# *Theater Piece No. 2*

For lecturer/conductor, 1-5 performers, and electronics

By Philip Schuessler

Ca. 20 min. (or 60 min.)

## Introduction

*Theater Piece No. 2* was initially conceived as a sort of compendium to a lecture on the music of John Cage, specifically his work done in the late 1940's and early 1950's at Black Mountain College. Cage's creative output at that time culminated in a collaborative, multimedia performance in the summer of 1952 entitled *Theater Piece No. 1* (a.k.a. *Black Mountain Piece*). The performance involved a number of performance elements such as live music, pre-recorded music, dance, film, slides, painting displays, and lectures. *Theater Piece No. 2* is an attempt at emulating (without necessarily recreating) the same type of aesthetic environment in the folds of a lecture on this same topic. The end result is that there are a number of discreet events occurring simultaneously without necessarily being causally related to one another. The observer is awash in multiple sensory stimulants and has the freedom of selecting events, if any, on which to focus and of interpreting the gestalt as it pertains to everyday life experiences.

## Layout

Essentially, the work centers upon the lecture. Performers should be distributed amongst the performance/lecture space so that they may surround or be imbedded with the assumed audience. All performers must have a clear sight of the lecturer at the stage/podium in the front. As the lecturer delivers the speech, he/she also assigns performance materials and cues. Performers are cued by hand signals provided by the lecturer during performance. The lecturer decides cues, time lengths, and distribution of materials either during performance and/or beforehand. Additionally, the lecturer may choose to distribute materials in an improvised manner or may do so using chance procedures.

## Score

All materials are improvisatory in nature with certain guidelines for how and when the music should be delivered.

1. Each performer is given a score of elements defined in three categories: (1) pitch, (2) text, and (3) noise. Each category of elements contains original material upon which the performer is to improvise around freely.

2. Pitch material consists of melodic/rhythmic fragment. Text material consists of quotations and original sentence fragments. Noise material consists of a list of noise-producing actions along with simple rhythmic indications.

3. Instrumentation for original instruments is unspecified and may be any instrument, generally homophonic, acoustic (including voice) and/or electronic, that is of a definite or indefinite pitch producing nature.

4. The nature of the improvisations is free and may consist of, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Simple statement(s)
- Redundancy – simple repetition of fragment(s)
- Rhythmic augmentation/diminution
- Melodic lengthening/shortening
- Harmonic expansion/contraction – changing tessitura
- Transposition
- Fragmentation – executing only small pieces of material
- Juxtaposition – changing order of material
- Retrograde
- Other variation techniques
- Timbral substitution – changing the method of sound production

Cues

Types of elements and time lengths for performance of elements used are specified by changes indicated by the lecturer's hand signals. Players are assigned a number beforehand that will be used to indicate cues during performance.

Hand indications:

1. Right Hand Alone – Global
   - Fist (zero) – All stop playing immediately
   - One (1) – All resume
   - Open-palm (5) to fist (zero) – All fadeout gradually

2. Right Hand (1 – 5) – player number

3. Left Hand (0 – 3) – material type
   - Fist (zero) – stop playing
   - One (1) – pitch
   - Two (2) – text
   - Three (3) – noise

Once the player has been cued to perform, he/she may choose any of the given fragments to improvise on from the indicated materials. He/she should continue to play until the lecturer indicates otherwise. Moreover, the performer may choose to implement chance

procedures to indicate which fragments to play. Once the particular fragment has been decided, he/she may only improvise on that fragment until he/she has been indicated to cease playing and begin again on another (or the same) fragment.

Time-brackets

In addition to providing cues, the lecturer may also choose to implement time-brackets indicating material types and lengths of time for the performers to play their musical fragments. Time-brackets should be generated using any type of chance procedures (*I-Ching*, throwing dice, tossing coins, etc.) to distribute materials and performers over the allotted time. Otherwise, the lecturer may use either time-brackets or hand signals exclusively.

Electronics

Live electronics (using Max/MSP) are implemented during performance and require a performer to trigger the cues. Electronic cues include the use of triggered samples and live processing of the lecturer's voice. Time indications for these cues should be specified exclusively beforehand. Time-marks should be given to the performer indicating when to trigger each cue. The lecturer and the performer may also decide together to allow the performer to cue the electronics in an improvised manner.

The electronic cues should be triggered using the yellow "preset change" *bang* button in the Max patch. Cues can only be triggered when both the gate clocker and input clocker (to the left of the "preset change") are in the off position. Some presets trigger one, the other, or both of these clockers. Whichever clockers are turned on by a preset cue will automatically turn off after an approximate one-minute cycle. Once both clockers have once again switched to the off position, the performer may then proceed to the next cue. The cue number is indicated by a red LED light on the bottom left-hand side of the patch. The performer may not advance prematurely to the next cue until the previous preset has run through its gate and input clocker cycle. After the tenth cue, the presets cycle back to the first cue. The performer may alter the volume of all three gates at the master volume control during performance.

Electronic Preset Layout

1. [Gate 1 preload]
   file looping on
   gate clocker off
   input clocker on

2. file looping off
   gate clocker on
   input clocker on

3. file looping on
   gate clocker on
   input clocker on

4. file looping on
   gate clocker on
   input clocker off

5. file looping off
   gate clocker off
   input clocker on

6. file looping on
   gate clocker on
   input clocker on

7. file looping off
   gate clocker on
   input clocker on

8. file looping on
   gate clocker on
   input clocker on

9. file looping on
   gate clocker on
   input clocker off

10. file looping off
    gate clocker off
    input clocker on

*1. Pitch*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

*1*. *Pitch* (continued)

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

## *2. Text*

1. The Gentle. Success through what is small.
   It furthers one to have somewhere to go.
   It furthers one to see the great man.

2. There is no skin on his thighs,
   And walking comes hard.
   If one is mindful of the danger,
   No great mistake is made.

3. Conflict. You are sincere
   And are being obstructed.
   A cautious halt halfway brings good fortune.
   Going through to the end brings misfortune.
   It furthers one to see the great man.
   It does not further one to cross the great water.

4. Fire over wood:
   The image of The Cauldron.
   Thus the superior man consolidates his fate
   By making his position correct

5. The Wanderer. Success through smallness.
   Perseverance brings good fortune
   To the wanderer.

6. sustained pitch material from the previous section. It is not exactly certain until the eighth iteration that this material, too, is derived from the initial section of descending chords (the eighth chord here picking up the pattern from the fifteenth chord – or the halfway point in the chord series – of the initial descending section). The regularity of the descending pattern and the pitch content of the chords begins to break down in this third section. Although the identity of the chord pattern again remains intact, many

7. sense of temporal, spatial movement in line with imagery used to explain spiritual experiences. Establishing the state of existence through tactile terminology is often a qualifying precursor to describing mystical experience itself. In the case of Western mystical thought, the concept of reality as dynamic and not static is known as Vitalism. The mystic philosopher Heracleitus said, "All things are in a state of flux…Reality is a condition of unrest." The endless, descending glissando is the dynamic reality. The perpetual sense of downward motion could hold its spiritual

8. solutions were found that were related to the fields of acoustics and psychoacoustics and revolved around a certain fascination with the nature of physical sound itself. Employing scientific analyses to understand the behavior of sounds allowed for a formal organization of sonic material that was based on the comprehension of the individualistic properties of the sonic material.

9. "war on terror." They at least had an army to defend them against state-supported terrorism. In neighboring states the terrorists *were* the security forces. El Salvador became the leading recipient of U.S. military aid and training (Israel-Egypt aside) by the mid-1980's, as atrocities were peaking. Congress imposed human rights conditions

10. The Sender is not a human individual…It is The Human Virus. …They have specific affinity for the Mother Cell; thus deteriorated liver cells seek the home place of hepatitis, etc. So every

11. to spend, play Baccarat. You can read a Baccarat "How-To" and do well. The gaming area tends to be Players only, much more relaxed, and the drinks and perks are much better. You bet on player or

12. and the Stratosphere have roller coasters. Ceases has a good shopping section. Mandalay, Bellagio, and the Palms have all the hotties, guy and girl. Rumjungle in Mandalay and the Ghost Bar at

13. liver disease and chronic variceal bleeding and intractable ascites in which case it can be done on an elective basis. TIPS is used in the treatment of recurrent and refractory hepatic hydrothorax. It has successfully treated chronic Budd-Chiari syndrome and portal vein thrombosis. It has also been used in patients with

14. hemoperitoneum. Cannulation of the portal vein in an extrahepatic location is potentially a life-threatening situation as it can lead to exsanguinations. Subcapsular hematoma can occur and is self limiting. Associated pleural effusion with referred right.

15. incriptions – miles and miles of symbols etched into the wall of this huge, underwater structure. These symbols are the same types of symbols that the spiders were spinning in the tree in Nevada. Hundreds of different colored-robed figures are hovering in mid-air within the

## *3. Noise*

1. Scratch surface of instrument with fingernails
   - furiously, repetitively
   - slowly, gradually drawn

2. Finger pitches without playing/Click keys without playing
   - furiously, repetitively
   - slowly, gradually drawn

3. Repeat a single gesture on one or more of the following instruments:
   - cowbell
   - singing bowl
   - clavés
   - pebbles/prayer stones
   - kazoo
   - whoopee cushion
   - scissors
   - sandpaper/sand blocks
   - siren
   - wood blocks
   - castanets
   - vibra slap
   - suspended cymbal
   - iron pipe
   - chains
   - duck call
   - ratchet
   - police whistle
   - bull roarer
   - wooden wind chimes
   - bamboo wind chimes
   - rain stick
   - thunder sheet
   - wind machine
   - glass of water