
Cage, John (Milton, Jr.)

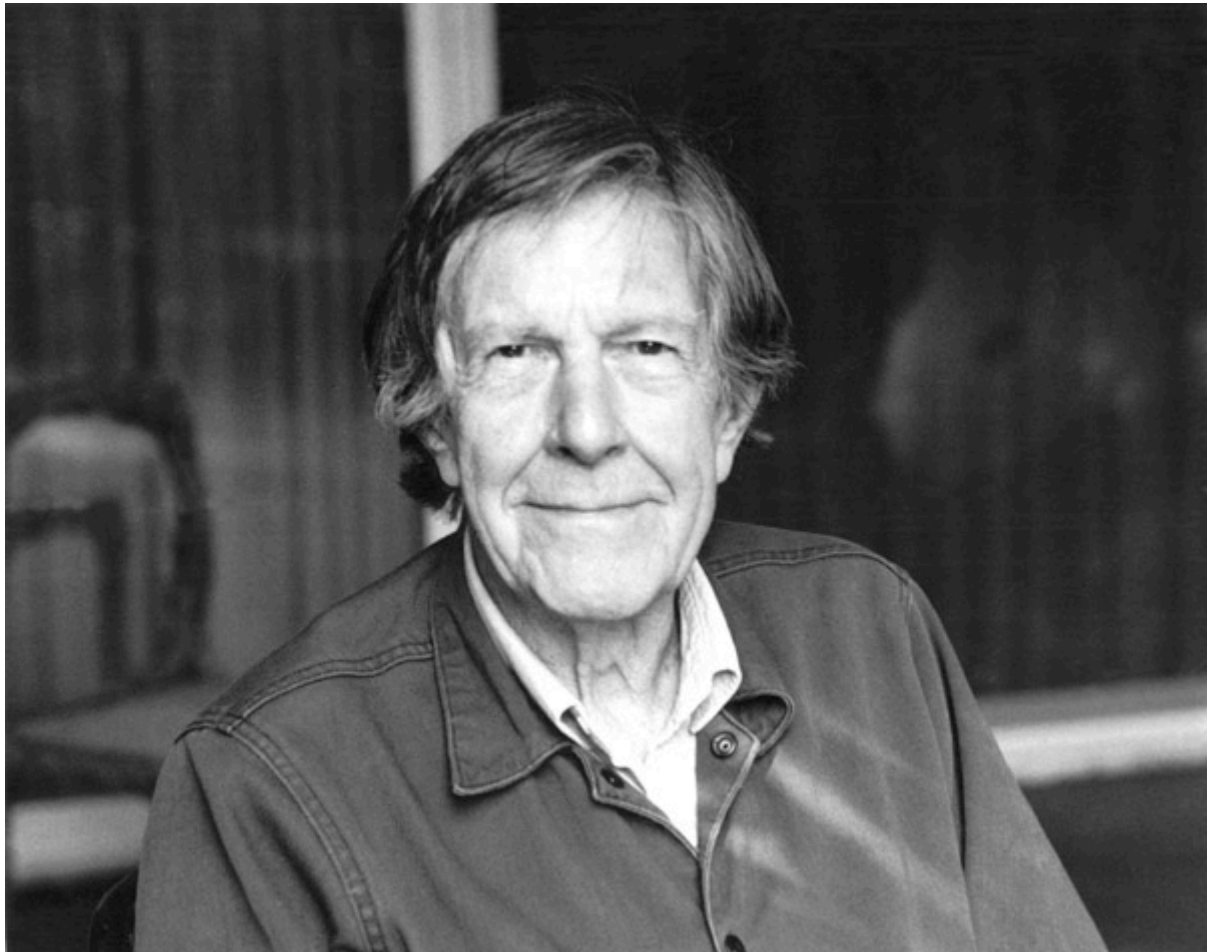
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(*b* Los Angeles, Sept 5, 1912; *d* New York, Aug 12, 1992). American composer. One of the leading figures of the postwar avant garde. The influence of his compositions, writings and personality has been felt by a wide range of composers around the world. He had a greater impact on music in the 20th century than any other American composer.



John Cage, 1991.

Betty Freeman/Lebrecht Music & Arts

1. Beginnings.

His initial education was at Los Angeles High School and then, for two years, at Pomona College, Claremont, which he left in 1930. After a year in Europe dabbling in various arts, Cage came back to Los Angeles in 1931 and began to study composition. His first instruction came from Richard Buhling, who subsequently introduced him to Henry Cowell, with whom he studied non-Western, folk and contemporary music at the New School for Social Research. Cage's compositional interests tended

towards chromatic counterpoint and Cowell suggested that he study with Adolph Weiss in New York with an aim towards working with Arnold Schoenberg who had recently arrived in the United States. Cage followed Schoenberg to Los Angeles in 1934 and was awestruck by the elder composer and his fierce devotion to music. Cage vowed to devote his life to composition as a result of his encounters with Schoenberg, and he recounted the story of this vow countless times during his life.

Cage's early compositions were modest pieces in which he tried to extend Schoenberg's dodecaphonic serial method first by using a 25-note series in works such as *Solo with Obligato Accompaniment of Two Voices in Canon, ... and Six Short Inventions on the Subjects of the Solo* (1934) and *Composition for Three Voices* (1934), and then by fragmenting the row into cells that could be permuted and repeated (*Metamorphosis, Music for wind instruments*). Neither of these methods captured his interest for long.

2. Dance, percussion, prepared piano.

In 1937 he began working as a dance accompanist at UCLA and the following year he took on a position at the Cornish School of the Arts in Seattle, Washington, again as accompanist for dance and teacher. This was the site for a number of important discoveries in Cage's life. It was here that he first met the dancer Merce Cunningham, with whom he would develop a lasting working relationship that also saw them become life partners. Through dance Cage was also introduced to the idea of writing music for percussion ensemble, using dancers as musicians. It was a medium conducive to his talents as a sonic innovator and he saw his work as extending the reach of music to include noises that had previously been considered "unmusical." Cage included all manner of exotic and mundane objects in the ensemble: standard drums, blocks and gongs; Balinese, Japanese and Indian instruments; tin cans and car brake drums. Alongside this development Cage was among the first composers to envisage the expansion of sonic possibilities implied by electronic technologies. In the radio station of the Cornish School, he composed *Imaginary Landscape no.1* in 1939 for a broadcast that used piano, cymbals and turntables playing test tone recordings at different and changing speeds.

The same year Cage composed the *First Construction (in Metal)* for percussion sextet, his first work to employ a structure based on relating lengths of time at different levels. The piece consists of units of 16 measures, each divided into 5 phrases with lengths of 4, 3, 2, 3 and 4 bars; there are 16 of these units, grouped into 5 sections in the same proportions. Thus the division of the whole into parts parallels the division of the individual parts into phrases. The structure used here, with minor variations, was the basis of all Cage's major concert works until 1956. That he ultimately relied on time as the basis of musical structure was the result of the combination of his use of unpitched materials and his work with dancers, whose choreography used similar structures.

It was also at the Cornish School that Cage began to employ the prepared piano. In 1938 a dancer had need of a percussion ensemble score, but the hall in which the performance was to take place did not have sufficient space to accommodate the players. Cage, mindful of Cowell's earlier experiments, responded by using a piano with screws, bolts and pieces of felt weatherstripping inserted between the strings. The added objects cause the sound of the instrument to be completely transformed, such that it produced timbres reminiscent of various percussion instruments. The resulting piece, *Bacchanale* (1940), is musically similar to the simple percussion works of the time, but requires only a single performer.

Cage's percussion ensemble, joined at times by players working in San Francisco under the direction of Lou Harrison, played concerts up and down the west coast until 1941, at which time Cage travelled to Chicago. The ensemble had generated some interest in the general media, and he was asked by the Columbia Broadcasting System to compose the soundtrack for a radio play by the poet Kenneth Patchen: *The City Wears a Slouch Hat* (1942). After composing an elaborate work for radio sound effects that proved far too difficult, Cage composed a second, more modest percussion score. Thinking that the radio commission would lead to greater opportunities, Cage moved to New York in 1942 and staged a percussion concert at the Museum of Modern Art. After this concert, however, his hopes did not materialize, his fortunes turned, and he found himself residing in a spacious but shabby commercial building on the lower east side of the city.

With his percussion instruments lost in Chicago, Cage again took up the prepared piano, an instrument barely touched since his first use four years earlier. He began a series of dance accompaniments, primarily for choreography by Cunningham (e.g. *Totem Ancestor*, 1942; *In the Name of the Holocaust*, 1942), that featured the spare and delicate sounds of the instrument, extending its range by inserting different objects – pieces of wood, bamboo, plastic, rubber and coins. Encouraged by these smaller pieces, Cage embarked on a series of larger projects, including *The Perilous Night* (1944) and two works for prepared piano duo: *A Book of Music* (1944) and *Three Dances* (1945). His expansion of piano techniques again led to notoriety and the confirmed view of him as an “experimentalist” and the heir to Cowell. However, he later received awards from both the Guggenheim Foundation (1949) and the National Academy of Arts and Letters (1949) for his work with the prepared piano, cited as having “extended the boundaries of musical art.”

3. New aesthetics, silence.

In 1946 Cage met an Indian musician, Gita Sarabhai, who introduced him to Indian philosophy and music. Cage felt an immediate and strong affinity for Asian aesthetics and spirituality. Of critical importance was his study of the writings of art historian Ananda K. Coomaraswamy; these in turn introduced him to the sermons of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart. Ideas from Indian aesthetics begin to be evident in Cage's work in the 1947 ballet *The Seasons* and also in the hour-long series of short pieces for prepared piano, the *Sonatas and Interludes* (1946–8), in which his aim was to portray the eight “permanent emotions” of Indian aesthetics – the erotic, the heroic, the odious, anger, mirth, fear, sorrow and the wondrous – and their common tendency towards tranquility. The combination of the sonic inventiveness of the prepared piano and the quiet immobility of the Asian imagery brought together the strongest aspects of Cage's character; the *Sonatas and Interludes* is a truly exceptional work and may be said to mark the real start of Cage's mature compositional life.

After travelling in Europe in 1949 (where he befriended the young Boulez, with whom he was to have a significant correspondence), Cage returned to New York where another critical period in his life began. At a performance given by the New York PO, Webern's Concerto op.24 made such an impression on him that he felt unable to stay and hear the rest of the concert; as he walked out, he met Morton Feldman doing exactly the same. Aesthetically sympathetic to one another, Cage and Feldman intensively shared ideas and music for the next four years. Feldman introduced Cage to the pianist David Tudor and the composer Christian Wolff. Feldman was also close to many of the abstract Expressionist painters in New York, and Cage began to move in these circles as well.

It was in these last years of the 1940s that Cage also started to develop an aesthetic of silence. His interests in Asian aesthetics moved from India to Japan, from Hindu theories to the culture of Zen Buddhism, as exemplified by the haiku master Bashō or the Ryoanji stone garden in Kyoto. Cage began to cultivate an aesthetic and spiritual silence in both his life and work. He took to heart the purpose of music as expressed by his friend Gita Sarabhai: “to quiet and sober the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences.” His goal became not just to evoke stillness, but to practice it, allowing his work to be as empty and flat as the raked sand of Ryoanji. In 1950 this line of thought resulted in the seminal “Lecture on Nothing” (published in *Silence: Lectures and Writings*), delivered to The Artists’ Club in New York. “I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it” was Cage’s succinct formulation of his new aesthetic. In the lecture, Cage associates this silence with the use of time-based structures; the division of the whole duration into parts exists and has integrity whether or not the composer “says anything” inside the structure. Completely static or uneventful music could fill up the duration structures – or even no music at all. Cage realized this at least as early as 1948, when he outlined his plan for a piece consisting of four-and-a-half minutes of silence, to be called “Silent Prayer.”

This new approach to silence, his exposure to Zen texts and Japanese culture, the stimulation of his new associates and the musical vision of the *Sonatas and Interludes* propelled Cage into a period of tremendous creativity and production. In 1950 he completed his *String Quartet in Four Parts* begun while in Europe, which translated the sonic imagery of the prepared piano to the medium of string quartet. Just as each key of the prepared piano triggered a fixed, complex sonority, so in the quartet Cage worked with a limited set of sonorities (which he called a “gamut”) that were scored for each player in an unchanging way. These fixed sonorities also produce a succession of harmonies that neutralize any sense of progression, resulting in a static, aimless, “silent” harmony.

4. Chance.

In the latter part of 1950 Cage extended his “gamut technique” to orchestra, beginning a three-movement Concerto for prepared piano and chamber orchestra. He tried to systematize the orchestra gamut by arranging the sonorities into rectangular charts, making continuities by tracing geometric patterns on these charts. The solo prepared piano in the first movement, meanwhile, was composed in a more subjective fashion, establishing a kind of dramatic tension between soloist and ensemble. In the second movement the solo part partakes more of the systematic aspect, following the orchestra around the charts in concentric circles, the way “a disciple follows the master” as the composer put it. But it is in the third – composed following a break in which Cage wrote *Sixteen Dances* (1950–51) for an evening of Cunningham choreography – in which the distancing of compositional subjectivity from material objectivity took a decisive new turn. In this movement the drama of the previous two is resolved by the introduction into the compositional process of what Cage called “chance operations.”

This breakthrough was prepared by Feldman’s creation of *Extensions 1*, the first of his compositions in which sounds are notated as numbers on graph paper, indicating only the quantity of notes to be played and the register in which they are to appear. Cage found what he described as Feldman’s embrace of “whatever sound comes along” to be heroic and inspirational, Feldman having achieved a completely different level of compositional silence than Cage had yet approached. In Cage’s *Lecture on Something* of early 1951, he praised Feldman’s graph pieces as having “changed the responsibility of the composer from making to accepting.”

As Feldman's example emboldened Cage, the other event that led him to chance operations was a purely practical and technical one. In late 1950, Cage was given a copy of the *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese oracle text in which images are selected at random from a set of 64 by means of tossing yarrow sticks or coins. The *I Ching* chart arrangement of the 64 images gave Cage the idea of using a coin-tossing oracle as a way of selecting the sonorities from his own charts. In the last movement of the Concerto, the piano and orchestra share the same array of sonorities; the movement from sound to silence to sound results from the operations of the oracle. Thus although Cage had carefully composed each sonic event in the chart, the order of events in the composition itself is completely random and outside the control of the composer's conscious mind.

Chance operations forever altered Cage's aesthetic of silence. Where before he had seen silence as impassiveness, flatness or aimlessness, he now saw it as a complete negation of the composer's will, tastes and desires. Silence had nothing to do with the acoustic surface of events, but instead was a function of the inner forces that prompted the sounds. Acoustic silence changed from being an absence of sound to being an absence of intended sound. Cage turned deliberately towards the world of unintended sound, announcing that his goal was to be "free of individual taste and memory." But such sweeping statements were somewhat misleading. Cage employed chance operations only in the ordering and coordination of musical events. The selection of materials, the planning of structure and the overall musical stance were still shaped by his stylistic predilections. What he had learned by using chance operations in a work like the Concerto was that, given a set of sounds and a structure built on lengths of time, any arrangement of the sounds and silences would be valid and interesting. Chance, by helping to avoid habitual modes of thinking, could in fact produce something fresher and more vital than that which the composer might have invented alone.

Following this breakthrough Cage immediately set to work on *Music of Changes* (1951), a lengthy work for piano solo that applies chance to charts of sounds, rhythms, tempos and dynamics. *Imaginary Landscape no.4* for 12 radios (1951) was written using an identical system, again demonstrating that it was quite irrelevant what specific sounds happened within the constraints of a rhythmic structure. In 1952 he stated this premise in its most provocative form in *4' 33"*, the final realization of his long-planned "Silent Prayer." The piece consists of three movements, each completely silent. Although Cage had conceived the piece in 1948 (while still working on the *Sonatas and Interludes*), it was only after he began working with chance operations that he felt confident enough to see the project to fruition. *4' 33"* has become Cage's most famous and controversial creation.

Apprehending the limitless musical universe that chance operations made available, Cage devoted himself to opening up his individual works, always seeking to use the widest range of sounds for whatever medium was at hand. The 1950s were a period of intense creativity, in which he experimented with ways of composing and notating his works so that they could encompass more and more varied possibilities. Always excited about technological innovations, in 1952 he acquired some tape recording equipment and produced the elaborate *Williams Mix* for magnetic tape (1952), one of the first such pieces created in the United States. He designed several different chance-controlled compositional systems, eventually ceasing to use charts which had the tendency to produce repetitions of events. In the *Music for Piano* series (1952-6) imperfections on the paper became notes by the application of staff lines and clefs. In another ambitious series of compositions whose titles were taken from their minutely-defined durations, e.g. *26' 1.1499' for a String Player* (1953-5), this same technique was coupled with more complex structures to make a music of diverse shapes, contours and continuities that is never predictable.

In these “time-length” works, Cage investigated ways of opening up his compositions by making their notation ambiguous, a situation he referred to as “indeterminacy.” This meant that the results of his compositional systems were no longer fixed objects but took on more the character of processes. The performer’s role was to animate the process Cage had set forth, producing results that, while having certain similarities, would differ in details at each performance or “realization.” The exploration of indeterminacy was the moving force behind the extraordinary piano solo of the *Concert* for piano and orchestra (1957–8). This composition consists of 63 pages which are covered with dozens of different ways of notating music, some that are variants of notations he had already developed, others completely new and always highly imaginative. The discoveries of the *Concert* sparked a number of further notational developments. Most notable of these was the use of transparent plastic: a performance could be created by superimposing notations on the transparencies in different orientations and then reading the result. This was first done in *Music Walk* for multiple pianists (1958) and was taken to its purest and most extreme form in *Variations II* (1961), in which the score consists of 11 small transparent sheets, six with lines, five with dots. The 11 sheets are arranged haphazardly and then measurements of the distances from points to lines are interpreted as the values of fundamental sonic variables (e.g. pitch, duration, timbre and dynamics). The flexibility of the piece is such that it could theoretically describe any imaginable combination of sounds.

5. Fame.

Cage’s work had been known in contemporary music circles for some good while (in part through teaching in the late 1950s at the New School for Social Research, where he instructed a number of composers who were involved in Fluxus), but in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he rose to a much higher prominence through performances abroad (both on his own and with the Cunningham Dance Company; fig.2), recordings (including the famous recording of his 1958 lecture “Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music”). In 1961 his music began to be published by C.F. Peters, and consequently to be performed worldwide. Most importantly, the same year saw the publication of *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. This collection, probably more than any other single production, turned him into a composer of international renown. Yet it was often the case that many of Cage’s critics knew the book, but had never heard a composition, and few had heard enough of the music to appreciate the range of musical expressions included. This has led to many misunderstandings, myths and hostilities, and it is probably the reason for the dubious judgment that Cage was more a philosopher than a composer.

Silence, whatever the misunderstandings to which it gave rise, gave Cage the notoriety necessary to find more performances, commissions, appointments and speaking engagements. By the mid-1960s he was self-sufficient as a composer, and received more requests for appearances and compositions than he could fulfil. The combination of a demanding touring schedule and misgivings about his new status triggered a pause in Cage’s compositional output. Over the decade of the 1960s he wrote very few works, and many of these were quite informal. A number are instructions for electronically-altered personal performance: *0’ 00’* (1962) consists simply of the direction to perform a single action while amplified to the maximum degree possible. These sorts of open-ended events suited the needs of his “performance tours.” The few works that Cage had time to compose were similarly informal “events”: *Rozart mix* (1965) simply directs performers to mount, play and change 88 tape loops on a number of tape recorders, while *Musicircus* (1967) is nothing more than an invitation to a group of musicians to play in the same space.

6. Later work.

In the foreword to his second collection of writings, *A Year from Monday* (1967), Cage indicated that “I am less and less interested in music.” His writings, lectures and even his music began to be filled with references to other subjects. Indeed, it seemed as if he was more interested in the 1960s in Marshall McLuhan, Maoism, Buckminster Fuller and other political and cultural figures than he was in music. However, with the composition of *Cheap Imitation* for piano (1969), a tribute to Erik Satie, Cage reaffirmed his commitment to music, and the final 25 years of his life were spent as a very active composer, writing pieces for the most diverse of media.

Some of the directions Cage’s output took over these later years were largely the results of commissions from performers. Several sets of études, for example, came in response to requests from virtuoso players, the most extravagant of these the *Freeman Etudes*, written for Paul Zukofsky. A large-scale multimedia piece for orchestra, *Renga*, to be performed together with another “musicircus” called *Apartment House 1776* was a commission in honor of the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Of five operas, each called *Europera*, the first two were written at the request of the Frankfurt opera company; they comprise excerpts of the Western operatic tradition combined with chance-derived sets, lighting, costumes and stage directions.

If Cage’s compositional structures remained in the 1970s as chance-based and non-personal as ever, this did not prevent him from engaging with different personal themes and subjects in his work. His move from New York City to the countryside in the mid-1950s had sparked an interest in nature (most famously, his passion for hunting mushrooms, the collection of which is housed by the University of California, Santa Cruz), and subsequently a love of the writings of Henry David Thoreau. Nature imagery and Thoreau’s writings and drawings begin appearing in Cage’s musical works in 1970 with the *Song Books* and continued off and on for the rest of his life. James Joyce was another important source, most notably represented in *Roaratorio: an Irish circus on Finnegans Wake* (1979). This work for electronic tape and performers is Cage’s attempt to translate Joyce’s mammoth final novel into music by combining a collage of sounds mentioned in the book with his own reading of a Joyce-derived text and live performances by Irish folk musicians. In 1983, the Ryoanji rock garden, a site that had long resonated strongly for Cage, inspired the first of a series of compositions, in which he traced the contours of stones to discover the pitch contours of the solo parts. In many similar situations, when asked to compose a new work, Cage would as often as not turn to one of these favourite subjects and invent a new, untried way of applying them to his own music.

Over the course of his career, Cage also worked increasingly in non-musical media, especially graphics and, employing his natural gift for writing, poetry. *A Year from Monday* contains fewer essays of a critical nature than *Silence* and more poetry and social commentary, including the first installments of his *Diary: How to Improve the World (You’ll Only Make Matters Worse)*. In 1978 a residency at Crown Point Press to create prints so took him that he went annually until his death, later also working in watercolours. Cage also made one film, *One11*, and, at the end of his life, was involved in curating exhibitions, notably the posthumous *Rolywholyover: a Circus*. In all of these areas he brought his use of chance operations and the *I Ching* to bear on the materials at hand. The result was an ongoing series of wondrous adventures into new areas of expression, both for Cage personally and for his audience.

In 1987 Cage wrote a piece for flute and piano entitled *Two*, the first of a series of 43 compositions over his last five years of output that together form the major final phase of work. Their common ground is twofold: first, they all consist of mostly short fragments of music (often single notes) which have a flexible placement in time through a system of “brackets” – a range of times (given in minutes and seconds) indicate the period during which the musical fragment may begin and another range the period during which the music must be completed. Secondly, each piece is named by the number of performers involved; superscripts distinguish compositions for the same number of players (e.g. *Two*, *Two*², *Two*³, etc.). These two features have led to these works being referred to as the “time bracket” or “number” pieces. Austere and spiritually powerful, they represent a return to pure music for Cage, without thematic associations. At the same time, the compositional techniques employed are not the focus of the work, as was the case in the 1950s, the last period in which Cage was concerned with exclusively musical issues. Indeed, by the later numbers in the series, the composition process was simply a matter of randomly selecting a range of pitches and a handful of pitches within that range, and of chance determination, within broad limits, where the bracket timings would fall. The technique of these pieces is no more than the brush with which Cage applied his sonic paint. And yet they exhibit a tremendous spectrum of sonorities, effects and moods. If proof were needed they demonstrate once and for all the depth of Cage’s musical imagination and vision.

See also: Aleatory; Borrowing; Environmental music; Fluxus; Happening; Improvisation; New York School; Prepared piano; Sound art; Sound sculpture; Toy instruments; Postmodernism

Works

Works listed in order of completion and are published unless otherwise stated. Of the many once-only performance events, the most prominent are listed. Incomplete or lost works are not given.

Greek Ode (Aeschylus: *The Persians*), 1v, pf, 1932, unpubd

3 Songs (G. Stein), 1933

3 Easy Pieces, pf, 1933, unpubd

Sonata, cl, 1933

Sonata for 2 Voices, 2 or more insts, 1933

Composition for 3 Voices, 3 or more insts, 1934

Solo with Obbligato Accompaniment of 2 Voices in Canon, and 6 Short Inventions on the Subjects of the Solo, 3 or more insts, 1934, arr. 7 insts, 1958

2 Pieces, pf, 1935, rev. 1974

Quartet, 4 perc, 1935

3 Pieces, 2 fl, 1935

Quest, pf, 1935

Trio, suite, 3 perc, 1936

Metamorphosis, pf, 1938

5 Songs (e.e. cummings), Ca, pf, 1938

Music for Wind Instruments, wind qnt, 1938

Imaginary Landscape no.1, 2 variable-speed turntables, frequency recordings, muted pf, cymbal, 1939 [to be perf. as a recording or broadcast]

First Construction (in Metal), 6 perc, 1939

A Chant with Claps, 1v, 1940, unpubd

Second Construction, 4 perc, 1940

Bacchanale, prep pf, 1940 [for dance by S. Fort]

Imaginary Landscape no.2, 3 perc, 1940, withdrawn

Fads and Fancies in the Academy, pf, 4 perc, 1940

Living Room Music (Stein), perc and speech qt, 1940

Double Music, 4 perc, 1941, collab. L. Harrison

Third Construction, 4 perc, 1941

Jazz Study, pf, 1942, unpubd

Imaginary Landscape no.3, 6 perc, 1942

Imaginary Landscape no.2 (March no.1), 5 perc, 1942

The City Wears a Slouch Hat (radio play, K. Patchen), 5 perc, 1942

Credo in Us, 4 perc (incl. pf, radio/phonograph), 1942 [for dance by M. Cunningham and J. Erdman]

Forever and Sunsmell (Cummings), 1v, 2 perc, 1942 [for dance by Erdman]

Totem Ancestor, prep pf, 1942 [for dance by Cunningham]

And the Earth shall Bear Again, prep pf, 1942 [for dance by V. Bettis]

The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs (J. Joyce), 1v, closed pf, 1942

Primitive, prep pf, 1942 [for dance by W. Williams]

In the Name of the Holocaust, prep pf, 1942 [for dance by Cunningham]

4 Dances, 1v, prep pf, perc, 1943

Amores, 2 prep pf, 2 perc trios, 1943

Ad Lib, pf, 1943, unpubd [for dance by Cunningham]

Our Spring Will Come, prep pf, 1943 [for dance by P. Primus]

She is Asleep, 1943: Quartet, 12 tomtoms; Duet, 1v, prep pf; A Room, prep pf/pf

A Room, pf/prep pf, 1943

Tossed as it is Untroubled (Meditation), prep pf, 1943 [for dance by Cunningham]

Triple-Paced no.1, pf, 1943, unpubd

The Perilous Night, prep pf, 1944

Prelude for Meditation, prep pf, 1944

Root of an Unfocus, prep pf, 1944 [for dance by Cunningham]

Spontaneous Earth, prep pf, 1944 [for dance by Cunningham]

Triple-Paced no.2, prep pf, 1944, unpubd

The Unavailable Memory of, prep pf, 1944

A Valentine Out of Season, prep pf, 1944

A Book of Music, 2 prep pf, 1944

Four Walls (Cunningham), 1v, pf, 1944 [for dance by Cunningham] Crete, pf, 1945, unpubd

Dad, pf, 1945, unpubd
Daughters of the Lonesome Isle, prep pf, 1945 [for dance by Erdman]
Party Pieces (Sonorous and Exquisite Corpses), 1945, collab. H. Cowell, L. Harrison, V. Thomson
Soliloquy, pf, 1945, unpubd
Experiences no.1, 2 pf, 1945 [for dance by Cunningham]
Mysterious Adventure, prep pf, 1945 [for dance by Cunningham]
3 Dances, 2 prep pf, 1945
Daughters of the Lonesome Isle, prep pf, 1945 [for dance by Erdman]
Ophelia, pf, 1946 [for dance by Erdman]
Prelude for Six Instruments, a, fl, bn, tpt, vn, vc, pf, 1946, unpubd
2 Pieces, pf, 1946
Music for Marcel Duchamp, prep pf, 1947
Nocturne, vn, pf, 1947
The Seasons (ballet, 1, choreog. Cunningham), orch/pf, 1947
Experiences no.2 (Cummings), 1v, 1948 [for dance by Cunningham]
Sonatas and Interludes, prep pf, 1946-8
Dream, pf, 1948 [for dance by Cunningham]
In a Landscape, hp/pf, 1948 [for dance by L. Lippold]
Suite, toy pf/pf, 1948 [for dance by Cunningham]
Works of Calder (film score, dir. H. Matter), prep pf, tape, 1950, unpubd
String Quartet in 4 Parts, 1949-50
6 Melodies, vn, kbd, 1950

A Flower, 1v, closed pf, 1950 [for dance by Lippold]

16 Dances, fl, tpt, 4 perc, vn, vc, pf, 1950-51 [for dance by Cunningham]

Concerto, prep pf, chbr orch, 1950-51

Imaginary Landscape no.4 (March no.2), 12 radios, 1951

Music of Changes, pf, 1951

Waiting, pf, 1952 [for dance by L. Lippold]

Imaginary Landscape no.5, any 42 recordings, 1952 [score to be realized as a magnetic tape, for dance by Erdman]

7 Haiku, pf, 1951-2

2 Pastorales, prep pf, 1951-2

Water Music, pianist, 1952 [also using radio, whistles, water containers, deck of cards; score to be mounted as a large poster]

Music for Carillon no.1, 1952

Black Mountain Piece, multimedia event, 1952, unpubd

For M.C. and D.T., pf, 1952

4' 33", tacet for any inst/insts, 1952

Williams Mix, 8 1-track/4 2-track tapes, 1952

Music for Piano 1, 1952 [choreog. J. Melchen as Paths and Events]

Music for Piano 2, 1953

Music for Piano 3, 1953

Music for Piano 4-19, 1953

59½", any 4-str inst, 1953

Music for Piano 20, 1953

Music for Carillon nos.2-3, 1954

34' 46.776" for a Pianist, 1954

31' 57.9864" for a Pianist, 1954

26' 1.1499" for a String Player, 1953-5

Music for Piano 21-36/37-52, 1955

Speech 1955, 5 radios, newsreader, 1955

27' 10.554" for a Percussionist, 1956

Music for Piano 53-68, 1956

Music for Piano 69-84, 1956

Radio Music, 1-8 radios, 1956

Winter Music, 1-20 pf, 1957

For Paul Taylor and Anita Dencks, pf, 1957 [for dance by P. Taylor]

Concert, pf, orch, 1957-8

Haiku, any insts, 1958

Variations I, any number of players, any means, 1958

Solo for Voice 1, 1958

Music Walk, pf (1 or more players), 1958 [also using radio and/or recordings]

TV Köln, pf, 1958

Fontana Mix, tape, 1958

Aria, 1v, 1958

Water Walk, TV piece, 1 pfmr, 1959 [using 1-track tape, numerous properties]

Sounds of Venice, TV piece, 1 pfmr, 1959

Theatre Piece, 1-8 performers, 1960

Music for Amplified Toy Pianos, 1960

WBAI, auxiliary score for perf. with other works, 1960

Music for "The Marrying Maiden" (J. MacLow), tape, 1960

Cartridge Music, amp sounds, 1960

Solo for Voice 2, 1 or more vv, 1960

Variations II, any number of players, any means, 1961

Music for Carillon no.4, 1961

Atlas eclipticalis, any ens from 86 insts, 1962

Music for Piano 85, 1962, unpubd

0' 00" (4' 33" no.2), solo for any player, 1962

Variations III, any number of people performing any actions, 1963

Variations IV, any number of players, any means, 1963

Electronic Music for Piano, pf + elecs, 1965

Rozart Mix, tape loops, 1965

Variations V, audio-visual perf., 1965

Variations VI, plurality of sound systems, 1966

Variations VII, mixed-media perf., 1966 [notated 1972, unpubd]

Music for Carillon no.5, 1967

Newport Mix, tape loops, 1967, unpubd

Musicircus, mixed-media event, 1967, unpubd

Reunion, elecs, 1968, unpubd

HPSCHD, 1-7 amp hpd, 1-51 tapes, 1967-9, collab. L. Hiller

33 $\frac{1}{3}$, record players, 1969, unpubd

Cheap Imitation, pf, 1969, orchd 1972, vn version 1977 [choreog. Cunningham as Second Hand]

Song Books (Solos for Voice 3-92), 1970

Sixty-Two Mesostics re Merce Cunningham, amp 1v, 1971

Les Chants de Maldoror pulvérisés par l'assistance même (Lautréamont), French-speaking audience of not more than 200, 1971

Bird Cage, 12 tapes, 1972 Etcetera, small orch, tape, 3 conds, 1973 [choreog. Cunningham as Un Jour ou Deux]

Score (40 Drawings by Thoreau) and 23 Parts, any insts, 1974

Etudes australes, pf, 1974-5

Child of Tree, perc using amp plant materials, 1975

Lecture on the Weather, 12vv, tapes, 1975

Branches, perc solo/ens, amp plant materials, 1976

Renga, 78 insts/vv, 1976

Apartment House 1776, mixed-media event, any ens, 1976 excerpts arr. vn, pf, 1986

Quartets I-VIII, orch, 1976, arr. 12 amp vv, sym. band, 1978

Telephones and Birds, 3 pfmrs, 1977

Inlets (Improvisation II), 4 pfmrs with conch shells, sound of fire (live or recorded), 1977 [for dance by Cunningham]

49 Waltzes for the Five Boroughs, 1 or more pfmrs/1 or more listeners/1 or more record makers, 1977

Alla ricerca del silenzio perduto, prep train, 1977

Chorals, vn, 1978

Etudes Boreales, vc/pf, 1978

Variations VIII, no music or recordings, 1978

A Dip in the Lake, 1 or more pfmrs/1 or more listeners/1 or more record makers, 1978

Sound Anonymously Received, any inst, 1978, unpubd

Some of "The Harmony of Maine", org, 3-6 assistants, 1978

Hymns and Variations, 12 amp vv, 1979

__, __ __ circus on __, any ens, 1979, realized as Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake, tape, 1979

Paragraphs of Fresh Air, radio event, 1979, unpubd

Improvisations III, cassette players, 1980

Furniture Music Etcetera, 2 pf, 1980, unpubd

Litany for the Whale, 2vv, 1980

30 Pieces for 5 Orchestras, 1981

Improvisation IV, 3 cassette players, 1982

Dance/4 Orchestras, 1982

Postcard from Heaven, 1-20 hp, 1982

Ear for EAR, vv, 1983

Souvenir, org, 1983

30 Pieces, str qt, 1983

Perpetual Tango, pf, 1984

Haikai, fl, zoomoozophone, 1984

Nowth upon Nacht (Joyce), 1v, pf, 1984

A Collection of Rocks, double chorus, orch (without cond.), 1984

Eight Whiskus (C. Mann), 1v, 1984, version for vn, 1985

Exercise, orch, 1984, unpubd

Selkus², 1v, 1984

Mirakus², 1v, 1984

Aslsp, pf, 1985

Sonnekus², 1v, 1985

But what about the noise of crumpling paper which he used to do in order to paint the series of "Papiers froissés" or tearing up paper to make "Papiers déchirés"? Arp was stimulated by water (sea, lake and flowing waters like rivers), forests, perc ens, 1985

Etcetera 2/4 Orchestras, orch, tape, 1985

Ryoanji, vv, fl, ob, trbn, db, perc, small orch, 1983-5

Improvisation A + B, v, cl, trbn, perc, orch, 1986, unpubd

Hymnkus, chbr ens, 1986

Rocks, elec devices, 1986, unpubd

Haikai, gamelan, 1986

Essay, tape, 1986 [choreog. Cunningham as Points in Space]

Music for more, variable chbr ens, 1984-7

Two, fl, pf, 1987

Organ²/Aslsp, org, 1987

Europeras 1 & 2, 19 vv, 21 players, tape, 1987

One, pf, 1987

101, orch, 1988

Five, any 5 insts/vv, 1988

4 Solos for Voice, 1988

Seven, fl, cl, vn, va, vc, perc, pf, 1988

Twenty-Three, str orch, 1988

Five Stone Wind, 3 pfmrs, 1988, unpubd [choreog. Cunningham]

Swinging, pf, 1989

Four, str qt, 1989

Three, 3 rec, 1989

Two², 2 pf, 1989

Sculptures musicales, any sounds, 1989

One², pf, 1989

One³, solo pfmr, 1989, unpubd

Freeman Etudes, vn, 1977-80, 1989-90

composed improvisations, elec bass, snare drum, one-sided drums, 1990

One 4, perc, 1990

Fourteen, pf, chbr ens, 1990

One 5, pf, 1990

One 6, vn, 1990

Europeras 3 & 4, 6vv, 2 pf, 12 victrolas, tape, 1990

Seven², b fl, b cl, b trbn, 2 perc, vc, db, 1990

Scottish Circus, musicircus, 1990 [based on Scottish trad. music]

Four², SATB, 1990

One 7, any inst, 1990

Europa 5, 2vv, pf, victrola, tape/TV/radio, 1991

One 8, vc, 1991

108, orch, 1991

Eight, wind qnt, tpt, trbn, tuba, 1991

Five², eng hn, 2 cl, b cl, timp, 1991

Lullaby, music box, 1991

Four³, pf/2pf, rainsticks, vn/oscillator, 1991 [choreog. Cunningham as Beach Birds]

Three², 3 perc, 1991

One 9, shō, 1991

Two³, shō, conch shells, 1991

Two 4, vn, pf/shō, 1991

103, orch, 1991

Six, 6 perc, 1991

Five³, trbn, str qt, 1991

Five 4, s sax, a sax, 3 perc, 1991

Five 5, fl, 2 cl, b cl, perc, 1991

Four 4, 4 perc, 1991

Four 5, sax ens, 1991

Ten, fl, ob, cl, trbn, perc, str qt, pf, 1991

Two 5, t trbn, pf, 1991

Five Hanau Silence, environmental sounds of Hanau, 1991

Twenty-Eight, wind ens, 1991

Twenty-Six, 26 vn, 1991

Twenty-Nine, 2 timp, 2 perc, pf, 10 va, 8 vc, 6 db, 1991

Twenty-Eight, Twenty-Six and Twenty-Nine, orch, 1991

Eighty, orch, 1992

Sixty-Eight, orch, 1992

One¹ 0, vn, 1992

Fifty-Eight, wind orch, 1992

Four 6, 4 pfms, 1992

Seventy-Four, orch, 1992

Two 6, vn, pf, 1992

Thirteen, chbr ens, 1992

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