



JOHN CAGE

Complete Works for Flute • 1

Ryoanji • Two • Three Pieces for Flute Duet • Music for Two

Katrin Zenz, Flute



John Cage (1912-1992)

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A composer whose innovative work and unorthodox ideas have profoundly affected Western music during the latter half of the twentieth century, John Cage was born on 5th September 1912 in Los Angeles and died on 12th August 1992 in New York City. Son of an inventor, he attended Pomona College then travelled around Europe. Returning to the United States in 1931, he studied music with Richard Buhlig, Arnold Schoenberg, Adolph Weiss, and Henry Cowell. While teaching in Seattle during 1938–40, he also organized percussion ensembles to perform his compositions. He also experimented with dance, his collaborations with the choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham sparked a lengthy and creative partnership.

Cage's early pieces were written in a variant of the 12-note method espoused by his teacher Schoenberg, but in 1939 he began to experiment with often unorthodox instruments such as the prepared piano (a piano modified by placing objects between the strings to produce new and unexpected sound effects). He also experimented with tape recorders, record players and radios in his effort to move outside the bounds of existing Western music and its concepts of meaningful sound. The concert he gave at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1943 marked the first significant step in his emergence as a leader of American new music.

Cage subsequently turned to Zen Buddhism and other Eastern philosophies, concluding that all musical activities could be seen as part of a single natural process. He came to regard all sounds as potentially musical, and encouraged audiences to take note of all sonic phenomena, rather than those elements selected by the composer. To this end he cultivated the principle of indeterminism in his music. He used devices to ensure randomness and eliminate any element of personal taste on the part of the performer, along with sequences of events determined by random means such as consultation with the Chinese I Ching. In his later works he extended these freedoms across other media, such that one performance of a specific piece cannot be judged in the context of another – thus establishing uniqueness by eschewing individuation.

Cage left a vast output which, almost by definition, is often difficult to classify generically. Among his best known works are *4'33"* (1952), in which the performer(s) remains utterly silent onstage for that amount of time; *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) for 12 randomly tuned radios, 24 performers and conductor; *Sonatas and Interludes* (1946-48) for prepared piano; *Fontana Mix* (1958), based on a series of programmed transparent

cards that, when superimposed, yield a graph for the random selection of electronic sounds; *Cheap Imitation* (1969), an 'impression' of the music of Erik Satie; and *Roaratorio* (1979), a mixed-media composition utilizing thousands of words selected from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. He published several books, including *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (1961) and *M: Writings '67-'72* (1973). His influence extended to such composers as Earle Brown, Lejaren Hiller, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff, and his work has been recognized as seminal in the development of traditions ranging from minimalist and electronic music to performance art.

This recording is the first of two [the second is on Naxos 8.559774] that includes all Cage's works for flute, even if the idea of writing 'for' a specific instrument needs to be taken advisedly.

Cage wrote *Ryoanji* in 1984, and named it after the rock garden in Kyoto. Around this time, oboist James Ostryniec asked Cage to write a piece for him, which resulted in a series. These solos are accompanied by a percussion or similar orchestral part. Each one is a series of eight songs (with the exception of that for voice, which has nine). A song is created on two pages, each with two rectangular systems. In each Cage traces parts of the perimeters of the given stones, these to be played as glissandi within the given pitch ranges. In some places contours overlap; in which case, one or more tape recordings are used, with which the soloist plays as a duet or trio. The percussion part is a complex of two unspecified sounds, played in unison. The soloist represents the stones of the garden, the accompaniment the sand surrounding them.

The present version starts with irregular taps on percussion, against which solo flute unfolds an undulating and eastern-tinged melody line permeated by microtonal inflection. It continues at length, and is joined unobtrusively by the pre-recorded flutes as the texture becomes more diverse and intricate. Gradually this latter thins out, as solo and pre-recorded flutes pursue an oblique dialogue in which gaps between musical phrases often assume equal importance with the phrases. The ending, on percussion alone, is at one with the spirit of this piece as a whole.

Two (1987) is the first in Cage's 'number' series. Its two parts each has 10 time-brackets, the eighth of which is fixed and the others flexible. The piano part is notated on two staves – one played in the given order, and the notes being played in any relation to the sounds in the other staff. The flute part consists of predominantly soft and low

tones. Each time-bracket here has only one tone, with a total of three different pitches heard over the total duration of the work. Detached and often deliberate piano chords presage the arrival of the flute, whose understated writing still provides a formal continuity that might otherwise be lacking given the unequal spacing and unpredictable resonance of the piano chords. Tonally the piece has a fair degree of dissonance, though the prevailing mood of edgy rumination holds good through to the end.

Among Cage's earliest works, *Three Pieces for Flute Duet* (1935) consists of studies in two-part chromatic writing. The first is a brief canonic dance, the second unfolds a more complex dialogue between instruments, while the third focusses on unresolved harmonic dissonance.

Music for Two is one of the *Music for ...* series (1984/87). Each work consists of 17 parts for voice and instruments without an overall score. Each of these parts consists of 'pieces' and 'interludes', notated on two systems with flexible time-brackets. Some of these 'pieces' are made up of single held tones, preceded and followed by silence, and should be played softly. Others consist of series of tones with various pitches, notated proportionally. The 'interludes', which last 5, 10 or 15 seconds apiece, are to be played freely with respect to dynamics and durations of single notes; also normally with respect to timbre. The piano part is played by bowing the strings with a fishing line or horse hair. The players may decide on the number of 'pieces' and 'interludes' to be performed, resulting in a maximum duration of 30 minutes.

Music for Two begins with piano resonance, against which the flute sets up a tenuous dialogue which is soon interrupted by plangent chords in the upper register. Following a more inward passage, again centred on piano resonance, the dialogue becomes more animated as forceful piano chords are countered by multi-phonetic writing on the flute. This duly evens out into a more remote yet inwardly intense interaction where both instruments assume the foreground in what is a constant process of incremental change. Just beyond the half-way point, a further series of forceful chords on piano leads into what is the nearest thing to an equal exchange of ideas, but this gradually becomes increasingly sparse when the flute ascends towards the top of its compass while the piano largely withdraws until its stark chordal sequences at the close.

Richard Whitehouse

This recording of collected works by John Cage involving the flute is a world première. The works included on CD 1 / 8.559773 and CD 2 / 8.559774 span a period of over 50 years, ranging from pieces composed for flute duet, flute and percussion, flute and piano (CD 1) to pieces for solo flutes, flute duet, flute trio, alto flute, piano, vibraphone, and alto flute, two pianos, two vibraphones (CD 2), not originally specified for the flute but for variable instrumentation, thus providing a new musical diversity for the flute repertoire.

The beauty and expressiveness of Cage's music lies in intimate situations, serving a specific spiritual purpose, which should "sober and quiet the mind thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences," as Cage says himself.

To discover the most appropriate way to embody the complex structural idea of each piece I had to undertake a truly unusual effort: each piece indicates a set of numerous instructions, which imply at the same time freedom and the aesthetic of chance, and where a mosaic of choices has to be determined, even though these allow total freedom regarding the attitude of playing. I explored on the flute a multitude of sounds, treating them all as "equally useful", completely independent from one another, free of memory and taste, free of musical judgment other than being attractive. This combined a creative and challenging engagement, with the discipline and responsibility of a highly demanding technical task as a performer.

Therefore, each performance results in an "once-only" interpretation, as it happens in the present recorded versions of *Ryoanji*, *Two* and *Music for Two*.

Music for Two, written for any combination of the 17 different instrumental "parts without score" provided by John Cage (by which he means that each performer plays his music independently), has here been determined as a new piece for flute and piano.

Moreover, the selection of the works on the present recording – as well as the choice and combination of instruments – results from my personal research and appreciation: the ones chosen seemed the most musically apposite.

I would like to address my special thanks to Greek composer Anargyros Deniosos, who contributed to an important extent to the overall concept of the production.

Katrin Zenz

Uwe Grodd



Uwe Grodd's contributions to classical music have brought him considerable international acclaim as conductor, flautist, editor and teacher. He has made world première recordings of more than 70 works of 18th and early-19th century music, winning First Prize at the 2000 Cannes Classical Awards for the Best Eighteenth Century Orchestral Recording with his album of Symphonies by J.B. Vanhal [Naxos 8.554341]. He is Professor at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Maxim Mankovski

Maxim Mankovski was born in Moscow and studied at the Ippolitov-Ivanov Conservatory and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory. He performs as a soloist and as a chamber musician and has collaborated with the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, the Russian State Symphony Orchestra and prominent chamber orchestras. He teaches percussion at the Municipal Conservatory of Patras and the Ionian University in Corfu.



Ludovic Frochot



Ludovic Frochot was born in Dijon. He studied in France and at Indiana University, USA, with Menahem Pressler. He performs extensively as a soloist and as a chamber musician in Europe. As one of the founding members of the Ensemble Utopik, dedicated to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries (www.ensembleutopik.fr), he has collaborated with some of the most prominent contemporary composers.

Chara Iacovidou

Chara Iacovidou was born in Athens to a distinguished family of artists. She studied in Greece, France and the USA, before becoming a pupil of Alfred Brendel. She is a very active soloist and chamber musician and has performed with the Greek National Orchestra, the Camerata Athens, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice, and the Orchestre Symphonique d'Orléans, among others. Her recordings include works by Schubert, Ravel, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven (Lyrix/France).



Katrin Zenz



Born in Donaueschingen (Southern Germany) and established since 1993 in Greece, the German flautist Katrin Zenz plays a central rôle in the performance of contemporary Greek flute music. Her research in the use of extended techniques has brought her into close contact with many composers and subsequently a number of works have been dedicated to her. She is a founding member of various chamber ensembles and ensembles of free improvisation, as well as being a member of the Ensemble Köln, the Camerata Athens, the Ensemble Skalkottas, and the Athens State Orchestra. She has deepened her knowledge of music and the flute with Peter-Lukas Graf. Her recordings include *Greek Flute Music of the 20th & 21st Centuries* [Naxos 8.572369], music for solo flute by Iannis Ioannidis and Anastassis Philippakopoulos, and numerous other Greek composers. Katrin Zenz is Associate Professor of flute at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki.

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- 1** Ryoanji (version for flute, percussion and tape) (1984) **18:46**
- 2** Two (1987) **10:01**
Three Pieces for Flute Duet (1935) **5:59**
- 3** No. 1. Allegro giocoso **0:43**
- 4** No. 2. Andante cantabile **2:46**
- 5** No. 3. Grave adagio **2:30**
- 6** Music for Two (version for flute and piano, arr. Katrin Zenz) (1984/87)* **28:07**

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

Katrin Zenz, Flute / Flute 1 **3-5**

Uwe Grodd, Flute 2 **3-5**

Maxim Mankovski, Percussion **1**

Ludovic Frochot, Piano **2**

Chara Iacovidou, Piano **6**

Special thanks to Dimitra Kokkini, wind instruments.
Recorded at Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece,
on 26th March, 8th and 9th May, 2013
Producer: Katrin Zenz • Engineer and editor: Zafiris Kontogeorgis
Publisher: Edition Peters
Booklet notes: Richard Whitehouse and Katrin Zenz
Cover: *Detail from a rock garden at the Ryoanji temple, Kyoto, Japan*, by Hasan Can Balcioglu (Dreamstime.com)



AMERICAN CLASSICS

This first volume of John Cage's complete works for flute spans a fifty year period, from the *Three Pieces for Flute Duet* of 1935 – deft studies in chromatic writing – to the 1984 *Ryoanji*, which involves the use of pre-recorded flutes and percussion with resultant diverse and intricate textures. *Two* is the first of Cage's important 'number' series and is edgily ruminative, while *Music for Two*, written for any combination of the 17 different instrumental 'parts without scores' provided by the composer, is heard in an arrangement described by Katrin Zenz as a 'new piece for flute and piano'.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
62:53