

MUSIC AT NOON

PROGRAM

November 1, 2022
University Recital Hall

Lecture on Nothing

John Cage
(1912 - 1992)

Performed by Peter Hatch
with
Maria Watson & Noah Robertson, keyboards
Brett Hollett, The John Cage Prepared Piano app
D. Andrew Stewart, live sound

A note on John Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing'

One of the 20th century's most important composers, John Cage is renowned as the composer of the piece **4'33"**, which consisted only of silence. Cage was a constant explorer and invented such things as the prepared piano, multi-media 'happenings' and "chance" elements applied to his work. He was a frequent lecturer and published several books around his lectures. The 1949 'Lecture on Nothing' visits favorite topics of his: noise vs music, tonality vs atonality, the twelve tone technique of composing. Cage was one of the first artists to embrace the Zen Buddhism that was introduced into North America in the 1940s. The ideas of mindfulness, emptiness, and nothingness attracted him greatly and began to influence his work. The Lecture on Nothing "is a composed talk, for I am making it just as I make a piece of music." The lecture is meant to be read in a 'musical' manner -rhythmically, "but with the rubato which one uses in everyday speech."

During the 1940s Cage was preoccupied with musical form or structure. Cage refers to the rhythmic structure in this piece as 'micro-macrocosmic'. Its five large parts are divided into 48 units, using the proportions 7 6 14 14 7. Each of these units is divided into 48 'small' parts using the same proportions. My interpretation makes use of visual dials to highlight the structural layers as they unfold and to draw attention to our experience of the passing of time while this happens. In the spirit of Cage, this performance includes extra sonic material, drawing from sounds and music mentioned in the text. This performance includes simultaneous performances of other works, a practice Cage developed in his own work starting shortly after writing his lecture. The appearance and disappearance of visual and sonic elements were determined by chance techniques, a practice Cage used in almost all of his mature work.

- Peter Hatch

Artist Biographies

John Cage was born on September 5, 1912 in Los Angeles, California and died in New York City on August 12, 1992. He studied liberal arts at Pomona College. Among his composition teachers were Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg. Cage was elected to the American National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and received innumerable awards and honors both in the United States and in Europe. He was commissioned by a great many of the most important performing organizations throughout the world, and maintained a very active schedule. It would be extremely difficult to calculate, let alone critically evaluate, the stimulating effect and ramifications that Cage's work has had on 20th century music and art, for it is clear that the musical developments of our time cannot be understood without taking into account his music and ideas. His invention of the prepared piano and his work with percussion instruments led him to imagine and explore many unique and fascinating ways of structuring the temporal dimension of music. He is universally recognized as the initiator and leading figure in the field of indeterminate composition by means of chance operations. Arnold Schoenberg said of Cage that he was an "inventor – of genius".

Composer, lecturer and music curator **Peter Hatch** has composed works in a large number of genres, from orchestral and chamber music to instrumental theatre, electroacoustics and installations. Hatch's compositions are both heady and playful, profound and humorous. Peter has been very active as the artistic director of new music ensembles and festivals. He founded NUMUS Concerts and the Open Ears Festival of Music and Sound, served as Composer-in-Residence with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and as Arts and Culture Consultant with the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics. Peter is Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Music, Wilfrid Laurier University, where he was Professor from 1985 to 2017.

Maria Watson graduated from the University of Lethbridge with a Bachelor of Music in 2021, majoring in piano performance under the mentorship of Dr. Brad Parker and is now in her first year of graduate studies, studying with Dr. Deanna Oye. She recently had the honor of participating in a masterclass at the Honens International Piano Competition. Maria is looking to increase her freedom of personal expression through music through further development of technical skills and a new found love for music composition and improvisation.

Noah Robertson is a pianist, who is originally from High River. He is a recent graduate of the University of Lethbridge where he earned a Bachelor of Music in piano performance under the instruction of Dr. Deanna Oye. Noah was awarded the Most Distinguished Student Prize by the Department of Music for this scholarly and creative track record, while completing his Bachelor of Music. Noah's most recent performances have largely taken place in chamber music and collaborative piano concerts, including several projects with colleagues from the university.

Composer and guitarist, **Brett Hollett**, is from Fort Langley, British Columbia. In 2018, Brett started his Bachelor of Music at the University of Lethbridge with a focus on both guitar performance and composing. Next year, in 2023, Brett's degree will culminate in two senior recitals. In the coming years, Brett intends to pursue graduate studies with a focus on combining his skills of performance and composition.