JOHN CAGE CENTENARY FESTIVAL
FONTANA MIX AND BEYOND

FEBRUARY 16, 2012 8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

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California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS

JOHN CAGE CENTENARY FESTIVAL
FONTANA MIX AND BEYOND

Thursday, Feb. 16, 2012, 8:30pm

PROGRAM

Fontana Mix **(1958)**   **John Cage**
    Tape

Aria **(1958)** and *WBAI* **(1960)**   **John Cage**
    Carmina Escobar, voice; John Baffa, signal processing

Piece for Guitar (for Stella) **(1961)**   **Cornelius Cardew**
    Stuart Fox, solo guitar

Water Walk **(1959)**   **John Cage**
    Kristen Erickson, performer

Unterwelten II&III **(2011)**   **Ulrich Krieger**
    Elise Roy, bass flute; Vinny Golia, contrabass flute;
    Christin Hablewitz, bass clarinet; Brian Walsh, contrabass clarinet;
    Kevin Robinson, baritone saxophone; Ulrich Krieger, contrabass saxophone (tubax)

Intermission

John Cage—Fontana Mix-Feed **(1965)**   **Max Neuhaus**
    Recording of a live performance by Max Neuhaus (percussion, microphones,
    feedback) at the New School of Social Research, New York, June 4, 1965

Theatre Piece **(1960)** and *WBAI* **(1960)**   **John Cage**
    Mark Menzies, Alessandra Barrett, Marcus Buser, performers;
    John Baffa, signal processing

(Fontana) Mix for Six (Strings) **(2001)**   **James Tenney**
    Madeline Falcone, Emily Call, violins; Mark Menzies, Alessandra Barrett,
    Kristin Thora Haraldsdottir, violas; Min Lee, cello

Playing continuously in the lobby: Karlheinz Essl: *FontanaMixer* **(2004–7)**
    Max/MSP patch

Musical Direction: Ulrich Krieger and Mark Menzies

ABOUT THE WORKS

Fontana Mix (1958) is a tape music composition, but more than that it is a compositional tool, as James Pritchett calls it in his book *The Music of John Cage*. It is a means to create new pieces, which Cage himself used to compose *Water Walk, Sounds of Venice*, *Aria, Theatre Piece,* and *WBAI*. All of these works but *Sound of Venice,* which is a work similar to *Water Walk,* are performed tonight. In addition to music, *Fontana Mix* can be used to generate any type of material for performance: theater, dance, lighting, electronics, etc.

The *Fontana Mix* tool consists of 10 sheets of paper and 12 transparencies. The sheets of paper have drawings of 6 differentiated (in thickness and texture) curved lines. 10 of the transparencies have randomly distributed points. Another transparency has a grid, measuring two by ten inches, and the last one contains a straight line. This material gets superimposed: one of the transparencies with dots is placed over one of the sheets with curved lines. Over this one places the grid. A point enclosed in the grid is connected with a point outside, using the straight-line transparency. Horizontal and vertical measurements of intersections of the straight line with the grid and the curved line, create a time-bracket and actions to be made. (Description of *Fontana Mix* at http://www.johncage.info/index2.html)

Fontana Mix can be seen as a set of instructions for creating any number of compositions. By measuring positions of crossing lines one will obtain 6 parameter values, which are needed to determine a single sound event. The choice of the parameters is free. Cage used these random graphic procedures to create music which is free of personal taste—a music which sounds just on its own, like nature: "It is therefore very useful if one has decided that sounds are to come into their own, rather than being exploited to express sentiments or ideas of order." (John Cage: "History of Experimental Music in the United States", in *Silence*, 1961). This was a very new approach to musical composition. *Fontana Mix* is not a score, not even a graphic score, for which it is sometimes taken, but a system, a random generator creating material for a composition.

Fontana Mix (1958), the tape piece, was the first composition created with the *Fontana Mix* tool. The tool was used to specify sound sources, starting times, durations, volume, editing patterns, and sound manipulation.

Aria (1958) is a voice solo, which asks the performer to use ten different vocal styles. The text fragments employ vowels and consonants and words from Armenian, Russian, Italian, French and English. The notation consists of wavy lines in different colors and black squares denoting "non-musical" noises. The colors indicate different singing styles (classical, folk, jazz, etc.), to be determined by the singer.

Water Walk (1959) is a performance piece, which originally was written for the Italian TV quiz show "Lascia O Raddoppia" (Italian: Stand or double down) and performed by Cage himself. The materials required are all related to water: bath tub, toy fish, pressure cooker where steam is being released, ice cubes, an electric mixer to crush them, rubber duck, goose whistle, etc.

WBAI (1960) is a score for an "operator of machines" (Cage). It is named after New York's Pacifica station. "Operator of machines" means that this is a performance score for a sound engineer, who is meant to use it to process sound material in real time—in tonight's case, other Cage compositions. The score may be used in whole or in part.

Theatre Piece (1960) is one of Cage's first works using time brackets, which became common in Cage's later works. These time brackets indicate a period of time within which an action may be made. The actions are taken from a gamut of 20 nouns and/or verbs, chosen by the performer. Parts are provided for 1–8 performers, which may be used in whole or part and in any combination

Five additional works are performed, by composers who used the *Fontana Mix* tool to create their own chamber music, and in one case a self-generating computer version of *Fontana Mix*.

Fontana Mix-Feed **(1965)**, by Max Neuhaus, makes extensive use of feedback, hence the title. It uses contact microphones loosely placed on various percussion instruments. By turning up the amplification to the fringe of feedback a complex interaction between the amplification system, the room itself, the percussion instruments, and the microphones create chaotic, indeterminate, but controllable sounds. "The factors here are so complex that even if the piece were to be performed twice in the same room with the same audience, the same instruments, and the same loudspeakers, it would have completely different sound and structures each time. It seems something alive." (Note by Max Neuhaus)

Piece for Guitar (for Stella) (1961), by Cornelius Cardew, is a little-known piece for guitar solo. It consists of 16 modules, which can be repeated, shortened, lengthened and combined in any. "Play with these pieces. Over & over. Change anything. Add & take away." (Cardew's instructions on the score)

Unterwelten II&III (2011, Netherworlds II & III), by Ulrich Krieger, is a continuation of *Unterwelten I* (2004), which was composed using the *Fontana Mix* tool. *Unterwelten II&III* uses *Unterwelten I* as source material and again applies the *Fontana Mix* tool plus other chance operations to it. The piece works with fine degrees of air sound within tones, multiphonics and fine gradations of dynamics.

(Fontana) Mix for Six (Strings) (2001), by James Tenney, is a piece using Cage's time-bracket technique with sustained tones and is a reference to Cage's late number pieces. It was written for the Maerzmusik festival 2001 in Berlin for a similar night of *Fontana Mix*-based compositions.

FontanaMixer (2004–7), by Karlheinz Essl, was commissioned by the festival Wien Modern (2004) as a new realization of *Fontana Mix*. Instead using the "graphical random generator" (Essl), the *Fontana Mix* tool, he created a real-time random generator as a computer program written in Max/MSP. Therefore Essl created a version which is not limited in its duration, but could be infinite, and which would always create new and unforeseeable structures.