particular frequencies is of course up to chance – sometimes it is just static, while other times one tunes into an actual station. Additionally, the performers were free to walk around the hall and to interpret the flow of time among positions in their part. The result was a spatialized electronic music texture with noise generators, distorted sine waves, and the occasional sampled recording. Particular combinations of sportscasts, music and tuning noise could be quite humorous.

This was followed by *Music for Amplified Toy Pianos*. Cage is often credited with bringing the toy piano into the realm of serious music with his 1948 *Suite for Toy Piano*. In *Music for Amplified Toy Pianos*, he pushes the instru-

ment further with the use of contact microphones, amplification, and more percussive interactions with the instrument itself. Like *Radio Music*, the score involves a series of instructions, indicating the pitches to be played by each performer, when to perform a "sound effect" on the instrument, and when to change the level on the associated amplifier – but in this piece, the times are given in absolute units. This was my station for the performance, with my own toy piano that was rescued from curbside dumping in New York. It has certainly had a better life at CatSynth HQ, and then the opportunity to appear in a concert like this!

Performing this piece accurately requires concentration – one must pay attention to the cues on his or her own part without being distracted by the other sounds. Nonetheless, like all ensemble music one is listening to overall sound. The texture of the piece is quite sparse, with individual disjoint notes punctuated by percussive sounds (hits, scrapes, etc.). The amplification changes add a strange sort of dynamic expression especially as the ear inevitably tries to pull together disparate parts into short phrases. There was not as much empty space in this performance as I heard on earlier recordings of the piece, in part due to our interpretation of the noise elements, which included longer-duration sounds like scraping a comb on the piano and the interaction of the amplifiers with ambient and electrical noises. It was a delight to play and to be able to at least partially listen to. The other performers for the piece included **Kyle Bruckmann**, **Daniel Cullen**, **Tom Dill**, **Sivan Eldar**, **Matt Ingalls**, and **Hadley McCarroll**.

The only piece on the program not written by Cage himself was a tribute by **Christopher Burns** entitled *Unlit Cigarettes (for John Cage)*. Ostensibly a multi-movement chamber piece with voices, winds, and strings, it followed the theme of other pieces in the concert with unusual patterns and instructions for the performers. Among the most interesting were the instructions for one or more performers to play on another performer's main instrument. For example, multiple performers attempted to make sounds from Burns' guitar while he held it. There was also a recitation of a familiar-sounding text by Gertrude Stein in one movement. Her writing often involves repeated words and phrases, which made for very contrapuntal and rhythmic music. Burns was joined in the performance by **Kyle Bruckmann**

on oboe, **Tom Dambly** on trumpet, **Tara Flandreau** on violin, **Matt Ingalls** on clarinet, **John Ingle** on saxophone, and **Hadley McCarroll** on voice. You can hear a bit of the performance in this video: Go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BvmxKnPUu8&feature=player_embedded

This was followed by one of Cage's most conceptual pieces, *0'00*". The score of the piece consists of the single statement "In a situation provided with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action." It is often subtitled *4'33 no. 2*, and although it has very little in common with the original *4'33*, it does represent another extreme of what can be considered music. The "deliberate action" in this particular performance involved **Matt Ingalls'** sitting at a desk and writing checks to pay the musicians. A contact microphone picked up the sound of the writing and it was amplified into the hall. It wasn't the most pleasant sound even when judged in comparison to the other extreme sounds of the evening, but it was a faithful rendition and the action was a humorous and appropriate choice for this concert. (And it's nice to get paid for playing experimental music.)

The final piece before the intermission was *Living Room Music*. Dating back to 1940, this was one of Cage's earlier pieces and explores the use of household objects as percussion instruments. Ingalls was again seated behind the desk from *0'00* with the other performers (**Matthew Goodheart**, **Tom Dambly**, and **Hadley McCarroll**) arranged to either side. Despite what was radical instrumentation for a concert setting at the time, the rhythmic work seemed rather conventional, with repeated polyrhythms and other patterns from idiomatic music. It was the combination of the staging, to look more like a room in a house with the desk and books, and the timbres of the "instruments" that allowed the concept of the piece to enter the listening experience. Once one accepted the setting, then focus shifts to the rhythms.

The concert resumed with *Music for Six*, a performance of Cage's modular piece *Music for _____* by six musicians, essentially the same ensemble that played Christopher Burns' piece minus Burns. This is one of the most flexible and reconfigurable pieces, even more of a "composition generating kit" than the others. Although the instrumentation for this performance was traditional chamber instruments, the piece calls

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the transbay

Creative Music Calendar

Saturday September 1

Subterranean Arthouse • 8pm \$10
Shayna Dulberger, solo doublebass
Cylinder (Johnston-Shelton-Mezzacappa-Nordeson)
plus special guests Chris Welcome, gtr (NYC), John Finkbeiner (gtr), Aaron Bennett (tenor sax)

Sunday September 2

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10-20 sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
sundays @berkeley arts presents Rova Saxophone Quartet: Bruce Ackley, soprano; Steve Adams, alto; Larry Ochs, s tenor; Jon Raskin, baritone

Monday September 3

Makeout Room • 8pm free
The Monday Makeout: Lorin Benedict (voice) - Kim Cass (bass) Duo; Jim Ryan's Forward Energy; Jayn Pettingill's Kaijuscop (**project premiere!)
**Godzilla film scores arranged for large ensemble with new visuals by Michele Graffiet

Wednesday September 5

Berkeley Arts Festival • 8pm \$10-20 sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
wednesdays @berkeley arts
8 pm: Goldberg, Brown & Anderson
Vijay Anderson - drums, Sheldon Brown - reeds, Ben Goldberg - clarinet
9 pm: jayn pettingill's kajuscop
arranging/re-interpreting the music of akira ikufube (GOJIRA film composer) Trumpet: Chris Grady, Tenor saxophone/clarinet: Cory Wright, Low reeds: Carolyn Walter, Trombone: Matt Plummer (Brooklyn, NY), Alto saxophone/flute: Jayn Pettingill, Drums: Vijay Anderson, Bass: Lisa Mezzacappa, Keyboard/vocals: Michelle Alexander
Bass Drum: Suki O'Kane

Friday September 7

Explorist International • 7pm free/donation
Young: contrabass (Chicago / Tiger Hatchery)
Aram Shelton: saxophone
Jacob Felix Heule: drums
Joe Lasqo

Saturday September 8

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
berkeley arts presents eric satie's VEXATIONS - over 20 hours of continuous satie piano music!

Starry Plough • 9pm \$10
The Starry Plough Presents Scott Amendola Quartet (with Ben Goldberg, Josh Smith, John Shifflett); PG13 (Phillip Greenlief, John Shiurba, Tom Scandura); Ava Mendoza Trio (with Dominique Leone & Nick Tamburro

Sunday September 9

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
berkeley arts presents eric satie's VEXATIONS - over 20 hours of continuous satie piano music!

SIMM Series • 7:30pm \$10/8
7:30 Melancholics: David Beck - baritone sax/Bill Noertker - contrabass
8:30 Noertker's Moxie: Annelise Zamula - tenor sax, flute/Amber Lamprecht - oboe,flute/John Vaughn - baritone sax, flute/Bill Noertker - bass/Dax Compise -drums

Cafe Van Kleef • 9pm
Aram Shelton (sax) + Alex Vittum (drums)
Andrew Scott Young (bass, Chicago) + Jacob Felix Heule (drums)

Wednesday September 12

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
wednesdays @berkeley arts
8 pm sheldon brown trio: sheldon brown - reeds, michael wilcox - bass, bryan bowman - drums

Thursday September 13

Meridian Gallery • 7pm \$10
NextNow.9 - Aaron Bennett's Electro-Magnetic Trans-Personal Orchestra = collective improvisation. (Rob Ewing, Theo Padouvas, Crystal Pascucci, Jeff Hobbs, Bob Marsh, Lisa Mezzacappa, Joe Lasqo.)
Mika Pontecorvo's Cartoon Justice = new emergent composition from live sonic architecture, and Key West - Brian Pedersen, Sung Kim, Dave Dupuis = inventive free jazz with alternative instruments.

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10
8:15 pm: Ashley Bellouin (<http://soundcloud.com/ashley-bellouin>)
8:45 pm: Sarah Davachi (<http://soundcloud.com/sarahdavachi>)
9:30 pm: ATTO PLAIN
April Tang: Contact mics, keyboard, and pedals.
Michael Mersereau: guitar, bass, laptop, and pedals.

Friday September 14

Intersection for the Arts • 8pm \$12 student/senior, \$15 general, \$25 true value
Revelations: Body + Space conjures imaginations of our bodies and space. Sound artist [ruidobello] collaborates with dancer Monique Goldwater to present "Womb," which investigates concepts of physical, emotional, and spiritual rebirth, and how we can regenerate through artistic revelation.

Saturday September 15

Jazzschool • 8pm
The New Monsters band: A hard-hitting post-bop group with exciting rhythms and melodic lyricism sure to delight serious listeners. Featuring Dan Plonsey, tenor sax; Steve Adams, alto/soprano sax/flute; Scott R. Looney, piano; Steve Horowitz, bass; John Hanes, drums.

Sunday September 16

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
sundays @berkeley arts
8 pm: anne pajunen (sweden) & gino robair

Tuesday September 18

Tom's Place • 7:30pm Free, donations accepted
Magda Mayas (piano) with John Shiurba (guitar) and Gino Robair (percutronics)

Wednesday September 19

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
wednesdays @berkeley arts presents
8 pm: john bischoff - electronics, phillip greenlief - tenor saxophone, karen stackpole - gongs, percussion
9 pm: Amat Sings Brody, laurie amat - voice, joshua raoul brody - piano, keyboards, accordion, etc.

Thursday September 20

SFMOMA • 7pm \$10/7
sfSound's Music of ChAnGEs Festival, featuring John Cage's "City Wears a Slouch Hat", "Sonatas and Interludes", "Aria with Fontana Mix", and "Theatre Piece"

San Francisco Art Institute • 7pm \$12 student/senior, Panel Discussions and presentations on the future of our sonic traditions, rituals, acoustics and storytelling. Co-sponsored by SwissNex San Francisco

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10
8:15pm: TBD
8:45pm: Feline Bureau
ukulele, electronics, found objects
9:30pm: Moe! Staiano

Saturday September 22

The Red Poppy Art House • 9pm
The Steve Adams/Lisa Mezzacappa Duo
Steve Adams – woodwinds
Lisa Mezzacappa - bass
Aram Shelton Quartet, "Everything for Somebody"
Album Release Show
Aram Shelton - alto saxophone, Keefe Jackson - tenor saxophone, Anton Hatwich - bass, Tim Daisy - drums

Sunday September 23

Bird & Beckett Books and Records • 4:30pm
New Monsters – jazz
Dan Plonsey (tenor sax), Steve Adams (alto and soprano saxes),
Scott R. Looney (piano), Steve Horowitz (bass), John Hanes (drums)

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
sundays @berkeley arts presents
8 pm: noah schenker trio; matt clark - piano, noah schenker - bass, smith dobson iii - drums
9 pm: phillip greenlief - tenor saxophone, scott walton - bass

Wednesday September 26

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
8 pm: steve adams - ken filiano duo, steve adams - reeds, ken filiano (nyc) bass
9 pm: Myles Boisen's Ornetteology

Darren Johnston - trumpet, Steve Adams - alto saxophone, Phillip Greenlief - tenor saxophone, Myles Boisen - guitar, John Finkbeiner - guitar, Ken Filiano - bass, Kim Cass - bass, Vijay Anderson - drums, John Hanes - drums

Thursday September 27

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10 sliding
8pm: White Pee
Larry Boothroyd, Michael Boul, Benjamin Tinker, and Josh Pollock
9pm:Grampus
Louis Lopez - trumpet/Max/MSP, Daniel Eaton - trombone/Max/MSP, Michael Lockwood -percussion

Friday September 28

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible
8 pm: Marco Eniedi Trio
marco eniedi - alto saxophone, lisa mezzacappa - bass, vijay anderson - drums

Sunday September 30

Jazzschool • 2pm \$30 advance/\$45 at the door
Improvisation Workshop with Ken Filiano and Steve Adams . "Strategies for Collaboration in Improvisation"

The Legion of Honor • 2pm free
Soundwave ((5)) Humanities' Finale event will be held in the grand outdoor courtyard at the Legion of Honor. Over 35 musicians and vocalists invite you to a surreal one-of-a-kind experience, coming together to celebrate our human triumphs, acknowledge our tragedies and signal the beginning of a new collective future amongst the Beaux Arts columned courtyard and Rodin's The Thinker overlooking the beginning of the world where the land meets the seas.

Hemlock Tavern • 8pm \$7
NOISE JAZZ PROG GARAGE FREEDOM MUSIC mini-fest **8pm start time**
MUTUAL AID PROJECT (Tracy Hui, Guitar / Nick Obando, Alto Saxophone / Marshall Trammell, Drums)
Marco Eneidi SHATTERED (Marco Eneidi, alto saxophone / Lisa Mezzacappa, acoustic bass / Vijay Anderson, drums)
INNER EAR BRIGADE (Bill Wolter, guitar / Chris Lau, drums / Stevo Wright, bass / Andrew Vernon, keyboards / Ivor Holloway, saxophone / Melody Ferris, vocals / David Shaff, trumpet)

Berkeley Arts Festival • \$10 - \$20, sliding scale - wheelchair accessible

sundays @berkeley arts presents
8 pm: OPERA WOLF
john marshall - tenor saxophone, crystal pascucci - cello, robert lopez - percussion
9 pm: the hearts and horses method
wes stead - electronics, jeanette stead - prepared
fender rhodes, voice, thomas monson - drums

venue information

Berkeley Arts
2133 University Avenue, Berkeley

Bird & Beckett Books and Records
653 Chenery St. San Francisco

Brava Theater
2718 24th Street, San Francisco

Cafe Royale
800 Post Street, San Francisco

Cafe Van Kleef
1621 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland

Community Music Center
544 Capp Street, San Francisco

Explorist International
3174 24th Street, San Francisco

Intersection for the Arts
925 Mission Street, San Francisco

Hemlock Tavern
1131 Polk Street San Francisco

Jazzschool
2087 Addison Street, Berkeley

The Legion of Honor
100 34th Avenue, San Francisco

Luggage Store Gallery
1007 Market Street, San Francisco [at 6th]

Makeout Room
22 st at mission, San Francisco

Meridian Gallery
535 Powell Street, San Francisco

Musicians' Union Hall
116 9th Street, San Francisco [at Mission]

The Red Poppy Art House
2698 Folsom Street, San Francisco

San Francisco Art Institute
Lecture Hall, 800 Chestnut Street, San Francisco

SFMOMA
151 3rd, San Francisco

Starry Plough
3101 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley

Subterranean Arthouse
2179 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

Tom's Place
3111 Deakin Street, Berkeley

Uptown
1928 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland

Zen Center
600 Page Street, San Francisco

the persistent caveat

Schedules are subject to change, and the reasons can be totally appalling, flying in the face of human reason. Please confirm details provided in this publication by visiting transbaycalendar.org.

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for extensive use of microtones that push the instruments into different sonic territory.

The most unusual instrumentation of the evening was in *Inlets (Improvisation III)*. The piece called for three amplified water-filled conch shells, one conch shell played like a trumpet, and pre-recorded sounds of fire. The honor of playing the conch shells fell to **Matt Ingalls, Tom Dambly and Tom Djil**.

There was much of the expected splashing and gurgling sounds that one would expect from the conch shells, but also surprising details such as short percussive sequences from the action of the water. These instruments were quite difficult for the performers to control, which makes the resulting music more unpredictable. At times it was also difficult to tell what was generated by the water in the shells and the fire in the recording, adding an aspect of "elemental ambiguity" to one's enjoyment of the piece.

The concert concluded with a performance of *Cartridge Music*. The piece has a similar structure to *Music for Amplified Toy Pianos* and *Inlets*, but distills the concept further to just modified phonograph cartridges – realized for this performance using contact microphones – and found objects. The piece unfolded with each performer rubbing his or her respective found objects against the microphones according to the timed instructions in the score. The resulting music was once again quite sparse, but with a wide dynamic and timbral range from the array of objects used, including Matthew Goodheart's cymbals (a miniature version of the system he presented a few weeks earlier at the Out-sound Music Summit), metal objects in a bowl played by Kyle Bruckmann, and many others. By following the changes in texture, density and volume, one can start to hear phrasing and form in the music.

In listening to (and in some cases performing) the works in this concert with their emphasis on generative techniques, "compositional tools" and indeterminacy, I could not help but think of Fluxus, for which Cage was an important influence (though not technically a member). The connection to Fluxus provides a strong conceptual context as well as connection to visuals of the time and place where Cage created these works. Nonetheless, they all still stand out as excellent on a purely musical level in the concert setting, with sounds and textures that were quite enjoyable to listen to despite Cage's undeserved reputation of writing impenetrable music. The concert was also well attended, with a full house packed into The Lab. A very successful night all around.●