

The Artist and the Audience Notes:

Musicking

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- Idea that meaningful art exists as experience that ends up being absorbed by its participants → taken further by christopher Small
- Work → known as “musicking” (meaning/social relationships) → implying embedding dynamic between music and meaning
- Small: utilizes “music” as a verb → “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (Small, 1998: 9)
- This is extended to ticket ripers or others including stage hands/cleaners, in this way, every event is a kind of musical performance
- Before Small proposed the idea of musicking, he spent time investigating every kind of interactive role an individual may be involved in when participating in music
- “Cage and Cardew - Words of Music” → “Art, instead of being an object made by one person, is a process set in motion by a group of people. Art’s socialized” (Cage, 1969, as cited in small, 1973:77)
- “[Art] isn’t anyone saying something but people doing things, giving everyone the opportunity to have experiences they would not otherwise had,”(77) (Small quotes again)

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- Small rejects the idea that only meaning found in objects can be found in music objects → claims that the self contained work which passes through a performer in order to reach its audience-goal → score understood on paper - deeply flawed
- Musicking attempt to evenly distribute meaning to all participants
- Piano tuner → not separate from the music just the same as the canvas stretcher isn’t separate from the painting → doesn’t stop here either → every person and stage is involved with the musical process → not separate from musicking
- Small’s experience as an audience member was considered to be uncomfortable → events did not correspond with his ideal or experience of human relationships
- In his work 4’33” he disrupted those relationships → they were not analogous to daily life - instead subverted ritualized standard and pointed in that direction

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- Small describes Cage’s music meaningful → first anarchical and chance approaches to sounds in terms of the relationships formed between one another, asking the listeners to see sounds strictly as they are, sounds
- Jesse stewart’s article “Interventions” Small writes “If the relationships, musical systems in which all sounds are treated as equals – systems that ‘let sounds be themselves’ as Cage advocated – can be construed as a musical embodiment of a social order without hierarchy” (Stewart, 334).

- 4'33" altered relationships between participants, which added to the audience's role of witnesses, composers, performers, critics, along with scientists and test subjects → adding participants in a way that Small would have approved of
- Cage → happy to place blame for musical meaning on the audience, but unlike them, he separates them from communication (ie relationship between composer, score, performer and audience)

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- Cage's interaction with artistic meaning has everything to do with the individual
- Ideas created in our heads - generate others - weren't in our heads to begin with → something of which 4'33" conveys → making room and subverting the standard → this is done by bluntly asking the audience to take control of every aspect
- 4'33" hands over the burden of artistic experience to the individual → take up responsibility in a way that is impossible to ignore
- Perfect reflection of Small's expectation of musicking as both a form of social selection and construction → meaning that the hierarchy found within traditional performance becomes dismantled → playing field of the participants allow for a community anarchy that is built upon individual responsibility

Cage, Contradiction, McLuhan

- As much as Cage had hoped for anarchy in his art and as much as he was able to promote individualized interpretation/understanding - not invisible in this process or uninvolved in developing a meaning in the audience
- For someone who valued individual interpretation, he also frequently in his writings the motivations behind his work frequently and eloquently

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- Cage did not dismiss communication as part of his work, rather a requirement
- Cage was influenced by Canadian Scholar Marshall McLuhan → McLuhan's demonstration of sweeping change found in society/technological developments allowed Cage to find justification in continuing his work in a manner that critics deemed to be irresponsible
- "Art and now music in this century serve to open people's eyes and ears to the enjoyment of their daily environment. We are now, McLuhan tells us, no longer separate from this environment. New art and music do not communicate an individual's conceptions in ordered structures, but they implement processes which are, as are our daily lives, opportunities for perception (observation and listening). McLuhan emphasizes this shift from life done for us to life that we do for ourselves." (Kostelanetz, 1991: 170)
- Cage, similar to McLuhan considers himself to be a detective who observes patterns, to which he points out in an attempt to make us aware of our environment (Kostelanetz, 1987: 105)
- Cage is able to identify that that is where their similarities end
- ie McLuhan: interested in patterns and relationships and Cage has spent his life denying relationships → Cage says that he spent his life denying the importance of relationship → contradiction found in Cage's work - music free of a particular communicative intent/meaning - but also "introduced situation" that expressed his ideas about freedom clearly known

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- Contradiction did not detract from the ideas presented in his work
- Question - no longer can we do it but what do we want to do?
- Influence on many artists such as Yoko Ono or Philip Glass etc
- Freedom from tradition - Cage established in the musical generations of composers following him → including the implied freedom of tradition for the audience
- Not only do artists and composers have the opportunity to choose the nature of their engagement with an audience, as a group individuals → have the opportunity to choose