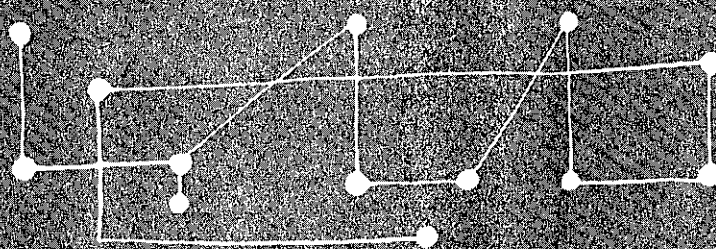


1993 : (sous t. hr), Perspectives of New Music  
vol. 31 n° 2, 1993, p. 135  
50 r. 6092

# PERSPECTIVES OF



# NEW MUSIC

VOLUME 31 NO. 2

SUMMER 1993

inspired masses of people in the second half of this century. But this vision seems to be dissipating. Experimentation in art can no longer claim to have the same necessity that it had fifty years ago. The idea of a new civilization built upon the ruins of the old has become a precarious one, shaken by ghosts of the past that stir beneath the surface. The hope that art might lead to a better way of perceiving (and transforming) the world has vanished, and with it the leaders who gave this hope expression. We are left on our own, and a frightening mess it is that we have to deal with.

The angelic consciousness which accompanied our twisting course through the middle of the twentieth century is gone. But like a δαίμων, or a guardian angel, Cage's voice still whispers to us as we hesitate before each dark turn—that angelic voice which seemed to promise the possibility of paradise if only the barriers inherited from the past could be dropped. Now that the angelic vision of instantaneous perfection has departed, it is time to organize daily life: what Oscar Wilde called "the long hours that follow with leaden feet." So we sift through the affairs of the dead, handling each object with affection, as we try to decide what should be kept and what should be thrown away. Will Cage's legacy, like that of Socrates, be mainly oral, rather than written? How many of his works are likely to be performed decades from now? And of those, how many will be understood? Of course the same questions could be asked about Schönberg, the teacher, whose approach to the art of writing was as different from Cage's as *Wiener Schnitzel* is from apple pie. Neither the one nor the other was able to lift the curse that hangs over modern music. Maybe this curse will not disappear until "modern music" itself disappears—soon, possibly, when the polemics of modernism will have been replaced by a friendlier vision.

—Frederic Rzewski

But if there is no solace in the fruits of our research, there is at least some consolation in the research itself.

—Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*, 154

John Cage: A kind of legend. In the fifties he introduced a new freedom in music, in its concepts and its realization, akin to Jackson Pollock's revolution in painting. He represents the American daring mentality, freed from the conventions that were so castrating in Europe after the last war. I don't know if a significant part of his music will survive. But the breakthrough that brought his personality in music, yes.

—Iannis Xenakis