



# JOHN CAGE OR THE REVELATION OF THE ETERNAL LISTENING

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John Cage (Los Angeles 1912 - New York 1992) has been one of the leading and most polemic creative spirits of the twentieth century, because his influence, which goes beyond music, has permeated to the fine arts, drama and poetry. A pupil of Arnold Schönberg and Henry Cowell, follower of Satie and Weber, he expanded atonal music with the introduction of noise, silence, the emphasis on action and electroacoustic technique. Inventor of the prepared piano he transformed the most well-tempered of instruments into a vessel of unique sounds, while transforming scores into graphic works of art. A disciple of Suzuki, Zen, Kagoon and Tibetan Buddhism, he has been the genuine catalyst of postmodernism, because as he respects and positively values chance, he abandons the introspection of the ego (dominant theme of the Romantic movement which gave rise to aesthetic Modernity) for an impersonalism that his friends Morton Feldman, David Tudor, Early Brown and Christian Wolff have similarly aspired to. Intimate friend of Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg, Duchamp and collaborator of the dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham for over forty years, he conceived the first *Happening*, an experience that integrates the arts (music, painting, poetry, dance, rhetoric) that included George Brecht, Dick Higgins and Al Hansen, as well as the ZAJ group and the serialist dissidents, Juan Hidalgo and Walter Marchetti.

He has coined the term *Musicircus* to designate ambiental sonorous extravaganzas that distil his concepts of "omniatentivity" and "pluricentrality", combining rock, jazz, piano, electronic, vocal, pantomime, dance, films and slides. Cage, who was able to do away with the structural rigidity of serialism, and had distanced himself from the idea of contingency, or controlled chance, defended by Pierre Boulez and Karl Heinz Stockhausen, inspired with his collective piano interpretation of Satie's *Vexations* (18 hours of playing repeating a brief sequence of sounds) Minimalism, the serial repetition of slight sonorous acts, of northamericans La Monte Young, Terry Riley and Steve Reich, and of the english Gavin Bryars and Michael Newman.

In 1987 he began to write operas (*Europas 1-5*) while he carried on artistic activities that culminate with filmic images.

Cage has been the paradigm of freedom for a whole generation of artists. In Spain, Juan Hidalgo, Ramón Barce, Llorenç Barber, Carlos Santos and José Iges have experienced sound phenomenom from angles that without him would'nt have existed. His thought system symbolised one of the most solid ethical consciences in the aesthetics of the 20th century, a role model for present and future creators. The celebrations of his eightieth birthday (which would have been the 5th of September) had begun in february at the Contemporary Art Museum of Chicago with the exhibition of five manuscript scores from the 50's, the decade during which he earned international prestige, together with some 60 works of his intimate friend Robert Rauschenberg, of the same period.

It was Rauschenberg's White Paintings, Mies Van der Rohe's glass houses, and Richard Lippard's wire sculptures, together with convictions the impossibility of communication and on silence that inspired Cage to create one of the principal sound achievements of our time, his work *4' 33'*, a score for piano devoid of any notation that diluted the boundaries between music and ambiental noise.

In may, the Appolohuis Room at Eindhoven (Holland), in collaboration with the Van Abbenmuseum dedicated a mini-festival to the theme of his music's ties with the *Erratum Musical* or contingent music of Marcel Duchamp. Then similar events took place in Italy, Czechoslovakia and Germany, which he attended personally. Death came upon him on the 12th of August in a New York as he witnessed the great summer celebration organized by the MOMA. The premier of his posthumous work *103* in september, takes on the solemnity of a Requiem. Anyhow, as he states in his book *Silence* of 1937, "One need'nt fear for the future of music". Because, "there'll be sounds till I die. And they will continue after my death."

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