James Whittle

geneRic speCtator

for two performers

Programme note

The title is an anagram of 'Cage in Retrospect'. This score consists of a list of instructions for the performance of 17 actions setting 15 words (DISCIPLINE is repeated twice). Each word is 'an aspect of my [Cage's] composition', which Cage used to compose mesostics collected in his *Composition in Retrospect* (1981-8, published in 1992).

'The situation is not linear,' wrote Cage. 'It is as though I am in a forest hunting for ideas.' The first mesostic is:

<pre>
                    My
                  mEmory
              of whaT
                     Happened
                is nOt
          what happeneD
</pre>

Description of the first performance

'geneRic speCtator' was commissioned by the York Spring Festival of New Music 2012, for their Cage Day on Sunday 13th May 2012. It was first devised by Kate Boyd and James Whittle, and performed by them in a Showcase Concert of five student compositions inspired by Cage, the brief for which had been that durations should be no more than 4 minutes 33 seconds.. Since the concert was planned as a single event without break in between pieces, the 17 actions were divided into five groups of three, with the last two in a pair, so that these six groups could be performed in between and surrounding the five other pieces. Lighting faded from downstage right, where Mr Whittle and Ms Boyd performed, to stage centre, stage left, and at one point to the audience, where the five pieces were situated, allowing performers for those five pieces to move on and off stage under a relative cover of darkness.

g e n e R i c   s p e C t a t o r

James Whittle (b. 1989)

f o r   t w o   p e r f o r m e r s

April-May 2012

after John Cage's *Composition in Retrospect*

Performers should assume the role of the title with a humorous playfulness. There are four performance options for 'geneRic speCtator':

> - within a programmed concert, either in between ('I'), or at the same time as ('II'), or both in between and at the same time as ('III'), other performances

> - as an independent performance or installation in any location ('IV'), whereby actions are performed continuously

[Unless marked, instructions apply to all four performance options.]

1. 17 actions are to be devised, sculpted, and performed, each one inspired by a word (listed overleaf).

2. Actions should communicate their words by any means possible. Words should be vocalised at least once during their actions.

3. The 17 actions must appear in the written order.

4. Additionally, depending on the performance context, actions should either:

   - (I/III) reference a piece performed adjacently (the words can be used to analyse these pieces)

   - (II/III) reference a piece performed at the same time (this can involve live improvisation)

   - (IV) reference the performance context (e.g. the location, its history, its people, its functions, its status)

5. (I/III) Any number of actions may be grouped together in a micro-performance.

6. (I/II/III) The first and last actions may (or may not) be performed respectively before and after the first and last programmed pieces.

7. Performers may (or may not) start off stage. Performers may leave and/or re-enter the stage at any point. Performers should otherwise remain on stage for the duration of the performance.

8. (I/II/III) Actions begin and end with performers looking to where the 'real' concert is. This should be a slow, deliberate move, turning/bending round curiously to look at any other visible performers. (IV) These movements can be applied to anyone or anything in the performance venue (see instruction 4).

9. There need not be any narrative continuity between actions. Actions can be individual, collective, interactive, simultaneous (but not appearing out of sequence).

10. When the last action has been performed, performers may (or may not) leave the stage.

11. Where possible, lighting should be used to distinguish between actions. Applause is to be avoided.

12. Duration and instrumentation are entirely free.

geneRic speCtator

METHOD

STRUCTURE

INTENTION

DISCIPLINE   **DISCIPLINE**   **DISCIPLINE**

NOTATION

INDETERMINACY

INTERPRETATION

IMITATION

DEVOTION

CIRCUMSTANCES

VARIABLE STRUCTURE

NONUNDERSTANDING

CONTINGENCY

INCONSISTENCY

PERFORMANCE