

Dustin Donahue, percussion

March 7, 2015 – 7pm
CPMC Experimental
Theater

Imaginary Landscape No. 5 (1952)

John Cage

Interieur I (1966)

Helmut Lachenmann

*dust that will coat the lobes of her lungs with glittering stillness
(2014)*

Kurt Isaacson

...from behind the unreasoning mask (1975)

Roger Reynolds

Matt Barbier, trombone

Imaginary Landscape No. 5 (1952)

John Cage

Vertical Thoughts 5 (1963)

Morton Feldman

Kirsten Wiest, soprano

Kyle Adam Blair, celeste

Batya MacAdam-Somer, violin

Jonathan Piper, tuba

This concert would not possible without:
the guidance of Steven Schick and red fish blue fish
the creative input and hard work of Matt Barbier, Tom Erbe, Paul Hembrece,
Kurt Isaacson, Curt Miller, and all of the Feldman musicians
the technical assistance of Brady Baker, James Bean, Jessica Flores, and Daniel Ross
and most of all, the love, trust, and endless support of my family and Rachel Betz.
Thank you.

John Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* consists of instructions for the assembly of a work on magnetic tape. The score provides information for the duration, amplitude, and channel of each sound, cut together from any forty-two records. In preparing a version of this score for computer audio technologies, I built a program that generates versions of *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* in real time, using any forty-two recordings on the computer's hard drive.

Cage's original realization consisted entirely of jazz records. Responding to his own distaste for jazz, this realization functioned as a way to "re-hear" jazz in an unexpected and unfamiliar context. To this end, my first realization on this program attempts to "re-hear" the work of Johannes Brahms, which I have always found bland, self-aggrandizing, and flatly unoriginal. The forty-two records consist of his four symphonies, the *Academic Festival Overture*, the *Tragic Overture*, and the *Double Concerto in A minor*.

The second realization on this program plays upon on the title *Imaginary Landscape* and employs recordings of early electronic music. In 1937, Cage writes of "a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard." He echoes Edgard Varèse, who in 1917 wrote, "Music, which should be alive and vibrating, needs new means of expression and science alone can infuse it with youthful sap... I dream of instruments obedient to thought – and which, supported by a flowering of undreamed-of timbres, will lend themselves to any combination I choose to impose and will submit to the exigencies of my inner rhythm." These fantastic visions of a "music of the future" were to some extent realized by the massive growth of audio technologies and electronic music after World War II. This *Imaginary Landscape* presents that early electronic music repertoire and its imagined, naïve utopia in a playful and unexpected context.

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Helmut Lachenmann | *Interieur I*

Lachenmann began work on *Interieur I* after his first (and only) major experience with electronic sound. His only tape piece, *Scenaria*, was completed at the Institute for Psychoacoustics and Electronic Music in Ghent in 1965. The experience apparently revolted Lachenmann, who later described electronics as “useless... since their free abundance of sound possibilities remains imprisoned by the limits of loudspeakers or perhaps their vibrating membranes. For all its vast wealth, electronic sound is too ‘safe’ – it quickly oxidizes to become an exotic, surreal, expressionistic idyll.”

Nevertheless, Lachenmann relies on many musical techniques derived from the experience of *musique concrète*: one instrument’s attack is spliced to the resonance of another; scraping gestures reverse the shape of percussive sound; the music cuts suddenly between radically different types of material.

Rejecting the source-less emission of loudspeakers, Lachenmann seeks here to draw attention to the physicality of the performer. The large-scale progression of *Interieur* is perhaps best understood through the physical actions that produce a sound (striking, scraping, trembling, rubbing, etc.) and transitions between these actions. Rejecting the “safe” emission of sound from loudspeakers, Lachenmann seeks to highlight physical exertion and human effort, or as he describes it, “illuminating instrumental sounds as mechanical processes.”

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Kurt Isaacson | *dust that will coat the lobes of her lungs with glittering stillness*

the smallest sister coughs up her house in pieces, hand over her lips, smothering the clang of wood and steel against her molars. she looks around the playground, soot blossoms, grains of plaster. a curl of twin dangles from her mouth. she pulls it out and binds the pile into a chewed up pit. with one thumb she pushes it down into the brassy soil, where ruin swells and blooms, tumors of memory underground.

[“the smallest sister coughs” in Rochelle Hurt’s *The Rusted City*]

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Roger Reynolds | ..*from behind the unreasoning mask*

All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event - in the living act, the undoubted deed - there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike though the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?

[from "The Quarter-Deck" in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*]

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Morton Feldman | *Vertical Thoughts 5*

When extinguished, the body
turns into dust, and the spirit
vanishes like the subtle air.

And our name is forgotten in
time, and no one remembers our
works; and our life passes away
like the residue of a cloud, and is
dispersed like a mist driven away by
the beams of the sun, and crushed
by the heat thereof.

For our *life is a passing shadow*,
and there is no returning of our end;
for it is closed, and no one returns.
[Book of Wisdom, 2:3-5]