

PREAMBLE 1

John Cage *Four*⁶

'Bubble, Trumpet, Humming, Fah!!'

If the above sub-title seems a little enigmatic, maybe even a little irregular, then that is all as it should be, for in *Four*⁶, although we are playing a piece of music, really, we might be playing a game, sometimes facing each other across a table (or canvas), echoing the bridge or chess game, or even the medieval *scriptorium*, sometimes supporting each other, jostling each other, tripping each other up, tuning in and out, slip streaming beside, behind, in front of, one another, ignoring one another, letting the jester of chance into the mix of each performance, perhaps?

One of the group of so called 'number pieces' written during the last five years of his life, *Four*⁶ utilises the system of 'time brackets' that Cage (1912-1992) had developed during the mid-1980s.¹ Briefly, time brackets specify lengths of time during which, events, often—but not always, prescribed—²should happen; and events are often, but not always, surrounded by silence³ (or ambience). The actual presentation of events is variable within each pair of time brackets, with start (left) and stop times (right) and also possible interruptions being determined by individual players either during 'live' performance, or pre-determined, so a certain amount of structural freedom is built into the score, even though the total duration is fixed. Thus, even though time brackets allow a certain amount of (structural) performer agency, they are very far from totally free; they have rules, and *Four*⁶ is subject to these rules. However, *Four*⁶ (and *One*⁷, a supplementary work derived from *Four*⁶), does allow performers much greater agency in the choices of the sounds themselves (the 'fillings' for the time brackets). In these two works sounds are indeterminate, drawn from a lexicon of forty-six in total, twelve each for performers' two, three and four, but only ten for player one, who does not have a sound 2 or 10.⁴ Thus, Cage has chosen the order (and number) of sounds for each player, but not the sounds themselves. *Four*⁶ consists of forty-five 'events'⁵ taking place over 30 minutes; there is no score, only a set of parts (see figure 1), as if to emphasise both the singularity of each 'player' and to bring into play concepts of distributed creativity or even usership (for a 'score' rather implies a 'controlling' hand).

So, what's at stake for the performers? What is problematised? What affordances does *Four*⁶ allow? From performance (performers'), or interpretative (including the listener or viewer), points of view,

¹ One of the earliest examples of a time bracket work (as described above) is *Thirty Pieces for String Quartet* (1983).

² *Theatre Piece* (1960), an earlier use of proto time bracket notation, is open regarding content, specifying only 'one to eight performers of any sort,' who are directed to choose words that signify sounds, actions or objects, from which the performance then proceeds. The score was also written *after the fact*, in that it is a summary (of sorts) of the first performance. See Pritchett, 1996, 133-134.

³ Especially in the earlier time bracket pieces, sound events often have a buffer of silence, or non-action, surrounding the pitch or sound material in the time bracket. This feature is present in *Four*⁶, but also, sound events sometimes run into one another, with no discernible break (indicated in the score by a connecting line between brackets).

⁴ For a discussion of the compositional processes employed by Cage in *Four*⁶ see Haskins 2009, 100-107, and for more general discussion see Brooks, 2002, 141-145, and Pritchett, 1996, 200-204.

⁵ But note that nothing in Cage's instructions prevents the deliberate overlapping and doubling of sound events by an individual player where the time brackets so allow. This was done by player 1 in the 'double hauntology' version.

the main areas of interest would seem to include the nature of authorship, the nature of the supplement, performances as the ‘children’ of scores if you like, the nature of the signature and what it means to (re)produce a performance in Derridean terms. In other words, who is composing and what is being composed? Are we ‘using’ this work, in the sense of a distributed creativity or even in the sense of a radical activism? Then there is domain heterogeneity to address—how many ways can we perform *Four*⁶? Can we problematise space and synchronicity by performing *Four*⁶ across different parts of a building, extending the framework of Stockhausen’s *Alphabet für Liège* (1972), for example, or indeed Cage’s *Musicircus* (1967) or *A House Full of Music* (1981-82), both of which could be considered closer to ‘happenings’ than pre-composed architectural structures in which events can occur? And how about perplexity, a situation that resists dialectical thought, Derrida’s aporia?⁶ Since there is no score, we cannot really know what *might* or *is* going on at any time; moreover, filling the time brackets also allows for what Derrida terms ‘viral intervention’;⁷ that is, provoking a response from a player during performance that will alter their own sound event. And even if there were a score (see example 1 for a version of the first ten events of the ‘score,’ inasmuch as that is possible with variable time brackets), would it actually help to understand or clarify any aspect of *Four*⁶ at all? Would there be any point? We performers devised our own sounds in isolation, we did not rehearse,⁸ we came together, we ‘performed’ (or ‘played’). We had no choice but to embrace the jester of surprise, as we did not know what the others would do or when they would do it. In a way, we deconstructed the performance event even as we produced it, through the unpredictability of the sound world, through the undecidability of *how* the fillings for the time brackets were brought into being, and then how they related to other sounds, how they anticipated or followed other performances, how they opposed themselves—even as they were born as sounds.

All of this raises further questions regarding documentation (as filmed ‘live’ performance, and as written commentary), notation and para-notation. We problematised the archive as we made a Derridean space for the event,⁹ in that the archive is shaped to fit its contents as the contents are shaped to fit the archive; in the processes of documenting the performance, preparing the scores, the para-notation on the scores, and said para-notation’s implicit (but silent) commentary. Undecidability (and chance) permeates the performance, and therefore, at however abyssal a level, also the seemingly fixed, reproducible, surplus-value rich, publisher’s artefact is subject to these agents of change in the performance of its supplements and the play of its own trace.

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A complete ‘score’ version of the opening ten events of *Four*⁶ would appear as shows in figure 1 (below) Figures on the far left denote event numbers (not found in the original parts, but used here for purposes of clarity), figures in red denote sound events for each player. Figures on the left are variable start times, figures on the right, variable stop times. Ligatures after a time bracket indicate that the next time bracket should follow without a pause.

⁶ Most extensively addressed in Derrida, 1993.

⁷ Derrida, 1994, 12.

⁸ There is absolutely no reason not to rehearse, and Cage certainly does not forbid rehearsal for *Four*⁶. Our feeling was that the lack of rehearsal made each performance more interesting for us as performers—events were more ‘undecidable.’

⁹ See *InterMuros* and *Exergue 2*

1.

PLAYER 1: 00-1.15 -----2-----0.55-2.05[^]

PLAYER 2: 00-1.15-----2-----0.55-2.05[^]

PLAYER 3: 00-45-----10-----0.30-1.15

PLAYER 4: 00-1.30-----12-----1-2.30

2.

00-1.30-----4-----1-2.30

00-1.30-----10-----1-2.30

00-1.30-----2-----1-2.30

00-1.30-----9-----1-2.30

3.

1.50-2.35--9--2.20-3.05

1.40-2.55-----9-----2.35-3.45

1.10-1.25-8--1.20-1.35

2.25-3.10--10--2.55-3.40[^]

4.

2.50-3.35--11----3.20-4.05

2-2.30-----2-----3-4.30

1.15-2.15--6--1.55-2.55

2.05-3.20-----12-----3-4.10

5.

3-4-----5-----3.40-4.40

3.20-4.35-----10-----4.15-5.25

2-3.30-----10-----3-4.30[^]

3.35-3.50--2--3.45-4

6.

3.40-4.55-----8-----4.35-5.45

4.15-5---9---4.45-5.30

2.55-3.10---12---3.05-3.20

3.35-4.50-----6-----4.30-5.40

7.

4.10-5.40-----2-----5.10-6.40

5.25-5.40---4---5.35-5.50 ^

2.55-3.50--8----3.50-5

3.50-4.50--12----4.30-5.30

8.

5.15-6.45-----8-----6.15-7.45

4.55-6.25-----9-----5.55-7.25

4-5.30-----11-----5-6.30

5.15-6---10---5.45-6.30

9.

6.10-7.40---8----7.10-8.40

5.20-6.50--2---6.20-7.50

4.30-6---11---5.30-7

5.15-6.30--6--6.10-7.20

10.

4 7.30-8.15---4----8-8.45

7 7.05-8.05---7-----7.45-8.45

7 6-7.30-----7-----7-8.30

3 6.05-7.20--3--7-8.10

Figure 1

The Cage project spans seven different manifestations and a supplementary work—*Logosphere*, for six of which documentation is included in this portfolio. Each version of the Cage project is discussed in detail in either *Inter Muros* ('art version', 'circus' and 'control') or *The Double Hauntology and its Supplements* ('double hauntology' and 'turntable' versions, single and mixed). All versions were filmed, and stills from some versions are included below also. All 'event' names/descriptors (time bracket numbers 1–12) are para-notations, taken directly from each player's (performance) part. Below follows a list of separate performances, with further information on individual performance choices for each 'version', as applicable.

John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	Art Version 1 (Not included in documentation) Filmed November 2017 30 minutes
John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	Art Version 2 Filmed April 8 th 2018 30 minutes
John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	'Control' performed and documented (filmed) December 1 st 2018 30 minutes
John Cage <i>One</i> ⁷	'Circus' performance, performed and documented (filmed) December 1 st 2018 30 minutes
John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	Double Hauntology Version and its Tripled supplements (LP) Filmed April 19 th 2019 30 minutes
John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	Turntable performance of the double hauntology version (and its supplements—see above). Documentation: wav files (single tracks: 4 recordings). LPs played & recorded April 23-24 th . 2 hours of performance material
John Cage: <i>Four</i> ⁶	Turntable performance (see above). Final Mix Documentation: wav file. Mixed April 30 th 2019 30 minutes of performance material
Clare Lesser <i>Logosphere</i>	Utilising the Nick Drake track from the double hauntology version (above). Created remotely with João Menezes at NYUAD Abu Dhabi, and Dorset UK via Zoom May 2020 (4 X 120-minute sessions).

Art Version 1: not included.

Art Version 2:

Players: Clare Lesser, David Lesser, Sangeetha Mahadevan, Ayah Kaboud

Actions	Player 1 Ayah	Player 2 David	Player 3 Clare	Player 4 Sangeetha
1		Speak	Tacet	Bag squirt/paint
2	Finger smear	Pencil	Shred score	Bristle splatter
3	Light sabre paint lines (on)	Overpaint	Brush rattle	Brush shake on canvas
4	Thick brush line	Wood blocks	Brush splatter	Wooden end of brush – streaks
5	Brush splat	White splat	Tube paint throw/splat	Agitate brush in bucket
6	Knife side-slide	Knife	Charcoal	Chalk line drag
7	Charcoal points	Black	Bag splat	Cloth rubbing
8	Knife stab (pop)	screw driver	Water/glass percussion	Paint smear – hand
9	Light sabre paint dots (off)	Blue	Erase	Charcoal multiple lines
10		Silence	Sharpen knife	Charcoal finger smudge
11	Hand smear	Sing	Shove	Tube dot squirts
12	Finger-nails/scratch	Cough	Slash canvas	Thick horizontal line



Figure 2. Canvas after 1 month of drying. May 2018.



Figure 3. Canvas after 1 month of drying, showing fragment of performance part. May 2018.

Control:

Players: Clare Lesser, David Lesser, Eunsu Choi, Ayah Kaboud

Actions	Player 1 Ayah	Player 2 David	Player 3 Clare	Player 4 Eunsu
1		Silence	Egg slicer harp	Plastic bottle ricochet
2	Drum 1	Bells	Bells	Foot stomps
3	Drum 2	Xylophone	Xylophone	Silence
4	Light sabre	Bass	Thumb piano	Pen bounce
5	Beep-beep	Middle	Bubbles	Egg slicer
6	Humming	High	Massage	Drink can percussion
7	Harmonica	Gliss. Strings	Tacet	Paper bag scrunch
8	Violin 1 (gliss.)	Hit strings	Wood shells	Plastic bag rustle (fast)
9	Violin 2 (col legno)	Coffee cup	Bouncy ball	Hit folder
10		Egg slicer harp	Monkey drum	Shhhh!
11	Egg slicer	Bubble pot	Trumpet	Paper bag rustle (slow)
12	Crumple/rip score	Plastic bag	Rotary whisk	Pen drop

Circus *One*⁷:

Players: Clare Lesser, David Lesser, Eunsu Choi, Ayah Kaboud

Actions	Player 1 David	Player 1 Clare	Player 1 Ayah	Player 1 Eunsu
1				
2	Bells	Counting	Drum 1	Silence
3	Xylophone	Xylophone	Drum 2	Thump table (palm)
4	Bass	Thumb piano	Light sabre	Knock table (knuckles)
5	Middle	Bubbles	Violin gliss.	Foot stomps
6	Hit low	Massage	Egg slicer	Hit folder
7	Gliss.	Tacet	Harmonica	Hit Flask
8	Hit	Wood shells	Violin pizz.	Pen drop
9	Coffee cup	Bouncy ball	Beep-beep	Shhh!
10				
11	Bubble	Trumpet	Humming	Fahh!!
12	Bag	Whisk	Crumple/rip score	Plastic bottle bash

Double Hauntology (LP) Version:

Players: Clare Lesser, David Lesser, Christine Dah-In Chung, Bea Laszlo

LPs were chosen regarding two criteria: mail order availability in a limited time frame, and price. No musical criteria at all were used in choosing the LPs. Actions were performed directly onto the LPs.

LPs:

PLAYER 1: *The Sound of Arvo Pärt*, (1994). *Spiegel im Spiegel* and *Fratres* (soloist, Tasmin Little).

PLAYER 2: *Pink Moon* (1972), Nick Drake's third and final album, released two years before he took his own life.

Tracks: 'Pink Moon,' 'Place to Be,' Road, 'Which Will,' 'Horn,' 'Things Behind the Sun.'

PLAYER 3: *Dusty in Memphis* (1969), Dusty Springfield's fifth studio album.

Tracks: 'Just a Little Lovin',' 'So much Love,' 'Son of a Preacher Man,' 'I Don't Want to Hear it Anymore,' 'Don't Forget About Me,' 'Breakfast in Bed.'

PLAYER 4: *J S Bach—The Goldberg Variations* (remastered version of the 1955 original recording), Glenn Gould. Part 1.

Actions	Player 1 Christine	Player 2 David	Player 3 Clare	Player 4 Bea
1		Silence	Sand rub	Cans
2	Stress ball	Drop pebbles	Meat basher	Screw driver
3	Paper cup	Skewer	Nail polish	Spoon
4	Hands	Throw sand	Screw driver	Sponge
5	Tooth picks	Pencil	Erase/make tracks	Eraser
6	Cotton pad	Scratch knife	Tacet	Scissors
7	Aluminium foil ball	Scrape sand	Pebble drop	Deodorant bottle
8	Hair brush	Varnish remover	Rake surface	Fork scratch
9	Ruler	Nail varnish	Tape	Markers
10		Tape	Throw sand	Nail polish
11	Ring	Glue	Spirit pen	Sand
12	Chain	Pebble scratch	Pebble stir	Knife

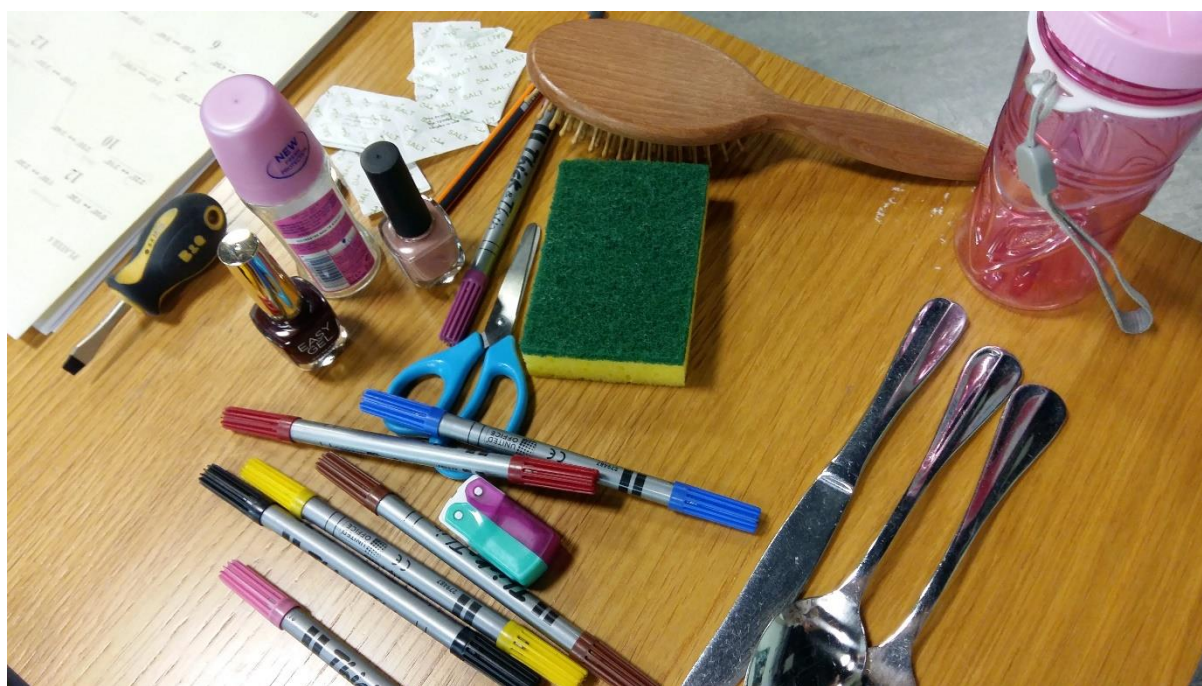


Figure 4. Double Hauntology (LP) Version. Performance 'station' for player 4 prior to performance.



Figure 5. Double Hauntology (LP) Version. Player 2 LP (*Pink Moon*) after performance.

Turntable Version — Hauntology and its Supplements:

Clare Lesser (performer/compiler)

Each damaged LP was played and recorded separately, then mixed as a four track WAV file. Panning was determined by chance (throwing a die): 1-2 = Left, 3-4 = Right, 5-6 = centre. Player 2s LP was so badly damaged that the needle head was pulled off the arm twice during the recording process (see illustration below).

Springfield – L

Pärt & Drake – C

Gould - R

Sound Engineer: João Menezes



Figure 6. Turntable Version. Player 2 LP (*Pink Moon*) showing record player needle head pulled out during recording.



Figure 7. Turntable Version. Player 1 LP (*The Sound of Arvo Pärt*) during recording.

Logosphere:

Clare Lesser, with João Menezes (sound engineer)

The final work is a twenty-minute soundscape composed of three spoken fragments of text drawn from the *Animadversion* (chosen using chance procedures) and the damaged LP of Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* that resulted from the Cage 'Hauntology' performance. The palette was kept deliberately spare, mainly employing stretching, shuffling and granulation to the sound samples. *Logosphere* is intended to be a companion piece to the *Animadversion* from which it draws most of its material.

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