THE THEATRICAL AESTHETIC OF JOHN CAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this thesis is an analysis of John Cage's aesthetic from a theatrical point of view. I have done this by examining his performed works and his theoretical writings. A short biographical chapter is included in order that the reader may become aware of certain influences and events which have affected his basic ideas. In addition, two short chapters— one on Happenings and another on the Living Theatre— are included as specific examples of theatrical applications of his aesthetic. It is concluded that Cage's ideas have influenced the general development of recent theatrical experimentation.
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I would like to thank my thesis adviser, Dr. Donald Soule, for his invaluable guidance and for having faith in me. In addition, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Richard Schechner, who first introduced me to the possibilities of exploring theatrical alternatives. Most important, however, are my husband Irving and my children Elizabeth, David and Douglas, who inspired me to complete this project. Their patient support has been particularly important.
INTRODUCTION
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John Cage, working in the field of experimental music, has developed a highly personal aesthetic which has relevance to all the performing arts. His broad artistic perspective and flexible approach to structure have stimulated others to expand traditional definitions of art and theatre, thus leading to a generation of theatrical experiments which are multi-focus, often multi-media and frequently concerned with entire architectural space rather than the limited spatial relationship of traditional proscenium staging. The impact of this aesthetic has led Michael Kirby to call Cage the "backbone of New Theatre".¹ (New Theatre comprises the bulk of theatrical experimentation during the last fifteen years.)

I will attempt to define and analyze Cage's aesthetic within a theatrical frame of reference. A consideration of his work is of value to students of theatre for two main reasons. First, the applications of Cage's aesthetic extend beyond the realm of music. The concepts of indeterminacy, audience participation and process in art can, and have been, applied to theatre as well as music. Second, Cage's performances are overtly theatrical. Typically, they involve a physically active use of space by the performers and the completion of various non-musical tasks, which combine to create a form of spectacle that is comparable to a pageant, fair or ritual. It is a form of non-literary theatre which is at base popular, yet conceptual enough to be a distinct type. One sees a clear and direct theatrical application of this form
in the Happenings of the sixties.

Since Cage has been often misunderstood by commentators, I will deal directly with primary sources. These include principally his theoretical writings, his "Indeterminacy" lecture and various published interviews. Cage's eccentric personality and irreverent sense of fun have led some to dismiss him simply as a clown, not to be taken seriously. Such dismissal is not justified. In actuality, his genius for approaching problems in an irreverent and individualistic way makes him less inhibited by sacred artistic traditions than most theorists, freeing him to assimilate more fully into his aesthetic influences and ideas gleaned from various non-art sources and to imbue his writings and lectures with an unusual warmth, unpretentiousness and humour.

Characteristically, these non-art sources are as eclectic as mycology, physics and Zen Buddhism. Direct, everyday experiences act as stimulation and raw material for his art, allowing him to bring together apparently unrelated material in order to arrive at innovative solutions to artistic problems.

His life and art are unusually closely coupled because of this. Therefore, it is well worth examining Cage from a biographical perspective. One can then see the major experiences and influences that have shaped the development of his ideas and career. In addition (although it is inconsistent with his stated philosophy), it must be acknowledged that Cage's personality is strongly revealed in his work. Thus, a deeper understanding of his work can be achieved by studying Cage as a whole person, rather than merely as a composer and theoretician.
The form of Happenings is essentially defined by their simultaneity and non-matrixed acting, all of which reflect Cage's direct influence. Some performances employed chance techniques as well. In addition to these elements, Happenings also utilize the intermingling of various art forms, another product of Cage's approach to art. The form of Happenings is particularly relevant to this study because the Happening phenomenon remains the most direct illustration of a theatrical use of Cage's aesthetic.

Many of the original Happening artists were former students of Cage at the New School of Social Research in New York. Although most of them were not theatre people, their work attracted the attention of the more experimental segment of the theatre community and stimulated considerable re-evaluation of traditional techniques. Certain individuals like Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner got involved in the Happening phenomenon in a direct way, but for the most part, it remained an attempt by visual artists to make theatre.

The first theatre company to incorporate some of Cage's ideas into its work was the Living Theatre, the founders of which Cage knew personally. They experimented theatrically by applying many of his ideas directly, in a more radical way than anyone in theatre has since attempted.

While chapters on Happenings and the Living Theatre are included as specific examples of theatrical uses of Cage's aesthetic, it is not the intention of this thesis to investigate the entire range of Cage's influence. In general terms, it goes well beyond the instances cited here. These
particular examples have been chosen as representative ones, since they show an unusually close correlation with his own works and because Cage was directly and personally involved in each of them. Significantly, in both cases the exploration of his ideas has gone well beyond his direct personal involvement. This fact alone is an indication of the fruitfulness of Cage's influences on contemporary theatrical innovation.
JOHN CAGE - A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY
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John Cage's concept of silence as music and his aleatoric compositions are the work of a highly inventive and original mind. Major influences, such as Dada and Zen Buddhism, are clear, yet Cage is more significantly a true product of his early environment. For that reason, a brief look at his family and his early years is relevant to a study of his thinking. Moreover, as his career has developed, he has continued to draw on many areas of non-artistic experience, such as mycology and technology, to define and express his artistic ideas. More than most artists, he has been able to incorporate these outside sources into his art so that his work has evolved in a highly personal way. Despite his awareness of a wide variety of outside sources, therefore, Cage has remained an American eccentric. In order to understand his aesthetic, it is important to trace his development as an individual.

John Milton Cage, Jr. was born in Los Angeles in 1912, the only son of an engineer and his wife. He remembers his childhood in this middle-class, Methodist Episcopal household as unexceptional and happy. His parents were simple, but not ordinary, people. They were both strong individualists, choosing to live in California at a time when it still had traces of a pioneer mentality and disdain for eastern American and European traditions.

His mother, a housewife, was active in community social organizations. She had been married three times before marrying his father. In his written Diary, he humourously recalls her
inability to remember the full name of her first husband.\(^1\) His many warmly related stories about her present her as rather scatterbrained and slightly comical. It must be remembered, however, that most of Cage's stories are told with the intent of pointing out the nonsensical in life.

His father, an award-winning amateur inventor, once designed an inhalator for the quick absorption of vitamins and hormones into the bloodstream. It was prevented from general distribution, however, by the American Medical Association.\(^2\) He also invented an unconventional submarine that stayed under water for a record length of time. It was not useful for military purposes, however, because of the constant stream of air bubbles that it created.\(^3\) Inspired by curiosity more than commercialism, his inventions were often more imaginative than practical. Cage's attitude of starting from zero to find possible new solutions to problems probably has some of its roots in this father-son relationship. The same can be said for Cage's ease with mechanics and electronics. Schoenberg once said of Cage, "He's not a composer. He's an inventor, of genius."\(^4\)

The Cage home was not culture-oriented, although his mother did insist that piano lessons be a part of his early education. Cage remembers his childhood piano teacher for her approach to composition. She composed by listening to the songs of birds, notating them, and using them as basic themes in her works. The acceptance of nature and the reliance on direct experience, rather than on inspiration as traditionally understood or on other people's previous music, may well have
been recalled later when Cage himself, through a different conceptual route, began using natural sounds.

Cage graduated from Los Angeles High School at sixteen, valedictorian of his class. Encouraged by his parents to be a minister like his grandfather, he entered Pomona College in Religious Studies, but dropped out before the end of his second year. John Cage, the individual, needed time to develop.

He spent the next three years wandering. He traveled through Europe. He became fascinated with Gothic architecture and spent much time in various libraries teaching himself all he could about it. Through an accidental meeting with a former teacher from Pomona College, he was able to get a minor job in the office of the French architect, Ernö Goldfinger. There is no evidence that he ever took any academic training in architecture, but a strong spatial awareness is characteristic of his mature musical work.

He returned to California, only to hold odd-jobs like gardening and checking out patents for his father. He organized a course in modern painting and music and offered it to neighbourhood housewives by selling tickets door-to-door. He candidly admitted that he knew very little about the subjects, but was very enthusiastic, and promised to research the topics well before each class. Twenty to thirty people came each week.

During this period, Cage periodically studied piano and harmony with various teachers. It is an important stage of his life because it was at this time that he began to write,
paint and compose music, and made the personal decision to study the arts seriously. This decision was a very unpopular one at home; both his parents found it difficult to accept. Artists were somewhat suspect.

In 1933, Cage moved to New York, where he was more removed from family pressures. He began to study contemporary music under Henry Cowell, the experimentalist, at the New School for Social Research. Cowell used the piano in an unorthodox way, which may have influenced Cage's later development of the Prepared Piano. Cowell performed using the piano strings as well as the keys and developed the idea of "tone clusters", in which the piano keys are played percussively with the entire fist.

The critical point in his development came when Cage returned to Los Angeles and, at the suggestion of Henry Cowell, sought out Arnold Schoenberg at UCLA. Schoenberg, already famous for his experimental work with the twelve-tone scale, must have sensed Cage's potential, because he agreed to work with him privately at his home at no cost, in exchange for a promise that he would seriously become a musician. The relationship with Schoenberg helped Cage to define himself as an artist. Slowly, he began more confidently to implement his own musical ideas, rather than simply carry out extensions of the ideas of his teachers. From that point on, one sees a gradual artistic maturing.

From the beginning, Cage had difficulty with harmony.
Schoenberg told me that without harmony I would always come to a wall and never be able to go through it. I said, "Well, then, I'll just beat my head against that wall". In a sense that is what I've been doing all my life.5

This difficulty proved in fact to be a great asset in defining his own style and identity. Since harmony was so difficult for him, he chose initially to ignore it by simply making music through percussion with only noise and rhythm. This shift is significant since all Cage's later developments are built on it. Rhythmic, rather than harmonic, relationships allowed him to explore sound in and for itself and eventually led him to discover the unpredictable and continuous sounds in silence.

This ability to create advantage out of disadvantage is one of Cage's greatest strengths. It is the mark of both the inventor and the artist.

In 1935, Cage married Xenia Andreyevna Kasheroff, an art student, who was the daughter of an Alaskan Russian Orthodox priest. They lived in Seattle, where from 1936 to 1938 Cage worked as a dance accompanist at the Cornish School, a progressive art school now known as the Cornish Institute of Allied Arts. It was here that he first met Merce Cunningham.

During this period, Cage organized a student percussion orchestra, which toured the Northwest performing his own percussion compositions. Xenia helped him by collecting various unconventional "found" instruments, such as an ass's jawbone. In a 1943 interview in Time, Cage refers to her as "the deftest of all living flowerpot and gong whackers".6

While in the Pacific Northwest, Cage began a lifelong interest in mushrooms. This hobby gives him the opportunity to
to spend much of his time in the wilderness, surrounded by the often subtle, ceaseless sound of nature. Going out into the wilderness allows him quiet time to experience these "full" silences. In 1962, he formed the New York Mycological Society, together with Lois Long, Esther Dam, Guy Nearing and Ralph Ferrara. He is also a member of the Czechoslovakian Mushroom Society.

During the thirties, Cage worked in traditional rhythmic counterpoint, at the same time searching for new sounds to expand his percussive vocabulary. The "Prepared Piano", which Cage invented in 1938 as a dance accompaniment for Syvilla Fort's "Bacchanale", came out of his search for new sound qualities. It is produced by inserting screws, bolts, paper, rubber bands, etc. under and between the strings of a standard piano. The instrument is played percussively, by scraping, hitting, plucking (or whatever comes to mind) the wood, strings, metal and keys to produce gamelan-like sounds.

In 1941, Cage was invited by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, formerly of the Bauhaus, to teach a class in Experimental Music at the Chicago Institute of Design. It was there that he met Max Ernst. Ernst suggested that the Cages move to New York City. Xenia was already a budding sculptor, and they felt they both could benefit from the stimulation of the New York art scene.

The Cages spent most of their money on the bus fare and arrived in New York in 1942 with twenty-five cents between them. At first, they stayed with Ernst and Peggy Guggenheim. Through Peggy Guggenheim they met Marcel Duchamp. (Xenia is
listed as an assistant in Duchamp's first publication of Box in A Valise.) Cage took a job as Music Director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. This collaboration, which has been maintained until the present, is a very important one. Together they have evolved a system of independent parallel performance which forms the groundwork for later multi-media activity.

The Anechoic Chamber at Harvard's physics laboratories is technologically designed to be as noiseless as possible. When Cage first experienced it in the early forties, he heard two sounds, one high and one low. These were later explained to him to be internal sounds: one was his own blood moving through his veins; the other was the electrical charges of his nervous system in operation. This experience profoundly affected him for it proved that, without total deafness, there is no silence. He began developing the idea of "full silences" rather than "empty" ones.

In 1943, Cage's reputation as an avant-gardist was finally established in a series of percussion concerts sponsored by the League of Composers at the Museum of Modern Art. The program included Amores, Construction in Metal, Imaginary Landscape #3, and some works of Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison and Amadea Roldan. Cage conducted the twelve players (one of whom was Xenia), who were dressed in tails and black evening gowns and playing flowerpots, automobile axles and rice bowls, among other instruments. The New York Times reviewer considered it "childish", "not serious enough to require detailed comment", but New York's avant-garde community responded with enthusiasm.
The eccentricity of the performance got him national media attention as well, including large write-ups in Life and Time.

1943 was an important year for Cage in many ways. His marriage dissolved, and, as an "alternative to psychiatry", he began a three-year study of Zen Buddhism with Dr. Daisetz Suzuki at Columbia.

In Eastern thought, one can see the basis of many of his ideas. As his career developed, he took the concepts of non-intention (or existence for existence's sake), unpredictability and the oneness of all things, and applied them to his work. He began to use compositional techniques which removed him from total control, in an attitude of Oriental purposelessness.

These techniques involved using the imperfections on a piece of paper (e.g. Music for Piano-1952), the chance overlapping of several transparent plastic templates arrangeable in many different ways (e.g. Variations-1958), or the position of the stars on astrological charts (e.g. Music for Carillon-1961). The intention was to distance himself and his personal taste from the performance result.

In 1949, Cage received a Guggenheim Fellowship in recognition of his contribution to "extending the boundaries of musical art". He used this money to travel again to Europe, where he was befriended by Pierre Boulez.

In 1951, his score for Herbert Matter's film, Works of Calder, was awarded First Prize for Music at the Woodstock Art Film Festival.

1952 was another crucial year for Cage. It was the year of the Black Mountain Piece, and of 4'33", both of which were
extremely influential and controversial works. Imaginary Landscape #5 was done as a dance score for Jean Erdman the same year, and is also important because it is generally considered the earliest American tape music. In it, Cage fragmented the sounds of forty three jazz records, combined them by chance and distorted their original sounds through electronics. This work made Cage the originator of tape music.

In 1954, together with David Tudor, Cage toured Europe. This trip established their presence in the European avant-garde, although not without waves. The concert scheduled at the highly prestigious Donaueschingen Festival of Avant-garde Music was cancelled at the last minute, when the promoter refused to move the two prepared pianos to opposite ends of the performance space. The promoter announced to the waiting audience that the performance would not take place because it was "too radical for public ears, and might cause unrest".10

Returning from Europe, Cage moved from New York City to a house in a co-operative community in Stony Point, New York, which had been established by Paul Williams, a former student at Black Mountain College. (Cage is a Social Anarchist and has a deep commitment to co-operative ventures.) This modest house in the country has remained his home to the present time, although much of his time in recent years has been spent travelling to lecture and perform. In addition, he shares a West Village apartment with Merce Cunningham when he has to be in New York.

From 1956 to 1960, Cage taught several courses at the New School for Social Research in New York. His course in
Experimental Composition was attended by many of the major artists later involved in the development of the Happening form. The course was considered seminal to their work.

Four months of 1958 were spent working at the Milan radio station, Studio di Fondogia, composing an electronic piece called *Fontana Mix*. During his stay in Milan, Cage became a national celebrity by appearing for several weeks on the Italian television equivalent of "Double or Nothing": "Lascia o Raddoppia," as an expert on Mushroom Identification. Characteristically, he used this opportunity to get exposure for some of his work. Each week, he amused Italian audiences with humorous and eccentric musical performances. One was *Water Walk*, which uses, among other instrumentation, a bathtub, a pressure cooker, a syphon, a Waring blender, a vase of roses, a watering can, and a large rubber fish. He won $6,000 on the program and received thousands of letters from viewers, as well as an offer from Federico Fellini to appear in the film *La Dolce Vita*.¹¹ Cage did not accept the offer.

It was in 1958 that Cage presented his lecture on "Indeterminacy" at the Brussels World's Fair and had his retrospective concert "25 Years of Experimentation" at the Town Hall in New York City. The large and enthusiastic audience at the concert included the bulk of the city's avant-garde community.

The academic year 1960-61 was spent by Cage as a Fellow at the Wesleyan University Center for Advanced Studies. Here he wrote the book *Silence*, which presents his philosophy and aesthetic in written form. Characteristically, the ideas are
broken up and arranged in several interweaving type styles. The duration of each idea/typestyle unit was decided by chance operations. Robert Wilson had cited *Silence* as having had an "important effect on his thinking".  

Significantly, Cage met Marshal McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller at Wesleyan, both of whom were also Fellows there at the time.

McLuhan's insights into electronic information structure supported Cage's own ideas on artistic non-involvement and subjectivity. The intention of putting individuals in the centre of a bombardment of information stimuli is to create a situation where each person is forced to understand reality on individual terms. When McLuhan states in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* that the "modern physicist is at home with oriental field theory" he makes the same connection between Western technology and Oriental philosophy that Cage does.

Cage and Buckminster Fuller share a naively optimistic belief in the power of technology. Both also highly value inventiveness. Fuller, however, expresses little interest in chance, tending more to over-design than to leave anything open to randomness. However, his total, spatial view of the world excited Cage, as did his activism and social consciousness. After this year at Wesleyan, one sees a stronger commitment by Cage to approach the larger problems of the world by creating new structures and inventions analogous to his anarchic approach to music.

The ideas of McLuhan and Fuller take up much of Cage's later book, *A Year From Monday*, written ten years later during
his second term as a Fellow at the Wesleyan Center in 1972. Unfortunately, however, Cage is a more convincing artistic revolutionary, than he is a social visionary. The messages of *A Year From Monday* too often parrot Fuller and McLuhan to be powerful or stimulating.

In 1962, Cage and Tudor did a six-week concert tour of Japan, sponsored by Mr. Sofu Teshigahara, a wealthy patron of avant-garde art. The climax of the trip was a special service at the Grand Shinto Shrine of Ise to bless their avant-garde work.

In 1964 *Atlas Eclipticalis* was performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Leonard Bernstein at Lincoln Center. The reaction of the subscription audience was one of shock. More than half of the audience walked out. The ultimate insult, however, came from the players of the Philharmonic itself, who began hissing when Cage was introduced by Bernstein at the end of the concert.

Cage had the privilege of living with Teeny and Marcel Duchamp in Cadaqués, Spain in 1966. Although there are great differences in their approach, Cage's work is in the Dada tradition in its use of chance, simultaneity, irreverence, non-rationality, nonsense juxtapositions, and materials and ideas from non-art sources. (Duchamp also experimented with chance in composition by using the effects of wind and gravity on a piece of string.) Duchamp is one of the world's artists that Cage most admires. During the 1966 visit, he studied chess with him. Referring to these sessions, Cage said,
Every now and then he would get very impatient with me. He complained that I didn't seem to want to win. Actually, I was so delighted to be with him that the notion of winning was beside the point. When we played, he would always give me a knight in advance. He was extremely intelligent and he almost always won.

.... In trying to teach me how to play, Marcel said something which is very oriental, 'Don't just play your side of the game, play both sides.' I tried to, but I was more impressed with what he said than I was able to follow it.15

Stimulated by these sessions, he organized Reunion, a musical performance in which Duchamp, Cage and Teeny Duchamp played chess on a board electronically wired for sound. This took place in Toronto in 1968.

Also in 1968, Cage was elected a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. His career-long fear of not being taken seriously was quelled. He was now officially a member of the artistic Establishment.

Notations was published in 1968. This is a collection of graphic music notation which Cage edited together with Alison Knowles. (She is the mother of Christopher Knowles, the retarded child who has appeared in several of Robert Wilson's theatre pieces.) The test is written primarily by the various composers whose works are shown. The space allotted to each contributor, relative to the total book, was chosen by I Ching chance operations.

In 1972, WGBH, the pioneering educational television station in Boston, presented "A Tribute to John Cage", an hour-long program by Nam June Paik in honour of Cage's sixtieth birthday.

Cage's most recent book, M, appeared in 1973. It is written in the highly controlled form of mesostics, or
acrostics with the critical letter in the centre of the word rather than at the beginning. The book shows a deeper commitment to social change than his earlier ones. Much attention is given to the anti-elitist social approach of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the identification with nature of Henry David Thoreau, and much talk about mushrooms and personal friends.

In 1976, Cage received much attention with his work commissioned for the American Bi-Centennial, Apartment House/Renga, which was also performed by the New York Philharmonic. Allen Hughes, the reviewer for the New York Times, praised it highly for its sense of celebration. The audience, however, was once again highly polarized. "Hundreds fled their seats", while those that remained to the end, "cheered and booed enthusiastically."17

Cage is now sixty-seven years old. He is still composing, lecturing and occasionally performing. The questions and challenges he poses are still getting strong reactions. With a warmth and humour rare in revolutionaries, he has become as much a philosopher as a musician.
CAGE'S AESTHETIC
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Cage defines art as the conscious structuring of time and space that stimulates the senses.

Material objects are not included in the definition; the emphasis is on structuring. The artist remains the maker, or form-giver, in the Aristotelian sense. However, it is the action of structuring per se that is the "art", rather than the product of the activity given form by an artist.

In these terms, then, traditional theatrical production is a by-product of art not the art itself. Cage's type of aesthetic lends itself to a theatrical form where the emphasis is on doing or activity more than on creating an end product. It also lends itself to a workshop or audience participatory form more than to a presentational one, although Cage usually works with the presentational.

Although the art object or production is of secondary importance, its scope is enlarged. Traditional non-art media are acceptable within the defined art. The non-hermetic and the unintentional fall within the bounds of art as long as they are contained by a consciously-structured framework of activity. As Harold Rosenberg points out, this type of definition "dissolves all limitations on the kinds of substances out of which art can be constituted".1 This shift from the aesthetic to the non-aesthetic, he calls the "de-definition of the arts".2

The inside-outside productions of Squat Theatre exemplify this aesthetic in practical theatrical terms. Their Pig,
Child, Fire (1977) was staged in a storefront window with the audience facing out toward the street. The non-theatrical space and events of Twenty-third Street that were framed by the window, and the presence and reactions of the shifting group outside curiously looking in (outside audience watching inside audience and performance) became part of the art work.

Cage ignores any reference to a rational response on the part of the perceiver. Like Artaud, he wants us to respond intuitively and sensorily in direct ways. It is sight and hearing, our public senses, that are stimulated by theatre. In theory, therefore, Cage's own art is non-intellectual. In practice, however, it is highly intellectual, since it demands a sophisticated conceptual understanding for greatest impact.

Of all the specific art forms, Cage considers theatre to be the most pure, since it "resembles life more closely than the other arts". Theatre in Cage's terms is something that engages both the eye and the ear...it is an occasion involving any number of people, but not just one.

In justification, Cage states:

the reason that I want to make my definition of theatre that simple is so one could view everyday life itself as theatre.

What Cage considers theatre is usually called performance. Performance is a live action intended to be presented to at least one spectator. It may or may not be scripted. It may or may not be dramatic. It is related to activity or to the completion of a prescribed task.

Performance is the genus. Theatre is the species.
Theatre since the Greeks has involved dramatic action, conflict, and creation of artificial time, place, and character. Kirby calls theatre which has these artificial elements "matrixed". Action and spectacle are common to both. Performance is to theatre then, what "organization of sound" is to harmony. It is the removal of classic aesthetic expectations, while still employing a formal structure.

The content or subject matter of a work of art must deal with processes of the external world. Cage is not interested in art works whose content is self-expression. To Cage, "communication [self-expression] is a way of calling attention to one's own psychology" and should be avoided because it is filled with irrelevant ego.

The ego, which acts as a filtering system for the external, must not be blocked and rigid since it is the external, rather than the psychological concerns of the individual artist, that Cage feels is appropriate subject matter for art.

The individuality of the artist is evident through the choice of activities that he/she makes. Cage tries to minimize the presence of his ego by working with chance techniques in order to remove these choices from his control. Inevitably, though, his presence in his works remains strong by the very choice of chance itself.

Artaud, too, in his Theatre of Cruelty, renounces "psychological man, with his well-dissected character and feelings, and social man, submissive to laws misshapen by religion and precepts", and concerns himself with a "total
man....cosmic and universal truths". He accuses psychology of causing theatre's "abasement and fearful loss of energy". Cage became aware of The Theatre and Its Double early in the fifties through Pierre Boulez in France. He refers to Artaud in Silence and other theoretical writings. (Here is an instance of a theatrical influence on Cage in contrast to his influence on theatre.)

The content of art must provide opportunities for perceiving our material environment and, as such, should deal with social, political and scientific processes. Cage points out in A Year From Monday, however, that these processes change as our understanding of them is altered by scientific developments. For example, the Einsteinian concept of space/time has fundamentally changed our way of seeing the world from a fixed model to a shifting one. The Uncertainty Principle of Heisenberg is also noteworthy in its relevance to Cage's general aesthetic. The Heisenberg Principle states that you cannot predict anything with absolute certainty. All you can do is specify probabilities. This renders everything indeterminate.

Buckminster Fuller credits this shift in scientific consciousness with changing our attitudes toward innovation.

Inventions and new-fangled ideas were anathema to the Newtonian in his changeless universe, but innovation is the essence of the Einsteinian universe.

Cage agrees that innovation in itself is a value. He is more interested in the experimental attitude than in creating great works of art. When subject matter reflects non-static external
processes rather than personal emotions or individual ideas, the result, according to Cage, is more often than not innovative. The theoretical reason for this is that in a shifting universe of constant change the point at which an artist begins to create is a unique space/time, with a unique profile of stimulation. If we can allow external processes to flow openly in and out of us, our creative efforts based on them will, of necessity, be different from what has come before.

Cage's works are highly innovative, but this is due more to his individual inventive ability than to his theoretical base. The subject matter of the majority of his works is the same: the order within the disorder of the universe. His chance techniques produce much variety of sound and image, but the real innovation in his works comes in the instrumentation and structuring. From this point of view, his own works do not fully support his theory.

Regarding value judgements, Cage feels there can be no "good" or "bad" art as long as the art work fulfills the definition described above. "Good" and "bad" only reflect middle class taste, which changes with different social periods. Duchamp pointed this out earlier, when he said,

art may be bad, good, or indifferent, but whatever adjective is used, we must call it art, and bad art is still art in the same way that a bad emotion is still an emotion.12

Cage defines error as "simply a failure to adjust immediately from pre-conception to a reality".13 As such,
there can be no consideration of error.  
Things come to pass, arising and disappearing.  
Things are always going wrong.¹⁴

One must accept life processes in and for themselves. In so doing, one gives up the need to change the things one does not like. This renders error irrelevant in a work of art, as well as in life.

Cage's approach raises questions about the concept of rehearsal. If any occurrence, intentional or unintentional, is acceptable, practice toward a specific goal is unnecessary. Rehearsal becomes simply a process of exploration, rather than the fine-tuning tool of product-oriented theatre. Squat Theatre performs with a no-rehearsal policy.

They don't warm up. They don't rehearse. They talk about what they want to do... discuss it in detail... not too much before, just afterwards¹⁵

Few other companies work in such a radical way. Even Cage, when performing with large orchestras, insists on rehearsals. Traditional criticism is obsolete. Cage sees it as "negative" and "non-consumptive". Instead, life processes should flow and "criticism must turn to creation... respond with a work of your own".¹⁶ Existing art works of all kinds, then, become stimulation for further art works in the same way as do the other processes of life. Masterpieces take on new meaning. They lose their sacredness, and become resource material for further innovation.

We must take intentional material, like Beethoven, and turn it into non-intention (we must get something out of it that he didn't put in it)¹⁷

It is implied that everyone is a potential artist just by
virtue of being alive.

Artaud had a similar disrespect for the worship of great art works.

Masterpieces of the past, are good for the past. They are not good for us. We have the right to say what has been said, and even what has not been said, in a way that belongs to us, a way that is immediate and direct, corresponding to present modes of feeling, and understandable to everyone... the idolatry of fixed masterpieces is an aspect of bourgeois conformism.18

The prime function of art is to increase our sensitivity to the external world in order to integrate our environment fully into our lives. Cage states:

The obligation, the morality, if you wish, of all the arts today, is to intensify, alter perceptual awareness, and hence, consciousness... of the real, material world. Of the things we see and hear and taste and touch.19

He wants a "view of the arts which does not separate them from the rest of life".20 He considers only the material, sensory side of life, however, and ignores the emotional entirely. "Life" is alive, but cold and unemotional.

In his discussion of A.K. Coomaraswamy's statement that the traditional Indian function of art is to "quiet the mind, making it susceptible to divine influences",21 he clarifies this. He interprets "divine influences" to be "the environment in which we are", and a "quiet mind" to be one in which "the ego does not obstruct the fluency of the things that come in through our senses and up through our dreams". This is in direct opposition to the Western tradition in which sense perceptions are secondary to conceptualization.

Cage limits the integration of the environment, however,
to "social-realization", rather than "self-realization". 22

Art functions to increase our understanding of and helps us "to adapt to our complex, contemporary society". 23 This is done by creating shifts in public sensibilities. He considers Buckminster Fuller a major artist because he has been able to accomplish this. Cage utilizes Fuller's concept of Collective Consciousness when he states,

> We have only one mind (the one we share). Changing things radically, therefore, is simple. You just change that one mind. 24

(Obviously Cage is simplifying matters for the purpose of making a rhetorical point.)

The structure of his Apartment House (1976) can be used as an example of his intent to raise social consciousness through art. It reflects the random interweaving representative of the racial mix that forms America's base. The process of interdependence and co-operation of those early inhabitants, as they faced a challenging but difficult life, often with common problems, is expressed. The importance of co-operation within diversity is basic to Cage's political philosophy as a Social Anarchist.

He feels that art is capable of improving social, political and environmental problems. This can be done by the consciousness-raising of the works themselves. It can also be done by applying the imagination, idealism, and creativity traditionally associated with the arts directly to social problems. When art is seen as an activity rather than an object, the act of art can then be applied to life on social, interactive levels. In his book A Year From Monday, he proposes:
Take the facts of art seriously: try them in economics/politics; giving up, that is, notions about balance (of power) (of wealth), foreground, background.

Another function of art is to "keep us from ossifying". Art should stimulate us into reaction. In this way, it helps us avoid stagnation. (Gertrude Stein similarly considered art useful only when it was irritating.) In a world of constant change, it is important for survival not to become complacent.

Irritating art is best when it stirs the audience to action. The performances of the Futurists (which incidentally also used noise and simultaneity) often brought violent reactions from their audiences. Marinetti once wrote a manifesto on "The Pleasure of Being Booed" (1911). In their work, they intentionally tried to antagonize people with pranks like double-booking the theatre, and putting glue on seats. Frequently, Marinetti, Balla or Russolo were jailed for their disruptiveness.

The Dada movement too was a protest of irrationality designed to shock audiences into seeing the madness of their society. Dadaism recognized art as a social necessity.

Significantly, non-stagnating art theoretically prepares us for risk-taking.

There is nothing we really need to do that isn't dangerous. Eighth Street artists knew this years ago. Constantly spoke of risk.

Cage's personal risks are all artistic, however, when compared with the Living Theatre, who create often threatening protest situations or Chris Burden, the Body Artist, who actually puts his life momentarily in danger.
The essential thing about a work of art is that it somehow be useful to us in connection with our daily lives...There is no need to minimize the complexity of the situation (our lives), but rather a great need to make this complexity something we can enjoy. If our arts introduce us to it, then I think they are performing a useful function. 30

The utilitarian aspect of Cage's work can be seen in the types of actions that he chooses to work with. Tasks are never purely aesthetic; they always perform some sort of function. For example, the performers changing the radios in Radio Music do not do so looking for beautiful sounds. The act of changing stations is purely functional. Cage's use of space is the same. Rather than beautify the environment, he allows it to reflect the functional uses of the space. The complicated spatial arrangement of the many elements of HPSCHD was arrived at either randomly or by the availability of electrical sources.

Cage defines artistic structure as a framework that can be broken down into clearly distinguishable parts. It is structure that distinguishes a work of art from a non-work of art. Structure is the "net" within which the artwork lives. Structure must be flexible in form.

If something else happens that ordinarily would be thought of as an interruption, doesn't alter it, then it is working the way it now must. 32

Accidents and unintentional events that occur within the consciously structured time are, therefore, considered an integral part of the artwork. All the non-hermetic that exists in that space/time exists on an equal plane with the aesthetic. In his overview this is justified, since both are simply fluid, interweaving parts of an infinite whole. The processes of art, therefore, should not stop the processes
of non-art (life). Art and life are inseparable.

One doesn't stop living when one is occupied with art. Inclusion of the non-hermetic into the aesthetic structure makes us aware of the formal elements that make up the non-hermetic. "4'33" is Cage's most radical example of this.

The non-hermetic extends to the physical environment and the process and actions of the members of the audience. In an extreme example, the audience that reacted violently to Cage's Milan performance of *Empty Words* created an intensely dramatic and alive performance. When this type of violence persists beyond the defined space/time of the artistic structure, however, it shifts from being "alive and unpredictable non-hermetic activity" to potentially-uncontrollable "social disturbance".

The environmental staging techniques of the early work of Grotowski (e.g. *Kordian* -1962) and that of The Performance Group (e.g. *Dionysus in 69* -1969) visually incorporated the audience into the theatrical images. The movements and facial expressions of individual audience members were visually juxtaposed with the performance itself, adding a constantly changing, non-hermetic level of reality to the focus of the entire production.

Duchamp's Readimades and his Glass Paintings also bring non-hermetic reality into art, as does much other Dada work. The Glass Paintings, in particular, parallel Cage's "4'33" by incorporating the physical environment and immediate human activity that falls within view of the framed area. Real things and actions become art by virtue of the artist's
selection and framing. However, Duchamp's intent was different than Cage's. The Dada slogan that Art=Life was aimed specifically at rendering traditional notions of art meaningless, rather than at meaningful integration. Richter points this out in his book, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, when he considers Duchamp's use of the non-hermetic as parallel with "amorality, emptying life as well as art of all its spiritual content."  

Although Cage, like the Dadaists, wants to change traditional concepts of art, he is aware that art is not crucial to life. Life is interesting in itself. Art is a dispensable tool. \[\text{We open our eyes and ears seeing life each day excellent as it is. This realization no longer needs art, though without it, it would have been difficult to come by.}\]  

In his optimistic view of life, everything holds interest. It is just a matter of concentration. The inclusion of unpredictable non-hermetic elements within the art work changes the responsibility of the artist toward the work. He becomes an acceptor, in addition to being a maker in the Aristotelian sense. \[\text{To accept whatever comes regardless of the consequences is to be unafraid or to be full of that love which comes from a sense of at-oneness with whatever.}\]  

However, "accepting whatever comes, regardless of the consequences" can also mean a reluctance to accept personal responsibility for the work. Incorporating violence, for example, is theoretically within the artist's bounds as an acceptor, but it can interfere with individual values and moral responsibility on a practical level.
In an interview in "Art in America", Cage reveals concern and disapproval for the unpredictable violence used in the work of other artists such as Nam June Paik. For example, Paik's piece entitled *In Homage to John Cage* (1962) consisted of Paik eviscerating the insides of an old piano, then jumping off the stage to run over to Cage, who was sitting in a front row seat. He then cut Cage's necktie off at the neck and poured a bottle of shampoo over his head. After massaging Cage's bubbly head a bit, he ran out of the auditorium. The shock of both Cage and the audience was broken by a telephone call. It was Paik calling to say that the performance was over. Although Paik is a disciple of Cage, the aggressiveness of this piece made Cage personally aware of the potential dangers of unpredictability.

Flexible structure produces art works that are non-static and different with changes in time and environmental conditions. They are never exactly reproducible. Some aspects of the performance will remain when repeated, but the total is transitory. The immediate takes precedence over the permanent.

In theatre more than other art forms, exact reproducibility has never really been possible. There are too many human variables in live performance. It was to counter this aspect of the art that theories like Craig's system of Übermarionettes were developed.

From this perspective, anything lasting becomes documentation, rather than the event or experience itself.
Photographs, videotapes, recordings, and film are considered documentation. They serve only to record the experience as an historical event, much like a post card.

In a flexible structure that includes unintentional elements, innumerable levels of reality "interpenetrate" to mutually affect each other at any given moment. This structure, then, should have no prescribed focus according to Cage, since many possibilities will always exist. Cage reflects the influence of McLuhan when he states,

Nowadays, everything happens at once, and our souls are conveniently electronic (omni-attentive) Art, like life, should exist in a changing field. One sees an Oriental influence in this approach. Western aesthetics is built on rational linearity, or cause and effect relationships, as opposed to an Oriental view, which sees life as based on an incalculable number of simultaneous causes and effects.

Lack of a prescribed focus radically alters the role of the traditional perceiver in responding to the art work. Surrounded by a field of stimulation, the perceiver must make personal decisions about what to focus on and when to shift focus. This approach is supported by the psychological research done by Segall, Campbell and Herskovits in which they show that although we assume that everyone perceives the same as we do, they don't. In reality, everyone is responding with an individual set of perceptual content and system of associations and inferences. Many perceptions are shared, but they are always perceived in an individual way.
Correspondingly, a non-linear structure creates works which begin and end by personal points of involvement and non-involvement. Since the perceiver is defining the experience/piece for him/herself, the piece begins when his/her attention is focused. The piece ends when attention is no longer held. In this way, every art work becomes directly audience-participatory. In Cage's words, "each person is in the best seat".\(^3\)\(^9\)

According to Cage, there is no right or wrong way to perceive. Every individual creates a unique combination from the stimulation based on his/her own perspective. However, to the uninitiated, trained to expect defined, linear development from the artist, the experience of a field-structured art work is often one of confusion and chaos.

Basic to Cage's aesthetic is the concept of indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is the state that exists when structured units interact with each other in an unpredictable way. It is a specific type of flexible structure. All of Cage's work from *Music for Piano* (1952) to the present is indeterminate.

Indeterminacy is a formal means of separating the artist's intention and taste from the experience of the art work itself.

All things are related, and this complexity is more evident when it is not oversimplified by an idea of relationships in one person's mind.\(^4\)\(^0\)

Any direct idea that the artist may have is altered by the intrusion of the unpredictable elements. New meanings arise
which can then be re-interpreted by the perceiver. It is a formal attempt to let things happen, rather than make them happen.

Cage values technology as a tool capable of minimizing individual intention. On a practical level, he is intimately involved with the tools of technology - namely electronics and computers - in his art works. Technological media lend themselves to cool, impersonal, and unemotional works of art.

Computers are bringing about a situation that's like the invention of harmony. Subroutines are like chords. No one would think of keeping a chord to himself. You'd give it to anyone who wanted it. Subroutines are altered by a single punch. We're getting music made by man himself, not just one man. It is a paradox that Cage, who turns to chance to escape the rational, also turns to computers, the mechanical extension of the human brain, in hopes of freeing art from artists. One is reminded of the Univac slogan: Don't think. Let Univac do it for you.

Indeterminacy results in one-of-a-kind performances. For this reason, they are "equally interesting to the performer as to the audience". It is the unpredictable that makes the performance alive. However, it is often very difficult for a performer to let go of his fear of the unknown.

Indeterminacy allows for simultaneity, or multiple, unrelated things happening at the same time. The Black Mountain Piece makes effective use of this phenomenon. The Dadaists also made use of simultaneity as early as 1912 to express the chaotic political situation in Europe at the time.
Simultaneity results in interpenetration, in which innumerable levels of reality mutually affect each other, bringing both the non-hermetic and aesthetic together, as discussed earlier.

I am interested in any art not as a closed-in thing by itself, but as a going-out one to interpenetrate with all other things, even if they are arts, too. 

Both a random cough and a fleeting thought are brought into the art work because they occur within the defined space/time structure and are just as worthy of focus as the intended elements. Juxtaposition causes associations which become part of the total perception of the work. Interpenetration is constant.

"There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time."

When one simultaneous element temporarily obscures the others, Cage refers to it as a "truck effect", i.e., a situation parallel to a passing truck obscuring the view of a building across the street. The building continues to exist. It is only the perception of it that is cut off. The truck effect occurs in the non-hermetic regularly.

An indeterminate structure can be accomplished through the use of chance techniques, such as dice or the I Ching. All of Cage's major works are structured by this method. However, he recognizes it as a tool, and states that "chance techniques are unnecessary when the actions performed are unpredictable."

Cage's use of chance techniques has two significant precedents. The first is Oriental philosophy, which is
reflected in his frequent use of the I Ching. As already mentioned, Cage has seriously studied Zen Buddhism. Zen is an anti-rational religion of the present.

Life as it is lived suffices. It is only when the disquieting intellect steps in and tries to murder it that we stop to live and imagine ourselves to be short of or in something. Let the intellect alone, it has usefulness in its proper sphere, but let it not interfere with the flowing of the life-stream.

It is based on a belief that everything in the universe is related, and "all is one". Examination of dissimilars and opposites is believed to reveal natural truths. Chance is used to bring dissimilars into play while not upsetting the natural order with human intelligence.

The second major influential precedent in Cage's use of chance is the work of the Dadaists in the early twenties. Tzara, Arp, and Duchamp all used chance techniques in their work. Much Dada poetry and collage is built on chance. It expressed the irrationality and chaos they felt in society. They "adopted chance, the voice of the unconscious - the soul, if you like - as a protest against rigidity."

Underlying all of this is the concept of process, the state of constant change that characterizes all living things. In Cage's words, it is "continually becoming that it is becoming". This reflects a Zen sensibility of purposelessness. Anything that happens between two fixed points in time is always in the process of becoming something other than it was before, but never actually arrives at a given end point. No goal is necessary, simply the goal of constant
change. All activities then have the same goal.

Process-oriented art has no permanent, or static, end product. Only the documentation is lasting. Since it is different when repeated, the same work is often unrecognizable and thought to be another piece. Several of Cage's works have been performed only once, but have strong similarities to other works.

Elements in process do not all change at the same rate.

Everything is changing, but while some things are changing, others are not. Eventually, those that were not changing begin suddenly to change et vice versa ad infinitum. 51

These variations intensify unpredictability. Elements come together and separate. Therefore, momentary conditions can never be the same twice. There are too many elements changing at the same time at different rates.

The complexity of process-oriented art is unfathomable. Exact definition is no longer possible.

You will never be able to give a satisfactory report, even to yourself, of just what happened. 52

This lack of definition is difficult for many people to adjust to. The fuzziness and distraction disturbs our sense of stability. Process in art requires conceptual re-education. Cage's aesthetic is to contribute to that re-education.
CAGE'S PERFORMANCE
I shall consider Cage's performance in the following way: 1) theatricality - spectacle and Conceptual Theatre, and 2) inventions and instrumentation. Since these are categorical, rather than developmental divisions, there is often some overlapping of characteristics.

Theatricality has been important to Cage's work since the forties. Before that time, the performance of his percussion concerts were given in traditional concert format. Through his collaborations with Merce Cunningham, he began to see his musical performances as a type of theatre. As previously mentioned, he sees theatre simply as an activity that stimulates both the eye and the ear in a public situation. Such a broad definition is closely aligned with non-literary theatrical genres such as pageants, spectacle, and circus.

Together, Cunningham and Cage evolved a system of equal, parallel performance. The music was not linked to the dance either rhythmically or thematically, but both were performed simultaneously in the same performance space. Cage's movement, in the activity of making sounds, was part of the dance whole. Conversely, the sounds of the dancers moving along the floor, etc., became parts of the percussive sound score. This differs from traditional dance in that the sound is not simply supportive of the movement, but equal to it. (The independent "zones" of action and visual imagery in theatre pieces such as Robert Wilson's *King of Spain* (1969), or *Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (1974) are parallel to this idea.)
Cage uses this simultaneous performance technique in most of his lectures and as musical performances. A traditional audience-performer relationship is often maintained, but information is interrupted by the simultaneous nature of the presentation. The intent is experiential rather than communication of information.

"Indeterminacy", a lecture presented together with David Tudor at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, serves as a good illustration. It was a collection of ninety, randomly chosen stories. The stories varied in length. They were in no set order. Each was read aloud, allowing one minute for each story. Some had to be read quickly. Others had to be stretched out. This created an unpredictable rhythm of words and silences. The stories themselves were often difficult to comprehend. Parallel with the reading, David Tudor performed Fontana Mix, an electronic piece which uses very loud sounds, in which the performer is free to decide the order and duration of the noise. The loud electronic noises frequently obstructed the speaker's voice. Neither artist knew beforehand what the other would do. The fixed parts of the structure were the one minute intervals, the read stories, the electronic sounds, and the total time of ninety minutes. The performance result, being structured yet unpredictable, was indeterminate.

In the Black Mountain Piece (1952), Cage began to use spectacle by integrating otherwise unrelated visual elements with the sonic in an indeterminate way. Black Mountain Piece
was done collaboratively with Cunningham as a lecture at Black Mountain College. It involved Cage lecturing on Zen Buddhism, with M.C. Richards and Charles Olsen on scattered ladders adding commentary. David Tudor played the piano. A movie was projected onto Robert Rauschenberg's white paintings that were hung from the ceiling. An old phonograph played and Cunningham, followed by a stray dog, improvised a dance throughout the auditorium. The effect was one of confusion and overlapping stimulation.

The audience was arranged in a formation focussing into the centre of the room.

Loudspeakers were placed throughout the space. Activities happened at random spots around the room. The traditional physical audience-performer relationship was altered to encourage each person to have an individual perception of the event. Black Mountain Piece is generally considered the prototypical Happening.

By the late sixties/early seventies, Cage had enlarged the Black Mountain idea to circus proportions. The large-scale spectacle and technical complexity of the later works,
like HPSCHD, are a direct result of a more highly developed technology. (They are also a by-product of the increased funding that comes with recognition.)

HPSCHD, (the name is derived from computer language) was performed at the University of Illinois in collaboration with Lejaren Hiller. Forty eight artists contributed their works. Outside the building, a large sports arena, fifty-two carousels projected overlapping images onto the walls. Inside, hanging from the rafters, were several large (one hundred feet by forty feet) translucent panels. Simultaneously, film and slides were projected through them. Cage attached contact microphones to the lighting board so that each change of lights created sound. Other electronic sounds were amplified over fifty-eight separate channels, each having a separate operator who could adjust the volume at will. Seven live harpsichordists independently played either their own composition or one of the pieces chosen by the others. No one was told when to do what. Several thousand moving people filled the floor and sides of the area, adding to the confusion and noise.

The inclusion of an acrobat and a belly dancers in the Paris version of this idea (1970) points up the theatrical intent behind the work even more clearly. It was a multi-ring circus (without the rings) in which the performers and audience shared the performance space in a constant flow of change and movement. Ronconi's production of Orlando Furioso (1970) uses the same integrated staging technique. The
integrated audience, through colour, physical presence and human reaction, becomes part of the theatre itself.

Theatre in these terms has become what Cage describes as "purposeless play that awakens our senses". Theatre as pure action must exist on its own. With so many variables at such a scale, Cage loses control of the piece. His non-intention, however, is conceptual since loss of control was actually his original intent.

All of Cage's performances are not as grandiose as HPSCHD. Theatre Piece (1960), which was performed at the Living Theatre, is of a scale more typical of the bulk of his work. It is also characteristic in its indeterminacy and use of electronic sounds. Although indeterminacy in many of his works is arrived at through the Oriental "Book of Changes", the I Ching (e.g. Music of Changes-1951), random irregularities of a piece of paper (e.g. Music for Piano-1952), or the chance overlapping of several transparent plastic templates (e.g., Variation V-1958), Theatre Piece is not. The form is built from individual personality differences. It calls for "anywhere between one and eight performers" and is structured in compartments. Individual performers choose twenty nouns and/or verbs before they begin. During each time bracket, one of these is randomly chosen and completed as an action by each of the performers independently. Taped electronic sounds play simultaneously. Thus, Theatre Piece relies on the performers themselves, rather than electronics and visual effects to create the theatre. It is more conceptual than spectacular.
4'33" (1952) is Cage's ultimate Conceptual Theatre performance. 4'33" involved David Tudor, an accomplished pianist, sitting silently at the piano, not playing, for four minutes and thirty three seconds. The piece was made up of the gradually increasing sounds of the audience as it grew more and more restless and confused. Also included were the other accidental sounds that occurred during that short period (e.g. doors opening, etc.). The piece began with Tudor placing the score on the piano. It ended when he closed the score and walked off the stage four minutes and thirty three seconds later. Only the format and the duration of the piece were arranged beforehand. The duration was chosen by chance techniques.

Using the concert hall format, Cage exploited traditional audience/performer decorum and played up shock value. Performed in the woods or a street corner (both of which are technically possible), a different but equally valid set of unintentional sounds would be produced, but the parody would disappear. Parody is vital to the piece. 4'33", like any other piece of Conceptual Art, only works once. Cage must have realized this, since the piece was never re-performed, even though it is his most famous work. It is an exercise in perception and unpredictability, as well as a deliberate challenge to Western aesthetics.

4'33" is Cage at his most outrageous. It is uncharacteristic in its radical simplicity and minimal reliance on a numerical framework. It is unfortunate that it is the first
piece to come to mind in any discussion of Cage. It is a brilliant piece of Conceptual Art, however, well before its time.

The following report of a recent Cage performance in Milan is interesting because of the audience reaction. It is interesting to see a new generation reacting violently to the rationality of the ideas that their parents found disturbingly irrational.

Last December, John Cage presented at Milan's Teatro Lirico his concert of *Empty Words*. That is the reading of a hodgepodge of syllables and letters obtained by putting Henry David Thoreau's *Journal* through a certain number of chance changes achieved by means of the I Ching. Slides showed drawings by Thoreau. The concert, organized by the private radio network Channel 96, was attended mostly by young people, who being unprepared for Cage's "music" reacted against it after the first few minutes. Threatening shouts like "Shoot him" and "Death to Intellectuals" were accompanied by firecrackers and plastic bags filled with water and thrown on Cage's head. A group from the audience even climbed on stage and attacked Cage verbally and physically. Without showing the least emotion, Cage went on with his "chant" for two and a half hours.

Cage's instrumentation greatly affects the character of his performances. The novelty of many of his inventions often colours the presentation with a very personal wit and humour.

Cage's early works are percussive. Found instruments, an extension of earlier Dada experiments with non-art objects, are used consistently because of their novel sound possibilities. An early piece such as *Construction in Metal* (1938) typically employs unconventional instrumentation. In addition to the more traditional gongs, bells, and cymbals,
Cage utilizes automobile brake drums and large pieces of scrap metal. The structure used in the piece is traditional and highly numerical, but the sensibility of inventiveness and exploration can already be seen.

Found objects used to create unusual sounds led to the invention of the Prepared Piano. At Cage's first Carnegie Hall recital in 1949, Ross Parmenter of the New York Times said,

John Cage came into his own last night, both as an inventor and a composer. Maro Ajemian played a sixty nine minute composition of his on one of his "Prepared Pianos", and there was no questioning the double impact on the select and intellectual audience gathered to hear it at Carnegie Recital Hall.5

Between 1938, the date of the original Bacchanale Prepared Piano piece, and 1951, when he composed Two Pastorales, Cage wrote fifteen works for the instrument. The Prepared Piano, however, is as much an idea as it is an instrument. Particular sound qualities needed for specific works determine the type of preparation the piano undergoes. This creates an instrument which changes from piece to piece depending on the type and quantity of objects manipulated into the piano itself.

Many of these compositions were conceived as accompaniments for performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. The instrument is a very convenient one for touring, since most performance spaces have pianos. The materials necessary to transform any available piano - a few erasers, rubber bands, screws, and blocks of wood - are easily portable. If necessary, new variations on the Prepared Piano can be improvised from whatever materials are at hand, and the piece can
still be performed as long as the rhythmic structure is maintained. The Prepared Piano is also convenient when there is limited manpower. An individual performer has the tonal range of several conventional percussionists.

Among Cage's other musical inventions is the Water Gong. This is created by placing a vibrating gong in a tub of water. This causes the timbre and the quality of the sound to gradually change. It is used in many of his works, such as Water Walk (1959).

Cage's sense of humour is shown in his use of the toy piano as a serious instrument. It is used, both alone and highly amplified, in several of his works. In Music for Amplified Toy Piano (1960) he gives it central and solo focus.

Before the development of magnetic tape, Cage incorporated the unpredictable sounds of radio. Twelve radios are called for in Imaginary Landscape #4. Radio Music (1956), a later work, calls for "one to eight performers, each at a radio". The performers simply change the volume and the stations indeterminately. When Cage told Morton Feldman about his plans to present Radio Music in performance, Feldman said, "But you can't do that, and expect people to pay for it." Cage did.

Cage's Imaginary Landscape #5 is generally considered to be the first magnetic tape composition, which probably makes Cage the inventor of magnetic tape as a viable instrument. He developed a new way of splicing which distorts the originally taped sounds.
Electronics provides him with a wide range of noise that was unattainable before, by making use of amplification, feedback and distortion. Cage's many electronic compositions satisfy his fascination with the purely technological aspects of producing sound. In performance, his works, like that of other electronic music, are filled with knobs, transistors, and tangles of extension cords. Cage's are always highly active, however. He moves from equipment to equipment, often wearing earphones, resembling an electronics technician more than a traditional musician.

At Brandeis University in 1965, Cage presented Rozart Mix. It is typical of his electronic works in performance. He placed eighty-eight tape loops (the same as the number of keys in a piano) at various locations throughout the building. The loops were made by distorting excerpts of the correspondence between Cage and the organizers of the event in the planning of the performance. Six performers were involved. Their task was to move throughout the building, intermingling with the scattered audience, and replace the broken tape loops. When only twelve loops were left, the event became a party and refreshments were brought out. (The close audience/performer contact, and the freedom of audience members to move throughout the space, is much like the staging of Schechner's Tooth of Crime.)

Cage's use of the extended performance space, which develops strongly from the Black Mountain Piece (1952), comes directly from an architectural sensibility. High amplific-
ation of sound for the purpose of filling interior spaces also reflects this. It makes us keenly aware of the architecture as an enclosure and emphasizes its peculiarities.

Cage's interest in the extended performance space goes back as early as 1941, when he made direct use of the architectural environment in *Living Room Music* by utilizing doors, windows, etc. as percussive instruments. This integration of the architectural space with the art work is an early experiment in Environmentalism. Schechner, as well as Ann Halprin and other recent experimental groups, consciously incorporate the peculiarities of the performance space into their performance.

Another electronic device that Cage has made much use of as instrumentation is the contact microphone. In performance, it is always coupled with a multiple loudspeaker system, which is arranged around the total performance space. He has used this instrument in a performance situation in ways as simple as wearing a contact microphone on his throat and drinking a glass of water, the sound then being highly amplified and distributed around the room. On a larger scale, *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1964) involves an entire symphony orchestra equipped with contact microphones on each instrument, each with its own loudspeaker at some point in the auditorium. The sounds of the piece are indeterminately structured from a set of transparent plates of astrological charts.

*Atlas Eclipticalis* makes use of another Cage invention, the Mechanical Conductor. This is a large arm (not realistic) which moves in a clock-like rotation during the entire perform-
ance, and ends the piece when it stops moving. It is placed in the centre of the orchestra, replacing the traditional conductor. When the piece was played in New York by the New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein graciously turned the podium over to the Mechanical Conductor for the Cage part of the concert.

In summary, Cage sees his performance work being as much theatre as it is music. While his performances vary a great deal in their spectacle, they consistently employ a theatricality involving several different and competing media and activities unified only by a shared space/time. They are frequently highly technical, utilizing unique instrumentation designed by Cage. Characteristically, they usually approach space architecturally, and, perhaps needless to add, they are never exactly reproducible.
CAGE AND THE HAPPENING
CAGE AND THE HAPPENING

All Happenings are theatre in Cage's terms. They clearly "engage both the eye and the ear" in a consciously structured way. They also "involve any number of people, but not just one". Like Cage's own work, they are a type of theatrical spectacle. In addition, since real actions, objects, and people are used, they are actually more "pure" as an art form, in Cagean terms, than literary theatre. They "resemble life more closely" by dealing directly with functional reality.

Darko Suvin defines a Happening as

a genre of theatre spectacle, using various types of signs and media, organized around the action of human performers in a homogeneous and thematically unified way, and a non-diagnostic [from the Greek diegese=story told] structuring of time and space. 1

Kirby expands on this definition to include a compartmentalized structure and "non-matrixed" performance. 2 (He uses the words "matrixed" and "non-matrixed" to distinguish between traditional acting, in which the actor creates an imaginary matrix of time, place, and character, and the activities of a person who is being watched while completing a real-life task.) A non-cause-and-effect relationship of visual and sonic images should be added to the definition.

Happenings are not theatre in the traditional sense. They do not involve dramatic conflict or plot or demand the suspension of disbelief. Being "non-matrixed", as Kirby points out, there is no construction of artificial character, time and setting. This style of presentation is an extension of Cage's Dada-based ideas of blurring the distinctions between
the artistic and non-hermetic, or art and life. Performers carry out their tasks as themselves in actual environments.

Happenings, as a form, offer much diversity, and exceptions can be found for most generalizations about them. Despite their variations, however, Cage's concept of art and theatre as activity is basic to all Happenings. It is the action of completing assigned tasks within a given structure that constitutes the form.

In the Happening, action itself is seen in functional terms. The performers react functionally, not aesthetically, to each other's actions, as well as their own. The images are aesthetic, but the activities themselves are potentially useful. The picnic scene in Robert Whitman's *Mouth* (1960), for example, was actually dinner for the two performers involved. (It's menu changed with each performance, depending upon who had prepared the meal, incidentally, true to the Cagean spirit of non-reproducibility.) Bringing actual reality within aesthetics, as Cage does, blurs the distinctions between useful action and non-useful action and often creates a double-edged reality.

Cage's active aesthetic orientation was particularly appropriate to the visual artists and musicians, like Allan Kaprow and George Brecht, who attended his Experimental Composition classes at the New School for Social Research from 1958 to 1960. Cage's individualistic view of art-as-action complemented the Abstract Expressionist mood of most New York artists at the time. The art-as-action aspect of Happenings thus has its roots as much in the Action Painting of Jackson
Pollock as it does in Cage.

Most Happening artists were originally visual artists or, like Cage, musicians. Frequently, words were used as sounds rather than for meaning, in much the same way as Cage uses noises. In fact, Cagean noise itself was often used in these productions. The lack of technical theatrical expertise or acting skill by the people making Happenings, coupled with their training in the visual and musical arts, shaped the type of theatre they produced. Cage, the musician, as well as Cage the theorist was relevant.

One of Cage's most important contributions to the development of Happenings was the liberating effect he had on the original Happening artists. Dick Higgins reminisces about those New School classes:

The best thing that happened to us in Cage's class was the sense that he gave that "anything goes", at least potentially. The main thing was the realization of the possibilities which made it easier to use small scales, and a greater gamut of possibilities than our previous experience would have led us to expect.

Cage's attitude toward error, value judgements in art, and his acceptance of things going wrong as simply part of a larger, universal flow, freed his students from fear of failure and opened their creativity. Also, seeing the artist as acceptor brought new possibilities and perspectives by minimizing individual taste and pulling the aesthetic and non-aesthetic closer together.

His most direct influence can be seen in the use of a flexible structure. Compartmentalization, indeterminacy,
multi-focus, and simultaneity are general characteristics of the form. Compartmentalization, as opposed to the linear cause-and-effect information structure found in literary theatre, is common to all Happenings. This is the framework that all of Cage's works are based on.

In Happenings, compartmentalization was frequently accomplished through lighting, as in Robert Whitman's *American Moon* (1960), where a blackout divided each section. Kaprow physicalized the concept by linking each section with a corresponding, distinct, spatial area. For example, in *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1958), partitions were set up to divide the space. Physical compartmentalization was frequently used by others as well.

Indeterminacy, to create flexibility, was also used in different ways. Dick Higgins' *Graphis Series* (1961) integrated the space with the action by marking the floor in a large, irregular design and labelling each intersection with an action-direction. Performer movement was limited to following the floor lines, but no direction was prescribed. At every intersection, one of a list of pre-learned sentences was said, while performing the action dictated on the floor. A variety of indeterminate combinations were created in this way.

Sometimes indeterminacy was achieved by combining props, rather than the physical environment, with the actions. George Brecht's *Motor Vehicle Sundown* (1960) involved the participants sitting in their cars, performing in a random order pre-assigned tasks, like start motor, open and close
window, blink lights, turn on windshield wiper, and sound horn. The cars were found-objects made into visual and sonic instruments, much like the percussion instruments of Cage's early works, or some of his more eccentric inventions. The rhythms were indeterminate and the total, non-static effect was one of shifting, unpredictable juxtaposition. This piece was originally performed "In Dedication to John Cage".5

Although the form is indeterminate, few Happenings employ formal chance techniques like dice or the I Ching. An exception is Dick Higgins, who used dice in The Tart (1965). Kirby's First and Second Wilderness (1963) also used dice in a game format, although this performance was reportedly picketed by Higgins and Al Hansen, disciples of Cage, for "improper use of chance techniques".6

Simultaneity was taken beyond Cage's use of it by the Happening artists. They often created simultaneous events taking place at various distant locations at the same time. Marta Minujin's Simultaneity in Simultaneity (1966) happened in three countries and made use of mass media like television, telegrams, and telephones. Although this piece was involved with technological media, as is Cage's work, most Happenings involved nothing more advanced that the use of slides and film.

Indeterminacy and simultaneity were not used in Happenings for the purpose of minimizing the presence of the artist's taste. They were used to arrive at new and unpredictable relationships. The artist's will was to create images or intentional sensory overload through simultaneous, random
juxtaposition and is very much in evidence.

Although the content, or subject matter, of most Happenings has little to do with psychology, it is not concerned with "social realization" either. Most Happenings are concerned with the abstract juxtaposition of unrelated images (e.g. Oldenburg's *Autobodys*-1963), or pure fantasy (e.g. Red Groom's *The Burning Building*-1959). The only "shift in public sensibilities" that takes place is a detached and aesthetic one.

Questions about traditional performance and the nature of art in general are raised. The realm is artistic, not social.

When Kaprow calls for

the source of themes, materials, actions, and the relationship between them...to be derived from any place or period except from the arts, their derivatives, and their milieu,

his intent follows Cage: namely, to bring art closer to everyday reality. Even though the raw materials of the medium are familiar to everyone, however, Happenings remained much like Cage's work, an elite art phenomenon, rooted in aesthetics and the reaction against older traditions. They were never popular entertainment. They were usually done in small, intimate gatherings of the avant-garde community, in lofts, off-beat galleries, classrooms and other non-theatrical environments.

The Happening idea developed from the *Black Mountain Piece* and was spread through Cage's students to others. Many artists contributed to its development, giving much variety to the form. Their common characteristics of multi-media, action built from non-matrixed tasks, simultaneity leading to
unrealistic and often nonsensical juxtapositions, and a sensory orientation all remain true to the Black Mountain model. Like Cage's performance works, Happenings were collages of actions which explored a non-theatrical environment and in which no particular message was communicated.
CAGE AND THE LIVING THEATRE
CAGE AND THE LIVING THEATRE

The personal association between Cage and Judith Malina and Julian Beck goes back to the early forties, before the formation of the Living Theatre. When he and Xenia first moved to New York and were living with Peggy Guggenhim and Max Ernst, they became acquainted with the Becks. The Becks were part of the community of artists and intellectuals who surrounded Peggy Guggenheim at the time.

In 1947, Cage was one of the original group of people the Becks contacted when they were looking for support for their new theatre. This association has been maintained over the years. In 1960, Cage was included in the Sponsoring Committee to honour the Living Theatre's 1000th performance.1 (Others were Jean Cocteau, Merce Cunningham, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Allen Ginsberg, Paul Goodman, and Tennessee Williams.)

In the early years of the Living Theatre, Monday nights were set up for informal gatherings. Playwrights, poets, artists, and others congregated to discuss current projects, and often read from their works. Dylan Thomas and Cage were two of the first to read. Between 1959 and 1963, these Monday evening programs were reinstated. During this time, several Happenings were held in the theatre.

In 1952, Cage performed the premier of Music of Changes in the Living Theatre space. Music of Changes was one of Cage's early indeterminate compositions. It was the first use of the I Ching in his work. Also in 1952, the following text was included in the program notes for "An Evening of
Bohemian Theatre", which was staged by the Living Theatre.

written in response to a request for a manifesto, 1952

nothing is accomplished by writing a piece of music
nothing is accomplished by hearing a piece of music
nothing is accomplished by playing a piece of music

Cage's statement, which is a poem in itself, negated expectation and opened the audience to the possibility of something new. The plays, three short pieces by Picasso, Stein and T.S. Eliot, were traditionally structured and literary, however. It was only later that the Living Theatre began to develop a looser theatrical style.

It is important to point out that the ideas of Artaud and Piscator, together with a political philosophy of Social Ararchism, form the theoretical base upon which the experiments of the Living Theatre have been built. Cage is only one of many influences that have affected their development. However, as the mature style of the Living Theatre grew, many aspects of Cage's aesthetic came to be seen.

The political content of the Living Theatre work is compatible with Cage's views on the content and function of art. Not only is the subject matter of their works non-psychological, but to the Becks as well as Cage, who is also a Social Anarchist, their works "help us to adapt to our complex, contemporary society" by posing alternative solutions to a capitalistic economy and social structure.
Their intent to bring art and life together is expressed both in the work and in their lifestyle. The lifestyle of the Living Theatre has become a work of art in itself. As it has matured, the Living Theatre has managed, more than any other American theatre group, to blur art and life on a non-aesthetic level. Having had the experience of performing at the Michigan Festival of Experimental Theatre the same year as the Living Theatre, as well as sharing an ordinary social evening with the company, I was struck by the power of their collective presence, even in the most everyday situations. Their larger-than-life quality as a group is achieved in part through mixed cultural backgrounds (various colours, shapes, and nationalities), in part from the wildness of extreme hair styles and a sense of aggressive sexuality, in part through clothing that is used both in and out of theatrical performance, and in part from a tendency to be confrontational as individuals. Together, they communicate a threatening challenge by being so aggressively individual against the background of a non-anarchistic society. Simply by being who they are they function on an everyday level as art integrated with the rest of society.

But by becoming their anarchistic art, the Living Theatre are virtual outsiders wherever they go. Reports of their tours tell of continual distrust and often cancellation because of their implicit threat. Cage, on the other hand, lives quietly and comfortably alone in a small artist's community outside of New York. The Living Theatre have gone beyond him in their anarchy and in bringing life and art together.

Compared to them, Cage seems theoretical and academic in
lifestyle.

This art/life relationship flows into their formal performances through the use of non-matrixed acting. The actors perform as themselves, sometimes introducing themselves to the audience by their real names. Another technique they use to blur the aesthetic and non-hermetic is direct audience involvement. Frequently, audience members are asked to contribute by performing specific tasks within the space-time structure of the performance.

They make much use of found, non-theatrical environments. The *Legacy of Cain* is an as yet unfinished but growing group of one hundred and fifty plays specifically designed to be performed in various city locations, but NOT a theatre.³

Found objects as props and instruments are also often used in production. Frequently this is done out of economic necessity, but it still adds an everyday reality to their performances. The found instrumentation used in *Frankenstein* (the floor, furnishings, seats, etc, of the room) is the same idea that Cage used in his early *Living Room Music*.

In the Living Theatre Action Declaration (1974), the art-as-action aesthetic, so basic to Cage, is expressed.

> Abandon the theatres. Create other circumstances for the man in the street. Create circumstances that will lead to action, which is the highest form of theatre we know. Create action. Find new forms. ⁴

Unlike Cage, however, the Living Theatre directs its action toward political ends.

Structurally, Cage's influence can be seen in the use of compartmentalization. This has been used in all Living Theatre
productions since *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* (1964). In *Six Public Acts* (1975), compartmentalization was coupled with environmental changes, much like many Happenings. Each section of this outdoor spectacle took place at a different site. The audience moved in a medieval-like procession down the streets from point to point.

A section of *Mysteries and Smaller Places* involved a series of tableaux vivants in which actors indeterminately changed positions in a compartmentalized set. Each actor was unable to see the others. All movement was done in silence. The piece was one of constant shifting and flow. Judith Malina states:

> All we wanted to say with these tableaux is whatever posture our bodies assume, it will always be beautiful, because the body is beautiful and the eye finds a natural satisfaction in it.⁵

The idea is parallel in movement to Cage's use of indeterminacy in sound and silence. The broad definition of what constitutes theatre, reflected in Malina's statement, is also very Cagean.

*The Chord*, another compartment of *Mysteries*, was entirely based on indeterminacy and unpredictability. The scene involved all performers individually and sequentially intoning a note and sustaining it. The chord changed with duration. Every performance was different because of variations in tone, intensity and volume. The theatre was simply the process and art of making the chord.

*Mysteries* was really a Happening that used a theatrical rather than a visual arts or musical vernacular. There were
no text or costumes. All acting was non-matrixed. There was
no narrative. Sounds and movement were used abstractly for
their own sake, not for the sake of an imposed story. The
performance was indeterminate.

Free Theatre (1966) was an experiment designed to create
a theatrical equivalent of Cage's 4'33". It is totally
anarchic and without rules. It pushes the broadest definition
of theatre to the limit. Cage has defined an experiment as
"an action of which the outcome is unforeseen". This is a
good example. The mimeographed sheet passed out to spectators
read:

FREE THEATRE

This is Free Theatre. Free Theatre is invented
by the actors as they play it. Free Theatre has
never been rehearsed. We have tried Free Theatre.
Sometimes it fails. Nothing is ever the same.

THE LIVING THEATRE

In the Milan performance, the piece began without anyone paying
too much attention to the actors. The company just stood on
stage sensing the vibrations and waiting for something to
happen. Nothing did. Slowly, "without speaking to each other,
we formed a tight nucleus of our bodies in silence. We got
very close to each other and did not move or speak." Eventually, the Italians got angry and began to play Free
Theatre themselves by screaming and finally coming up onto the
stage and pushing people around. The company remained
together, motionless and silent, moving only to leave before
the police arrived to break up the angry crowd. It was
basically the same experience that happened to Cage in Milan
In discussing the reaction to the piece, Malina said,

In our judgement, we did perform, because we transformed a specific atmosphere into an entirely different one. Then we left because there was nothing more that could have emerged.  

(She was not really being honest, since, obviously, the arrival of the police would have produced another legitimate dramatic atmosphere to be transformed.)

With Free Theatre, there are no longer any criteria for good and bad action. Ethics are non-existent. The Becks turn this problem into political dialogue by making the romantic assertion that when a free economic system is established, and we are rid of the master-slave relationship, ethics will no longer be needed because man is basically good and noble.

Since there was no defined structure at all, not even a time structure, even Cage's broad definition does not cover this experiment as theatre. Although it began as an aesthetic idea, it crossed the barrier, and became simply bizarre life.

In 1960, the Living Theatre produced a pure Cagean production entitled Theatre of Chance. Jackson MacLow, who had become interested in Cage through his music and had been one of his students at the New School, organized the production. MacLow's chance music and chance poetry were also used in later Living productions. Theatre of Chance involved two plays, one written by MacLow.

The Marrying Maiden was written by developing character and dialog scenes using I Ching hexagrams. Emotion, volume, tone and description were added on the spot by chance
selection of prepared alternatives. It was highly improvisational and was almost entirely different every performance.

The second play was a version of Sophocles' play *Women of Trachis* directed with chance techniques by Judith Malina. She prepared cards of the text of each scene. During performance dice were used in the selection of each. Every time a seven was thrown a random card was handed to an actor, who would perform it. A five activated music which had been composed by Cage. The "music" consisted of an electronically distorted reading of the play.

Theatre of Chance remained in the repertory for nearly a year.

The interaction between Cage and the Living Theatre is significant in the general development of New Theatre because they exposed his aesthetic to the larger theatrical community on a production level. Examples of such direct influence as the ones described here (i.e. use of chance techniques, etc.) are not part of the more recent Living Theatre style, but simultaneity and allowances for the unpredictable are basic to their approach. The broad Cagean definition of theatre, interpenetration of the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic (often through audience participation), non-matrixed acting and compartmentalization have also been retained. These are also expressed in various ways in the bulk of New Theatre work. Cage's broad influences on the New Theatre owe a great deal to the responsiveness of Judith Malina and Julian Beck to his ideas.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Cage's aesthetic is built fundamentally on the combination of the non-intellectual and experiential approach of Oriental philosophy and the anti-art, art=life concepts found in Dada. The first is expressed through unpredictability, the goal of personal non-involvement and the use of a multi-faceted field structure in place of the cause and effect relationship of traditional Western art. The second is reflected in his anti-traditionalism and his concern with functional, everyday reality in artistic contexts.

Through the use of multi-focus and simultaneity, Cage has created art works in which the perceiver must define his own aesthetic experience by making personal choices. Chance and indeterminacy are used to create flexible, non-static works of art in which elements, being unpredictable, are engaged in a state of process or continual change. This leads to art works which are void of fixed end products and are never exactly reproduceable.

His radical and expansive views have stimulated many directors and individual theatre artists to explore non-theatrical environments, a flexible structure and the 'natural theatre' of real, everyday actions. Historical precedents can be found for many of his ideas in the work of the Futurists and Dada, but it was Cage who mingled with
the theatrical avant-garde of the sixties and expressed his ideas in a language that many people were ready to listen to. Part of Cage's genius lies in his ability to make his ideas interesting to others. People are just beginning to recognize him as not only a musician and a theorist, but a poet as well.

His most direct influence was felt in the sixties when the climate of political restlessness among American artists and youth nurtured radical ideas in general. Schechner, Chaikin, Kirby and Ann Halprin, among others in the theatre community, explored Cage's ideas in the process of developing their own. (Schechner even created a 4'66" directly patterned after Cage.)

Cage's theatrical importance, however, lies more in his liberating effect on the climate of modern theatre experimentation than on his specific techniques. New Theatre has developed away from the anarchic form of the sixties toward a more controlled and personal expression, but it has retained a broad Cagean concept of what constitutes theatre. The simultaneous Happening form, which most closely follows Cagean dogma, has exhausted itself through repetition, but there has lingered in later work a frequent use of blurred, indistinct meanings, non-rational juxtapositions and decreased emphasis on a linear structure, as in the productions of the People Show or the work of Robert Wilson, all of which show a continuing debt to Cage.
Similarly, formal chance methods have proven too limited and gimmicky to be lasting. What is left, however, is the willingness of performers to accept the unpredictable as a part of theatrical performance. The recent para-theatrical work of Grotowski, for example, is deeply based in psychology, but it is also built on the blurring of art and life and a trust of the unpredictable.

This blurring of art and life, so basic in the socialization of theatre, is comparable to the shift from the artistic to the political that has occupied much of Cage's most recent thought. It is the acknowledgement that, above all, art is only one facet of society. Although he talks and writes about the large problems of society, however, he offers few practical suggestions for improvement. It is a para-political stance, political in implication but not political in itself.

Theatre historians will probably remember Cage mostly for the effect he has had on mixing various art forms. Also significant, however, is his direct connection with audience participation, since so many audience participation experiments grew from his stimulation. Many have responded to Cage's idea of participation without directly imitating him. Although the theoretical base might be the same, for example, there is a difference between the use of audience participation in a piece like Schechner's *Commune* and its use in *HPSCHD*. Cage's participation has always been kept on a per-
ceptual level. Although performers have prescribed actions to perform, audiences do not. Unlike some participation artists, Cage has always relied on the inadvertent and natural movements and sounds that grow simply from being an audience. Perhaps this difference explains why so many of the theatrical attempts at audience participation of the sixties and the early seventies were not successful. They often aggressively forced people into self-conscious situations and reactions in the name of liberated theatre.

Cage must certainly be credited with helping to educate audiences to see different things in productions than they had before. His concept of silence in music has in the long run had the effect of helping people to loosen their narrow definitions of theatre, to see more of the life within theatre and the theatre within life.

Finally, Cage's greatest theatrical contribution has undoubtedly been his ability to make people question things in art that they had previously taken for granted: to look at theatre in a new way, to develop more flexible and responsive attitudes toward subject matter, structure and the general function of art. Without the disturbing, whimsical and unpredictable influence of John Cage, theatre and audiences might well have been less able to make use of art to cope with a disturbing, whimsical and unpredictable world.
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