

Today's program

SETH KNOPP, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Yellow Barn

Summer Residency Concert

July 25, 2020 | 7:30 | The Big Barn and the Grammar School, Putney, VT

Stephen Coxe (b.1966) The Very Hungry Caterpillar (2005, rev.2020)
Story by Eric Carle (published 1969)

Elaine Daiber, narrator; Curtis Macomber, violin; Ayano Kataoka, marimba

Mark Applebaum (b.1967) Gone, Dog. Gone! (2012)

Ayano Kataoka, Eduardo Leandro, percussion

Fredrik Andersson (b.1973) The Loneliness of Santa Claus (1994)

Ayano Kataoka, Eduardo Leandro, marimbas

Alan Ridout (1934-1996) Ferdinand for Speaker and Violin (1974)
Story by Munro Leaf (published 1936)

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, narrator; Alice Ivy-Pemberton, violin

John Cage (1912-1992) Solo for Voice 57 from Song Books (1970)

Lucy Shelton

Program Notes

Those who have spent any time with infants know that they are wordless—not thoughtless. Of course, a baby thinks of more than food and sleep: of the sight of his mother’s face, the smells of pine trees and car exhaust and his mother’s soap, the concept of hot and cold, the feeling of skin against skin, wind on body, gravity when straining neck and back muscles to hold up his head. After six months, infants begin to babble. By twelve months, most have begun the process of language-learning in earnest. A pediatrician’s guideline is that by two years old, children should string two words together, and by three, use complete sentences. Humans live through the most exciting, exploratory, and terrifying part of their lives with no words to communicate. Therefore, the words even of one’s first language must be a translation of thought, not the thought itself.

My nephew, Charlie, is a month old. Because meeting him at his home in Montreal is impossible right now, we settle for Breakfast Bach. We Zoom most days during his elevenses, my breakfast time. My sister puts a Bluetooth speaker under his feet and I play a movement of the cello suites. In his funny wails, squawks, grunts, gurgles, and most recently giggles, I imagine I can already hear him pitch matching. When I play the courantes, I watch him trying with all his might to jump up and down, punching and kicking off the speakers with his feet. Having had no previous experience with babies, what I find amazing is the variety in his noises and movements—he is very clearly communicating, responding and reacting to stimuli.

In an article put out by the University of Montreal and McGill University titled “Neural overlap in processing music and speech,” authors Isabelle Peretz, Dominique Vuvan, Marie-Élaine Lagrois, and Jorge L. Armony hypothesize that music is an outgrowth of patterns necessary for human bonding and communication, such as intonation, dynamic, and rhythm. Maternal speech throughout the world is shown to have more variation in both pitch and dynamic level than the speech of other adults. In a study from 2002, Sing *et al.* hypothesized that the reason why an infant loves listening to his mother talk is because of the unique expressivity of her voice. From a musical training perspective, this is proof that technique and musicality are one and the same: the mother speaks with greater variation because of her change in emotional state, her desire to communicate, not because she is intentionally changing her speech patterns. Because communication during the most vulnerable years of life relies solely on the elements of music, it makes evolutionary sense that these skills are primal and innate—necessary. The researchers from this study hypothesize that “musicality may have preceded language in evolution, and language may build on the natural disposition for musicality.”

I am comforted to know that music is an inextricable part of me, of all people who were ever babies; it existed in my body and brain before I had a choice. It was my sole form of communication for close to three years. Music is just one more communication tool in this inexplicable world which leaves so much to the imagination. As my nine-year-old cousin wisely told me, “Music is a compilation of sounds to feed your soul.”

—Annie Jacobs-Perkins

Mark Applebaum (b.1967) *Gone, Dog, Gone!* (2012)

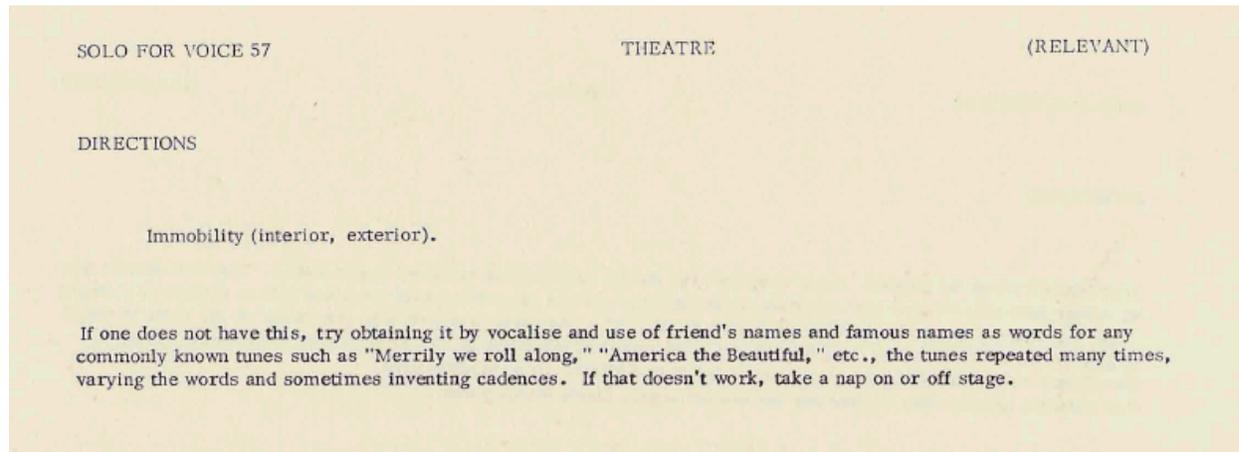
Gone, Dog, Gone! is, conceptually-speaking, a companion piece to *Go, Dog. Go!* (1997) and *Aphasia* (2010). From the former it borrows the idea of rapidly juxtaposed tempi and rhythms extracted from extant popular music recordings. From the latter it employs a nonsense sign language of hand gestures synchronized to sound.

Eight instruments—selected by the players—are arrayed between them and shared. They are numbered from each player’s perspective so that when a material articulated by Player 1 is later articulated by Player 2, the timbres all change.

For purposes of notation the gestures are named by corresponding “real world” physical actions. For example, the arms outstretched straight from the torso at shoulder height, parallel to one another and to the floor, palms facing down, with fingers and thumbs together and fully extended, is named *Superman* (as if flying) for ease of communication. Likewise, *Smell Grapefruit* refers to a cupped hand with palm facing upward, fingers curled slightly, and held in front of the face under the nose. Etc.

—Mark Applebaum

John Cage (1912-1992) Solo for Voice 57 from Song Books (1970)



Many of the fundamental ideas of John Cage's later compositional practices emerged in his earlier years. He entered Pomona College as a theology major in 1928, and describes in his autobiographical statement why he left soon after:

"I was shocked at college to see one hundred of my classmates in the library all reading copies of the same book. Instead of doing as they did, I went into the stacks and read the first book written by an author whose name began with Z. I received the highest grade in the class. That convinced me that the institution was not being run correctly. I left."

Decades later, Cage would become a pioneer of indeterminacy in composition and in performance, where elements of the music are left up to chance or to the whim of the players. In 1951, Cage acquired the first English translation of the *I Ching* [Book of Changes], the Chinese symbol system designed for divination. Much of his subsequent work used operations based on pages from the *I Ching* to which Cage would randomly flip, including *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) for 12 radio receivers, *Music of Changes* (1951) for piano, and, later, *Cheap Imitation*. He also composed using star charts in his *Etudes Australes* (1975) for piano and *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1962) for orchestra. Cage's most ambitious work involving chance procedures was *Europeras I & 2* (1987), which uses the *I Ching* to generate every aspect of the production—libretto, score, costumes, sets, lighting, "plot"—based on a database of over 100 classic European operas. According to Cage, his use of the technique allowed a piece to be performed in chaotically different ways, and also fulfilled his intention to "let things be themselves."

In 1970 Cage took a commission to write two sets of songs for Cathy Berberian and Simone Rist. He consulted the *I Ching* to determine how many songs would go into each book: 56 and 34 were the responses. Now he had the ambitious goal of writing ninety new pieces for a solo singer, and he had only three months to do it. Running to 317 pages of manuscript score, the songs are incredibly diverse, a cornucopia of musical invention.

The heterogeneity of the *Song Books* was the result of the method that Cage set up to guide the construction of the ninety solos. This was a method that would help him to find his way through the challenge of writing ninety solos in ninety days, and that would simultaneously take him on a host of unknown compositional adventures: not an architect's blueprint, but the hero's instructions in a fairy tale, full of riddles and secrets. For each song Cage had to ask three questions and receive the answers by tossing coins and consulting the *I Ching*. The answers would provide him instructions on how to discover this solo.

The first question: "Is this solo relevant or irrelevant to the overall theme of the *Song Books*?" For his theme, Cage took a line from his diaries: "We connect Satie with Thoreau." Relevant solos include references to either Satie or Thoreau or both; irrelevant songs do not. The second question: "What kind of solo is this?" There were four categories: song (that is, a primarily sung piece), song using electronics, theatre (that is, *not* involving singing, but instead consisting of actions), and theatre using electronics. The third question, the open-ended one, the key that opened the treasure chest of invention: "How will I compose this solo?" There were three possible answers: compose it using a method that Cage had used before, compose it by making a variation to a method already used, or invent an entirely new method of composition. If the answer was to use or vary an existing method, chance also determined exactly which method. Thus armed with a theme, a format, and this general direction, Cage set forth to figure out exactly how to make the solo. He did this for each of the ninety solos, one after the other, until the work was completed, the journey ended.

Song Books is a piece that is impossible to characterize in any brief description—a piece which juxtaposes the old and the new, determinacy and indeterminacy. Cage's description is as good as any: "To consider the *Song Books* as a work of art is nearly impossible. Who would dare? It resembles a brothel, doesn't it?"

—James Pritchett