

CAGE UNCAGED

CarriageWorks 15 September 2007

Presented by The Song Company and Ensemble Offspring
In association with the New Music Network and CarriageWorks

The Song Company

Clive Birch, bass
Richard Black, tenor
Jenny Duck-Chong, mezzo
Mark Donnelly, baritone
Ruth Kilpatrick, soprano
Nicole Thomson, soprano
Roland Peelman, Artistic Director

Ensemble Offspring

Claire Edwardes, percussion
Jason Noble, clarinet
Diana Springford, bass clarinet
Thomas Talmacs, violin/viola
Bree Van Reyck, percussion/accordion
Damien Ricketson, violin/auxiliary instruments/Artistic Director

Neil Simpson, lighting and production

3pm TO THE SEA...

5pm TO THE EARTH...

7.30pm TO THE AIR...

3pm

TO THE SEA...

John Cage – Litany for the Whale (1980)

Matthew Shlomowitz – Slow Flipping Harmony (2006)

Colin Bright – The Last Whale (2007)

TEXTS AND NOTES

Litany for the Whale – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1981

W-H-A-L-E

Slow Flipping Harmony – Matthew Shlomowitz (b. 1975)

For open instrumentation, London 2006

Shlomowitz's recent music has often featured the "looping" of musical ideas. In *Slow Flipping Harmony* each performer has his or her own melodic material, related but distinguishable from that of other players. These sections of material are repeated a number of times before the performers move on to new, contrasting music, however, the loops are asynchronous: the musicians play their loops at speeds different to one another. "I try to make a divine mess ... ambiguous, somewhat out-of-focus materials rubbing up against the occasional expressively vivid splash. ... Multiple material strands simultaneously in motion, with each strand looping independently at its own speed, producing a revolving world where both nothing and so-much happens."

In a related manner, *Slow Flipping Harmony* embodies processes of disintegration and decay: in addition to the four melodic instruments, it features the use of two "poor quality recording devices" which record and play back as the music progresses. This process is mirrored in another of the tasks the players are asked to apply themselves to imaginatively: in a number of sections of the work they are instructed to damage or "dirty" their sound in a manner of their own choosing.

Shlomowitz describes his use of open instrumentation and decision-making by performers as a kind of "anti-preciousness." It bucks the trend, evident through the history of classical music, of composers exercising ever-greater degrees of control over performance through the use of increasingly detailed notational practices. Many open scored works thus take music-making back to the time when a composer's contribution to a performance consisted simply of the provision of a set of pitches and rhythms.

The Last Whale – Colin Bright (b. 1949) premiere

Sydney, 2007, first version premiered Perth April 2007

Scientific Whale Research Report – 2003 (*Extracts from the scientific report. A typical example of their so-called science*)

Four hundred and forty Antarctic Minke whales were taken. The gunners were recommended to shoot harpoons at a shorter distance. Furthermore, larger calibre rifles were introduced. These measures improved the Time To Death - TTD - of whales significantly, and the Instantaneous Death Rate - IDR - of whales significantly, according to the Scientific Research Program. Next year we'll take nine hundred and thirty five Minke whales.

Whale Wail 1

Libera me de morte aeterna

Deliver me from everlasting death

Dies Irae

Dies irae, dies illa,
solvat saeculum in favilla
Requiem aeternam
Mors stupebit et natura
Lacrymosa dies illa
Ingemisco tamquam reus
Mundus iudicetur
Tuba mirum spargens sonum,
per sepulchra regionum
Requiem aeternam

A day of wrath; that day
it will dissolve the world into glowing ashes
Rest eternal
Death and nature shall stand amazed
That day will be one of weeping
I groan like one condemned
The world shall be judged
The trumpet's call sounding in tombs
throughout the world
Rest eternal

Indigenous Food (*An extract from an anonymous blogger from Iceland with a nicely ironic 'piss-take'*)

Imagine spending the entire day on a boat listing back and forth as the wind raged and the ocean swelled. In those conditions, it must be particularly difficult for the harpooner to square his harpoon on the Minke whale that is surfacing for air. Plus, when it is windy and rainy, whale blood gets everywhere.

But we should not let people without any substantial logic stop an independent people from making use of their resources in a sustainable fashion. We all still eat our traditional foods like, er ... pizza, and hamburger, and lots of coke. Anyway, we are an independent people and nobody, certainly not Mr. and Mrs. Greenpeace, should tell us what to do. So, take advantage of the gorgeous warm weather, grab your exploding harpoon, head down to the harbour, and catch a ride on a whaling vessel.

Whale Wail 2

Lux perpetua luceat eis

Let perpetual light shine upon them

[Colin Bright continued]

Whale Hunt *(As observed by a Greenpeace activist. A first hand observation that continues to abhor people and show that there is not really any 'humane' way of killing whales)*

The International Whaling Commission voted to lift the moratorium on commercial whaling.

It was particularly unpleasant to watch as the whale fought for its life for over 30 minutes. Whalers failed to get a first clean shot with their grenade-tipped harpoons, leaving the mortally injured male Minke bleeding profusely. It took several harpoons and rifle shots before the injured whale was eventually killed. The Minke whale is now extinct.

5pm

TO THE EARTH...

David Young – To Keep Things Reasonable (Ad Res Modicas Conservandas) (2007)

John Cage – Solo for voice 12 (1971)

John Cage – Forever and sunsmell (e.e.cummings) (1944)

John Cage – Solo for voice 21 (1970)

John Cage – Four6 (1992)

Frederic Rzewski – To the Earth (1985)

TEXTS AND NOTES

To Keep Things Reasonable (Ad Res Modicas Conservandas) – David Young (b. 1969) premiere

Melbourne 2007 written for The Song Company and Ensemble Offspring

Aliquando facilius est illos invenire
iuxta semitas umbrosas et silvas apertas
quam in codicem.

Sometimes it's easier to find them
near shaded paths and open woods
than in field guides.

*Cum boletos primum expertus sim,
fraga quaerebam.*

*When I first came in touch with mushrooms
I was looking for strawberries.*

*Fraga autem non aderant – fraga fera;
sed boleti solum.*

*but there weren't any strawberries – wild
strawberries; there were mushrooms though.*

Mutationes de nomenclatura fortisan
periculis occurrant.

Changes in nomenclature may involve hazard.

Quaerebam fraga.

I was looking for strawberries.

In scientia boletorum,
boletus quidam nondum editus
non existit.

For mycology
no mushroom exists until
it's published.

“ .. it's a balancing operation to keep things reasonable,
because if you use indeterminacy in connection with the
gathering and eating of mushrooms, you might kill
yourself.”

(John Cage in conversation, 1990)

Translated by Neville Chiaravoli
With thanks to Roger Scott

Cynthia Troup
Wapengo, New South Wales, June 2007

Solo for voice 12 – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1970 written for Arlene Carmen

forever and sunsmell – John Cage (1912–1992)

New York 1944, written for the dance by Jean Erdman – based on e.e.cummings, poem 26 Henmar-Peters, New York 1960

wherelings whenlings
(daughters of Ifbut offspring of hopefears
sons of unless and children of almost)
never shall guess the dimension of

him whose
each
foot likes the
here of this earth

whose both
eyes
love
this now of the sky

– endless of isn't
shall never
begin
to begin to

imagine how (only are shall be were
dawn dark rain snow rain
– bow &
a

moon
's whis-
per
in sunset

or thrushes toward dusk among whippoorwills or
tree field rock hollyhock forest brook chickadee
mountain. Mountain)
whycoloured worlds of because do

not stand against yeas which is built by
forever & sunsmell
(sometimes a wonder
of wild roses

sometimes)
with north
over
the barn

(e.e. cummings, poem nr 26 from poems 1923–1954)

Solo for voice 21 – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1970

“ceux qui ne comprendront pas
sont priés, par moi,
d’observer une attitude
toute de soumission,
toute d’infériorité”
(Erik Satie)

“those who don’t understand
are requested, by me,
to adopt an attitude
entirely of submission,
entirely of inferiority”

Four6 – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1992

Towards the end of his life, John Cage wrote a series of forty-three “Number Pieces”, named after the number of instruments they use, and further numbered according to where they fit into the sequence of works: *Four6* is Cage’s sixth work titled “Four” for four instruments, dating from the final year of his life.

Cage famously introduced elements of chance into his composition in the 1950s, using random procedures rather than allowing personal taste to dictate compositional decisions. In the score of *Four6* Cage specifies only that a series of sounds (the nature of which is determined by the performers) be played in a certain order. In *Four6*, therefore, performers decide on the instruments as well as the character and pitches of the sounds used. Cage’s goal was a musical organisation in which performers had freedom: with no pulse, or beat, to keep them together, and no conductor. He nevertheless aimed for an environment in which they would work together but only as a consequence of the actions they took, not because of any overriding, central vision.

To the Earth – Frederic Rzewski (b.1938)

Brussels 1985, written for Jan Williams

To the earth, Mother of all, I will sing, the well-established, the oldest,
Who nourishes on her surface every thing that lives:
Those things that walk upon the holy ground and those that swim in the sea and those
that fly;
All these are nourished by your abundance.

It is thanks to you if we humans have healthy children and rich harvests.
Great Earth, you have the power to give life to and to take it away from creatures that
must die.
Happy are the ones whom you honor with your kindness and gifts;
What they have built will not vanish.

Their fields are fertile, their herds prosper,
And their houses are full of good things.
Their cities are governed with just laws;
Their women are beautiful; good fortune and wealth follow them.

Their children are radiant with the joy of youth.
The young women play in the flowery meadows,

Dancing with happiness in their hearts.

Holy Earth, Undying Spirit,
So it is with those whom you honor.
Hail to you, mother of Life,
You who are loved by the starry sky;
Be generous and give me a happy life
In return for my song so that I can continue to praise you with my music.
(Homeric hymn – ca 7th century AD)

The composer writes: “The Earth – whatever it is – is a myth, both ancient and modern. For Heraclitus, it is a ball in the hands of a child. For the Kabbalists, it is the stuff of creation, an act so dangerous that it must never be undertaken alone. For Columbus, it is an egg. For us today as well, it appears increasingly as something fragile. Because of its humanly altered metabolism, it is rapidly becoming a symbol of the precarious human condition. In this piece the flowerpots are intended to convey this sense of fragility.

The writing of this piece was triggered by reading an article about newly-discovered properties of clay, particularly its capacity to store energy for long periods of time and its complex molecular structure. It can function as a catalyzing template for the formation of large organic molecules such as those of amino-acids, the building blocks of protein. This idea of clay as something half-alive, a kind of transitional medium between organic and inorganic materials, led me to take a look at flowerpots. I found, in fact, that some pots are “alive” while others are “dead”. Some emit a disappointing ‘thunk’ when you tap them, while others seem to burst into resonant song at the slightest touch.

My original design for the treatment of this text involved chorus, seven orchestras of different ethnic origin, and electronics. I am rather glad I dropped this project in favour of a simpler form.”

7.30pm

TO THE AIR...

John Cage – 4'33" (1951)

Stephen Adams – A Short Service (2007)

John Cage – Chorals for violin solo (1978)

Matthew Shlomowitz – Arsenal, Bahrain, Chihuahua, Darjeeling and Eisenhower (2007)

John Cage – Five (1988)

Mayke Nas – 'Anyone can do it' (2006)

Michael Smetanin – Due Pezzi Per Niente (2006)

John Cage – ear for EAR (Antiphonies) (1983)

John Cage – Three2 (1991)

TEXTS AND NOTES

4'33" – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1952

In his Autobiographical Statement (Kyoto, 1989) Cage writes: "From Rhode Island I went to Cambridge and in the anechoic chamber at Harvard University I heard that silence was not the absence of sound but the unintended operation of my nervous system and the circulation of my blood. It was this experience and the white paintings of Rauschenberg that led to 4'33"."

A Short Service – Stephen Adams (b. 1963)

Sydney, 2006, commissioned by The Song Company, premiered in Perth May 2007

"The purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences." (Thomas Mace, quoted by Cage as quoted by Gita Sarabhai)

The composer writes: "My point of departure for this new work is a Cage anecdote from his 1963 publication 'A Year from Monday'. Read aloud at the start of the performance, the anecdote touches upon a variety of Cage concerns: hearing and deafness; loud and soft sounds; sounds in space and the mediations of technology (the radio); the piano as a cultural object; and Cage's religious heritage, a low-church evangelical style of Protestantism.

[Stephen Adams continued]

This short service in the spirit of Cage contains Hymns, the 'verse for the Day' and 'The Lesson'. The Lesson is the anecdote, the Verse is a favourite Cage saying by the 17th-century lutenist Tomas Mace, refracted through an Indian musician's accumulated wisdom. The hymns are not Cage's beloved New England hymns but selected from my own heritage, a near century-old publication by my own great grandfather of *Evangelic hymns (with Tunes)*. In my imaginary service, the place of honour is given to the radio. And the whole, aspiring to a calm acceptance of its incompleteness, an every day, quiet transcendence."

Chorals for violin solo – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1978

Arsenal, Bahrain, Chihuahua, Darjeeling and Eisenhower – Matthew Shlomowitz (b. 1975) – Australian premiere

London 2007, for solo dancer and solo musician

This very recent piece by Shlomowitz is another collaborative work where the composer provides structure and initial ideas to be developed by the performers. In this case each performer develops five gestures (movement/sound). Written for David Helbich and Mark Knoop, it was first performed by them in July 2007. A video of this performance can be seen at www.shlom.com. Tonight's version was developed in a different way by the two performers, Ruth Kilpatrick and Thomas Talmacs.

John Cage – Five (1988)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1988

Amongst Cage's forty-three number compositions, only *Five* uses fixed pitch material. He asks for the sounds to be "brushed in and out". The result is an unusually consonant work for five musicians each playing or singing five musical elements within five minutes. Around the 2'30" mark all elements magically converge.

'Anyone can do it' – Mayke Nas (b. 1972)

Tilburg (Netherlands) 2006 – written for the Dutch Vocal Laboratory and Ensemble Klangzeit, commissioned by the Fonds voor Scheppende Toonkunst

Mayke Nas is emerging as one of the most interesting and resourceful young composers in Holland. She was composer-in-residence with the Nieuw Ensemble and has recently written works for ASKO and for the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (*No reason to panic*). Last year, she wrote '*Anyone can do it*' for the Festival Klangzeit. It is a performance-piece inspired by the Fluxus Manifesto (1965) by Georges Maciunas:

"Fluxmanifesto on fluxamusement? Vaudeville? Art? To establish artist's non-professional, non-parasitic, non-elite status in society, he must demonstrate own dispensability, he must demonstrate self-sufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can substitute art and anyone can do it. Therefore this substitute art-amusement must be simple, amusing, concerned with insignificances, have

[Mayke Nas continued]

no commodity or institutional value. It must be unlimited, obtainable by all and eventually produced by all. The artist doing art meanwhile, to justify his income, must demonstrate that only he can do art, art therefore must appear to be complex, intellectual, exclusive, indispensable, inspired. To raise its commodity value it is made to be rare, limited in quantity and therefore accessible not to the masses but to the social elite."

Due Pezzi Per Niente – Michael Smetanin (b.1958)

Sydney 2005/06, commissioned by Ars Musica Australis, premiered Sydney October 2006

"I have nothing to say
and I am saying it
and that is poetry
as I needed it" (John Cage)

Michael Smetanin made his initial impact as the unmistakable "enfant terrible" of the Australian music scene with the scandal-provoking *Black Snow* and a range of hard-hitting chamber works. In 1994, His first opera, *The Burrow*, received its premiere season in Perth and his second opera, *Gauguin* was premiered in Melbourne in 2000. These days his works attract awards and international attention. *The Shape of Things to Pass* won the Paul Lowin Prize and the 2005 Piano Concerto won the Sounds Australian award for best Composition. *Due Pezzi per Niente* is a double homage to Franco Donatoni and John Cage, prompted by a chance encounter in a bar in Venice in 1982 when the composer was studying in Italy. Cage walks in and, in his distinct Manhattan accent, approaches Smetanin: "Excuse me young man, is that Donatoni over there?"

ear for EAR (Antiphonies) – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters New York 1983

E-A-R

Three2 – John Cage (1912–1992)

Henmar-Peters, New York 1991 for three percussionists

In his Autobiographical Statement (Kyoto, 1989) Cage writes: "For each of these works (the number pieces) I look for something I haven't found. My favorite music is the music I haven't yet heard. I don't hear the music I write. I write in order to hear the music I haven't yet heard."