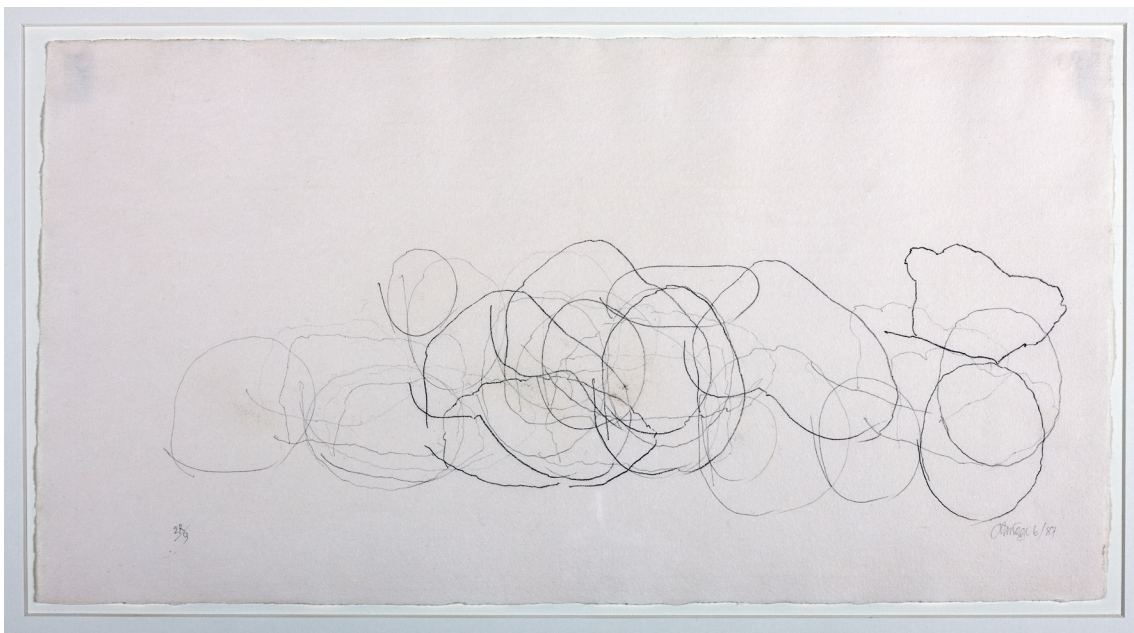


PERFORMANCE DRAWINGS



John Cage, *Where R = Ryoanji R-17 (2/88)*, ©John Cage Trust.

RYOANJI: SOLOS FOR OBOE, FLUTE, CONTRABASS, VOICE, TROMBONE WITH PERCUSSION OR ORCHESTRAL OBBLIGATO (1983–85)

John Cage

In recent years I have made a number of works, some of them graphic, some musical, all having the Japanese word *Ryoanji* or a reference to it, in the title. These began in 1982 when I was asked by Andre Dimanche to design a cover for Pierre Lartigue's translation into French of my *Mushroom Book*. This is a part of his series of fifteen books called Editions Ryoan-ji, all of which are paperbacked with a paper that reminds one of raked sand. My suggestion for the cover of my book that I draw around fifteen stones (fifteen is the number of stones in the Ryoanji garden in Kyoto) placed at *I Ching*-determined points on a grid the size of the cover plus the flaps was accepted.

In January of 1983 when I went to the Crown Point Press to make etchings I took the same fifteen stones with me, but soon found that what can be done with pencil on paper cannot be done with needle on copper. The mystery produced by pencils disappeared, reappearing only on copper when the number of stones was multiplied (225: 15 X 15; 3375: 15 X 15 X 15).

That summer I began a series of drawings which continues even now, having titles such as *3R/5*, or *R/12*. R is Ryoanji or 15 and the number below the line is the number of different pencils (between 6B and 9H) used to make the drawing. At some point that year an oboist in Baltimore, James Ostryniec, began writing a number of letters asking me to compose some solos for him to play in Japan. I kept putting him off. Eventually he came to visit bringing both his oboe and several textbooks about playing the instrument. I was amazed to see that one of the books began with the division of the octave not into seven or twelve tones but into twenty-four. Students of oboe playing must make special efforts to keep from sliding up or down while playing a single tone. I told Ostryniec that I would write some music for him.

Paper was prepared that had two rectangular systems. Using two such sheets I made a "garden" of sounds, tracing parts of the perimeters of the same stones I had used for the drawings and etchings. I was writing a music of *glissandi*. Where, through the use of chance operations, more lines than one were drawn in the same vertical space, I distinguished between sound systems, taking four as a maximum (loudspeakers around an audience; prerecorded tapes). For the accompaniment I turned my attention to the raked sand. I made a percussion part having a single complex of unspecified

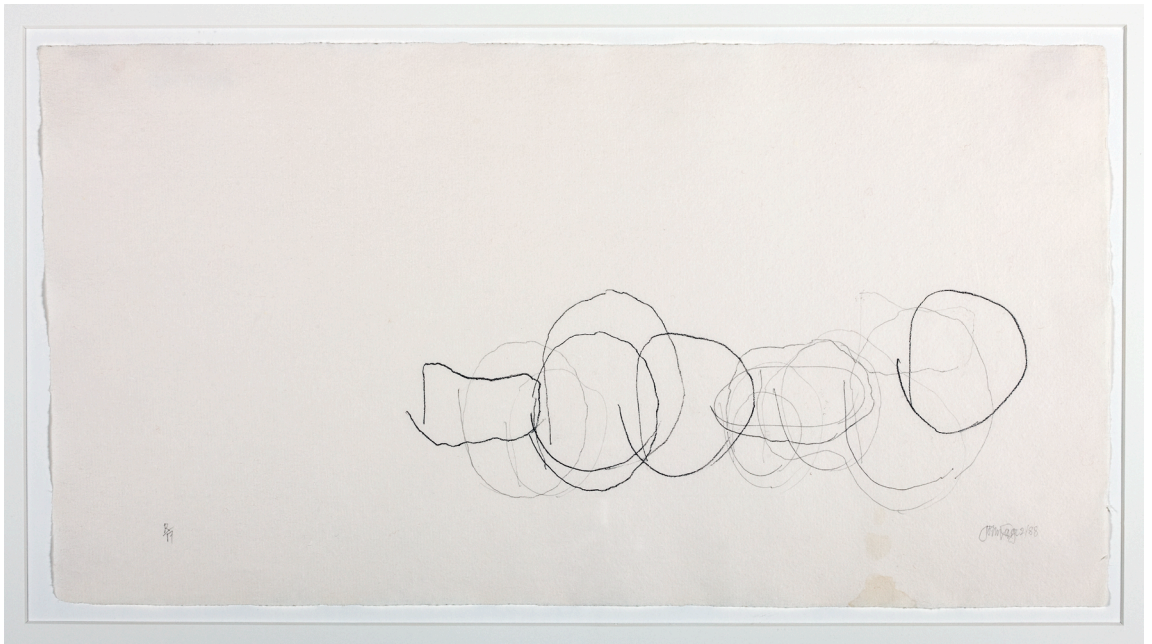
sounds played in unison, five icti chance-distributed in meters of twelve, thirteen, fourteen or fifteen. I didn't want the mind to be able to analyze rhythmic patterns. I dedicated this work to Michael Pugliese because he was the first to discover a way to play my *Etudes Boreales*, which I had thought were too difficult to play literally, that is, to play all of the notes that had been written.

These were the first pieces in a series that continues: flute solos for Robert Aitken, songs for Isabelle Ganz, pieces for double bass and voice for Joelle Leandre for whom I also made (enjoying a *Commande d'Etat* from the French Ministry of Culture) an orchestral version of the percussion accompaniment. I am about to write trombone pieces for James Fulkerson. Inclined as I am to listen to as many environmental sounds as there are I look forward to hearing these solos together, providing the space in which they are heard is large enough to accommodate several "gardens," i.e., multiples of four sound systems.

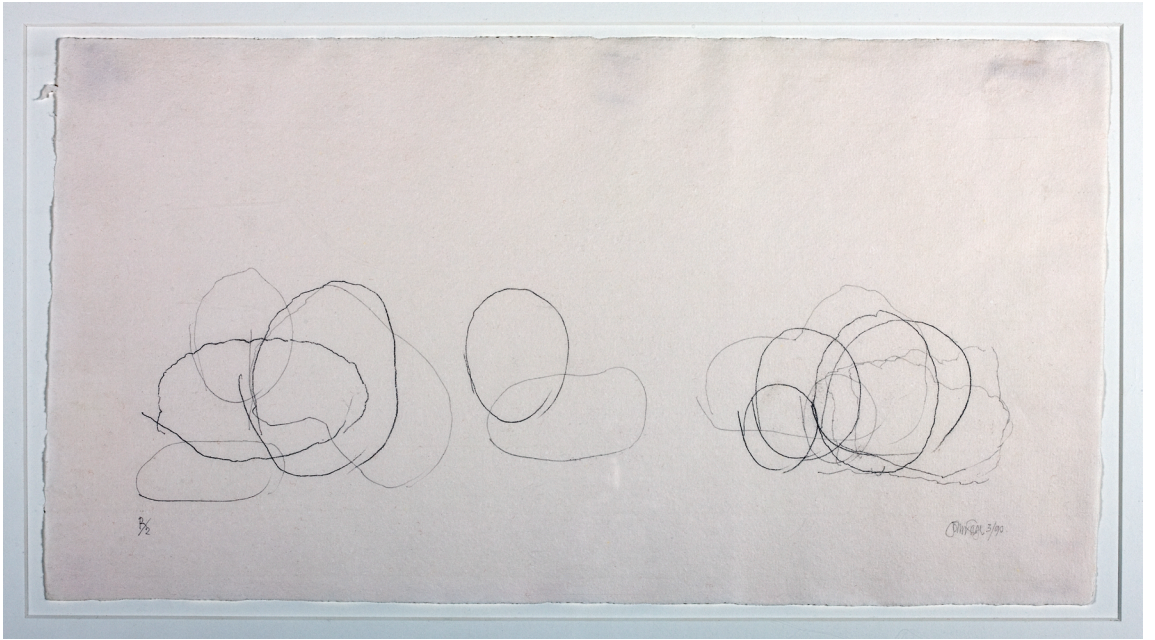
All of them are eight in number, except the songs for Isabelle Ganz which are nine. The ranges within which the *glissandi* play are sometimes wide, sometimes narrow. The texts are variations of lettristic *Haikus* (Letters from the seventeen chapters of *Finnegans Wake* which I had written earlier that year). I kept the letters of the original *Haikus* but using chance operations made vowel additions to them. Thus *dlyr*, *l, f, pr* (*k* the first part of the first *Haiku*) became *dya ayl-y rya, eul fo pie air ki*. A silence of an undetermined length takes place after each solo. The accompaniment continues. It also begins almost a minute before the first solo and does not end until slightly less than a minute after the last one.



John Cage's rock and pencils, used in the composition of his *Ryoanji* drawings.
Photo: David Sundberg, ©John Cage Trust.



John Cage, *Where R = Ryoanji (2R)/9 (6/87)*, ©John Cage Trust.



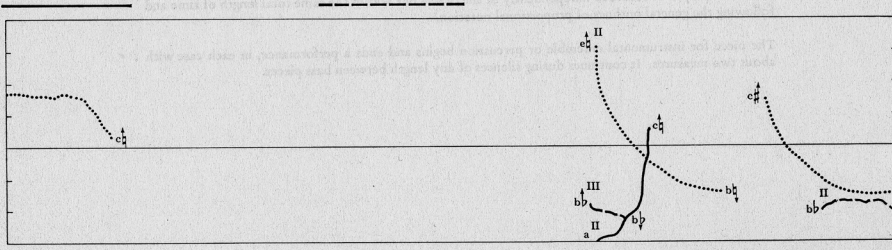
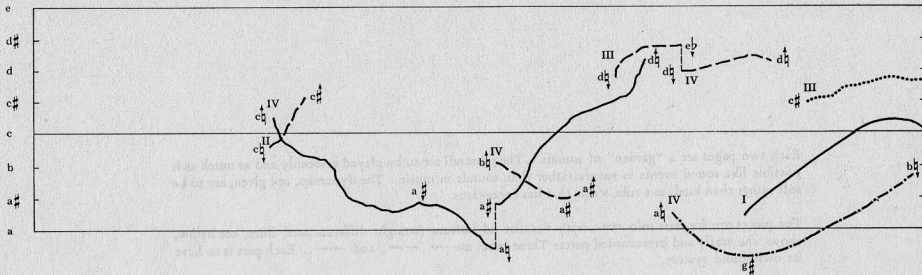
John Cage, *Where R = Ryoanji R/2* (3/90), ©John Cage Trust.

for Joelle Léandre

RYOANJI

JOHN CAGE

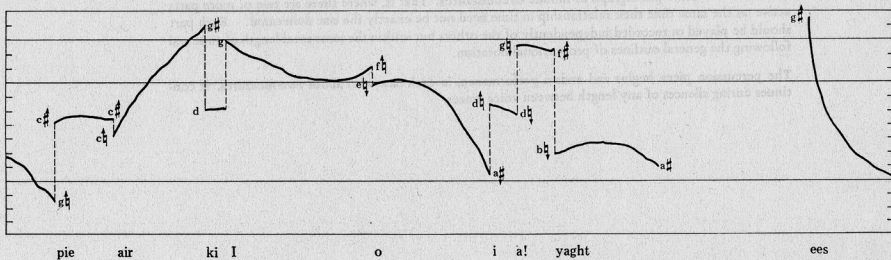
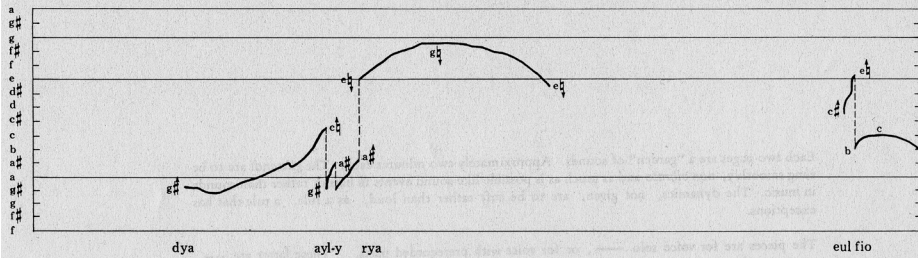
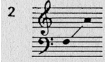
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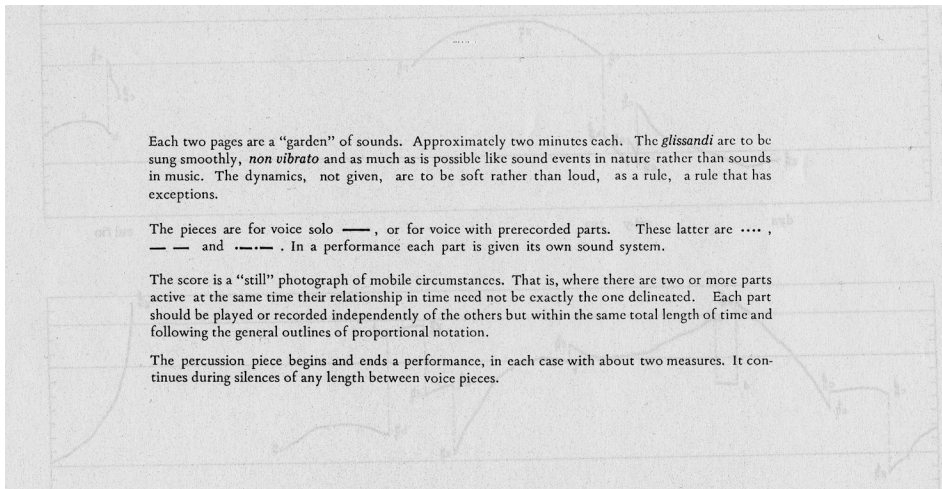
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for Isabelle Ganz
RYOANJI

JOHN CAGE



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JOHN CAGE (1912–1992) created works in several different media—music, performance, writing, and visual art—throughout his lifetime. One of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, he composed a landmark of modern music, *4' 33"*, as well as numerous compositions over several decades for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, first at Black Mountain College in the fifties and later in New York City where he also taught composition classes at the New School. His musical ideas were defined by chance operations, based on consulting the *I Ching*. Cage experimented with new technologies and amplification of objects and elements of nature, and turned literary texts by Thoreau, Joyce, Satie, and others into music. He wrote many books that elaborated unique forms of musical thought, personal anecdote, poetry, and reflections on painting, dance, music, and the natural world, including *Silence*, *Empty Words*, *X*, and *A Year from Monday*. The John Cage Trust, which serves his legacy, is located at Bard College.

Other *PAJ* features in the ongoing series "Performance Drawings"—

1. "Fluxus Long Weekend," by Alison Knowles, *PAJ* 91 (January 2009).
2. "*Deep Trance Behavior in Potatoland* and *Maria Del Bosco*" by Richard Foreman. *PAJ* 90 (September 2008).
3. "*Geneva, Handfall*," by Trisha Brown, *PAJ* 89 (May 2008).
4. "*The Threepenny Opera*," by Robert Wilson, *PAJ* 88 (January 2008).
5. "Research Events," by Ralph Lemon, *PAJ* 81 (September 2005).
6. "Studio as Study," by Melinda Barlow, *PAJ* 71 (May 2002).