

OPENING PERFORMANCE ORCHESTRA

Chess Show (Other Memories of John Cage) for 4 players (live version)

The composition Chess Show is dedicated in honor of John Cage. It consists of independent musical and visual parts. The only connection between them is a 64-minute timeline divided into 16 four-minute sections. The length of the composition coincides with the number of squares on a chessboard. The sounds in the composition come from 32 randomly chosen compositions of John Cage, which number corresponds to the number of pieces in a chess set. During the given time, four laptops play fragments of John Cage's compositions according to a plan which four players have determined in advance with the help of random operations. This plan determines when and for how long each composition or fragment will play. We have supplemented Cage's compositions with original, unrelated sound material such as concrete sounds from our group's performances.

Chess Show's visual representation comes from the record of a grandmaster-level chess game from 1970 between Bobby Fischer and Vasily Smyslov (Bird's Opening). The visual sequence is based on a classic black-and-white chessboard, under which (in place of chess pieces) are layered 22 fragments of black-and-white photographs of John Cage. As individual moves activate specific squares, the pictures layered beneath them enter the chessboard in place of chess pieces. The sequence of moves incorporates an element of randomness. The visual part of the composition corresponds in time with the audio part, but is otherwise unrelated to it. In the course of 64 minutes, 128 images are displayed in succession, each for a variable amount of time (just as a chess player needs varying amounts of time for each move in a chess game) and displayed at randomly generated time intervals. In the course of the chess game, individual moves introduce precise changes which gradually expand to repeatedly change and cover the entire board. Toward the end of the game white squares are gradually introduced; in the end these cover the entire image.

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Opening Performance Orchestra is a seven-person musical group from Prague in the Czech Republic. Its members have collaborated (both musically and otherwise) for almost two decades. Since 2006 the group has been engaged in creative musical activity. Opening Performance Orchestra follows in the path of 20th-century avant-garde composers and of Japanese noise music, and is based on so-called „fraction music” and the slogan “no melody, no rhythm, no harmony”. The group has created its own compositions (e.g. series „Spring Ceremony” and „Fraction Music“, „Evenfall“, „Creeping Waves“) as well as reinterpretations of the works of composers with whom Opening Performance Orchestra feels a kindred spirit (e.g. „Inspirium Primum” presenting a remix of sound material of Hiroshi Hasegawa as a representative of Japanese noise music, „Re-Broken Music” based on a destroyed music of Milan Knížák or just „Chess Show” dedicated to John Cage).

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